Hope in Western Philosophy

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Philosophy
In conformity with the requirements for
The degree of Master of Arts

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
(March 2017)
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Abstract
This project explores hope in Western philosophy through the examination of particular beliefs and teachings concerning the works of philosophers working in the ancient, medieval, and modern eras. In the second chapter I explore Aristotle using representative primary and secondary sources in order to come to an understanding of what we can make of Aristotle’s hope. Secondly I discuss selections from the work of St. Augustine, a medieval thinker. The third chapter introduces Immanuel Kant, and Søren Kierkegaard into the discussion of hope. In the fourth chapter I explore hope as portrayed by Albert Camus and Jayne Waterworth. I have chosen Camus to represent the modern non-sectarian era because of his posing and answering important philosophical questions of the day. He explored the human being’s capacity to know and to act ethically and our ability to reconceptualize the physical and social worlds without appeal to God or in terms of the human being’s apparent purpose, directive principle, or goal. His articles and novels articulated a critique of religion and of the Enlightenment. Camus’ notion of the place of hope in our human condition is taken from his texts, The Stranger, The Myth of Sisyphus, and The Rebel. Jayne Waterworth is a philosopher working today and her work specifically explores the nature of hope.

The fifth chapter of this thesis provides my explanation of what hope is from a non-sectarian, non-medical, philosophical vantage. It shows that hope can be understood on a day-to-day trivial basis such as, “I hope it will not rain on my birthday” to a profound level: “I hope my child will live through this risky surgery.” I argue that profound hope is a type of coping mechanism or ego-defense. Finally, I argue that there is no necessary reason to hope, because in some cases it can be deleterious to one’s overall well-being.
Acknowledgments

I am honoured to be able to dedicate this M.A. thesis to Andrew Brook: Chancellor’s Professor of Philosophy and Cognitive Science Emeritus, Carleton University; past-president of the Canadian Philosophical Association; treasurer of the International Psychoanalytic Association and past-president of the Canadian Psychoanalytic Society. Andy is the only person ever to be president of both Canadian bodies. His dedication to his students and to his profession impressed me profoundly. Over the next four decades of my life he continued to support all of my professional efforts. I frequently said to him that I would like to do a Master’s degree in philosophy, so when I retired at age sixty-five he once again urged me to follow my dream. I would not be here without him.

Further, I would like to acknowledge with deep gratitude the support and encouragement that Professor Paul Fairfield has given me from beginning my first class with him to the completion of this thesis. He embodies patience, a gentle, thorough teaching style, and a supportive and understanding approach. His attributes are readily recognized by all with whom he engages in or out of the classroom.

I gratefully acknowledge the contributions made by the second and third readers of this thesis: Professor Christine Synpowich and Professor Jacqueline Davies.

Finally I would like to thank Judy Vanhooser, Administrative Assistant, Philosophy Department who was the first friendly voice that I heard when contacting the department and I am honoured to now call her a friend.
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Chapter One: Introduction

In Aesop’s fable of “Zeus and the Jar” we are told that Zeus shut up all good things in a huge wine jar, which he left in the hands of a man. This man was curious and wanted to know what was inside. So he pried open the lid and all the good things blew away, flying up to the Gods. Thus, hope alone remains with men, and promises them the good things, which have fled (Gibbs 2008).

The ancient Greeks believed in the goddess of hope, Elpis. This earliest conception in Western thought will prove worthwhile as we explore hope’s migratory path through time and cultures. Ancient Greeks regarded hope as a goddess. This interesting belief finds a parallel in the Christian God of hope, but more important to me is the notion that Elpis brought feelings of well-being to those who suffered. The idea that hope brought feelings of comfort directly impacted the development of my understanding of what hope is. The goddess herself was not the feeling of hope, nor was hope in her. One prayed that she would bring feelings of comfort to ease one’s pain—that she would hold at bay feelings of despair, sorrow, or fear, while all the time knowing an unwanted outcome was feasible. Elpis was portrayed optimistically as a flower-bearing young woman, and it was her function to bring comfort to the despairing.

In Homer’s epic The Iliad, Agamemnon gives us his relation to, and thinking of, hope: “This now at one moment bodes ill, while then again hope, shining with kindly light from the sacrifices, wards off the biting care of the sorrow that gnaws my heart” (Agamemnon 1922-26 Ag 83). Hope wards off feelings of biting sorrow. She is active and usually (though not always,

1 It is puzzling to me that this jar contained all sorts of evils, sorrows, plagues, and misfortunes along with hope. Could it be too that hope was a “bad” thing?
as will be discussed later) unites the present with a desired (future) happier situation. Her worshippers actively sought her intercession. They chose to call on hope. They offered her sacrifices. Hope’s intercession was not limited to individual men or women; sometimes hope’s intercession was prayed for collectively, as in soldiers hoping for victory. Hope was sought in times of war and peace. It was not always directly related to courage, although the feelings that could arise from her intercession might include courage. For instance, a mother tending her ailing child might have hope for its survival, and that would help to promote the behaviours of patience, perseverance, and attentiveness. Having hope might also promote courageous acts by the woman as she carried her ailing offspring to the aid of an unknown healer. Thus hope was seen to be instrumental in behavioral responses subsequent to her intervention.

This thesis explores hope in Western philosophy through the examination of particular beliefs and teachings concerning hope through four historical eras, the ancient, the medieval, the early modern, and modern thinkers. My intention is both to provide some intellectual and contextual history on the concept of hope followed by a more properly philosophical analysis that emerges in the latter portion of the thesis.

Aristotle and Augustine represent the ancient and medieval eras respectively. Søren Kierkegaard and Immanuel Kant represent the early modern Enlightenment. The fourth chapter marks a distinctive break from traditional thinking with a discussion of Albert Camus and Jayne Waterworth, two non-sectarian approaches to hope. Although Camus denied being a philosopher, I chose to look at his work because he is a modern writer who posed and answered important philosophical questions of the day—such as the human being’s capacity to know, to act ethically, and to re-conceptualize the physical and social worlds without appeal to God or in terms of their
apparent purpose, directive principle, or goal. His articles and novels articulated a critique of religion and of the Enlightenment. I have gleaned his ideas about hope through his works, *The Stranger*, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and *The Rebel*. Jayne Waterworth, a contemporary philosopher, challenges prevailing philosophical traditions that claim that hope must be a God-given virtue or a feeling. She arrives at a conclusion that hope stands in a category of its own, and her reflections contribute enormously to the body of philosophical thought regarding hope.

In the fourth chapter I provide an explanation of what hope may be from a non-sectarian, non-medical, philosophical vantage. It will show that hope can be understood on a day-to-day trivial basis such as “I hope it will not rain on my birthday” to a profound level: “I hope my child will live through this risky surgery.” As earlier shown, Kierkegaard would have dismissed both these examples of hope because they have to do with the temporal and personal. I will discuss this later. For now, the position I hold in this thesis is that one’s profound hope is in the hoper and nowhere else and that it provides the hoper with a means through which to cope with life’s exigencies. The conclusion provides an overview of the work with an emphasis on how notions of hope have changed through time. I have been unable to go into the kind of detail one might wish in this thesis since this would require book-length treatment.

Briefly put, there have been four main conceptions of hope throughout Western history. One is that hope is a god or goddess or is embodied by a god or goddess. Other expressions of what hope is include notions that it is a feeling, a passion, or a virtue. I shall argue that it is appropriate to believe hope is a god or goddess, a feeling, passion, or virtue depending on the time and cultural circumstances within which one is living. I shall also emphasize that regarding hope as a god or goddess or a God-given virtue is a perfectly acceptable manner in which to
understand the nature of hope because such a belief is not dependent on reason. There may be a fifth legitimate way of understanding hope. This way is to view hope as a (sometimes) volitional activity that is adopted by the hoper either consciously or unconsciously to relieve current distress or to hold at bay what could be feelings associated with an unwanted outcome. I agree with contemporary philosopher Jayne Waterworth in many ways, but not in total. Although our terminology differs somewhat, our idea is essentially the same: profound hope can be understood as a kind of coping mechanism or ego-defense. This fifth and more contemporary way of thinking about hope is not based on belief, but has resulted from studying psychological, medical, sociological, and philosophical literature to discern what hope actually is—what its function is, where it is located, and its temporal relationship, i.e., does it always relate to the future or can it refer to the past? On what grounds can we say that hope is useful or even appropriate? Can we legitimately come to see that the majority of human beings who are aware of their contingency have used hope as a coping mechanism or strategy? Medical literature shows how this coping strategy—say in the facing of cancer—seems to benefit patients’ overall well-being, however this discussion is beyond the scope of the current work.
Chapter Two: An Ancient and a Medieval: Aristotle and St. Augustine

Aristotle wrote very little on hope. The Greek word for hope, also expectation, is *elpis*. Sometimes it is clear that the word was used as we might use hope in our time, however, at other times it is clear that it was used as we might use the word expectation. Getting a fix on Aristotle’s hope is challenging for a couple of reasons: one is the variant use and translation of *elpis*, and a second is its relation to the future and to behaviours arising from hope. Scott Gravlee tends to generalize *elpis* as an expectation, but to do this may overlook some important aspects of Aristotle’s hope. For instance, far more than a mere expectation, Aristotle points out that hope is tied to a favourable outcome only if one is invested in that outcome; otherwise hope does not play a part: “Again, if they are eager for, and have good hopes of, a thing that will be pleasant if it happens, they think that it certainly will happen and be good for them: whereas if they are indifferent or annoyed, they do not think so” (Aristotle, book 11, part 1). Expectation, as Gravlee says, is more neutral. For Aristotle, to tie personal investment to a positive outcome makes absolute sense, for why should hope be involved if we do not care? At the very least we can see in Aristotle the need for personal investment in the holder of hope. It is important to notice here that Aristotle makes the point that the one who hopes is invested in the outcome. Hope is in the hoper. It is not displaced from oneself; rather one must be eager for the outcome. Expectation, on the other hand, can merely be one’s prediction of the future, whether good or bad. In Jones’ masterful translation of Aristotle’s *De Sensu and de Memoria* (1906) Aristotle says that the future cannot be remembered; it is rather the object of opinion and hope. More important, hope,
for Aristotle, is the necessary enabling condition of the important virtue of courage.

In order to flesh out Aristotle’s notion of hope it may be helpful to understand his conception of soul, the passions, virtue, the relationship between soul and virtue, and the role that hope plays. I begin with Aristotle’s idea of soul, followed by the notion of virtue, and finally show how hope is connected to virtue, and in particular the virtue of courage.

Aristotle’s theory of the soul is best understood in terms of two other doctrines. *De Anima* provides a source for coming to understand Aristotle’s conception of the soul. First, Aristotle says the body and soul are joined as matter and form. Like matter and form, they are inseparable. Second, all transitory existence moves from potentiality to actuality. For example, a seed grows into a tree. The seed does not lack the form or matter of the tree. If it has the same form and matter as a tree, why do we say that they are not identical? In one sense they are identical, but in another they are not. By growing, the seed produces another embodiment of its form: the tree. The form is present and has potential that is actualized though growth. It is the inner telos or intelligence of the tree. Aristotle maintained that the substantial reality of the human being is the union of the body and the soul. This relationship can be likened to a person having a skill. Nobody thinks of a skill as inhabiting a person. For Aristotle, the soul is an ability: a power to do certain things. The soul is united to one, and only one, human body and it does not survive the death of the human. It gives unity to each human being. The soul’s function is to actualize matter into a composite—the soul-body. For Aristotle, the oneness of body and soul is incontestable. The soul is the source of movement.

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3 Thinking about the human soul as an intelligence allows Aristotle to avoid Plato’s dualism—the position that the soul both pre-exists and survives the body, going through a continual process of reincarnation or “transmigration.”
The soul actualizes the body in two ways. First, the soul is the first actualization of the body. Second, the soul makes possible the second actualizing of the body—living well. The soul is not a type of activity but is the potential (power) to engage in certain kinds of activities of which there are three. The most fundamental power of the soul is nutrition. It has no rational element and it takes care of things like breathing. The nutritive soul is found in the growth of all things and at its most elemental level it is found in plants. The second type of activity of the soul is sensation—pain and pleasure. This appetitive part has a rational element that has to do with our appetites and desires. Appetites and desires can be corrected and controlled by reason. This activity of the soul distinguishes animals of all sorts from plants. The passions are a kind of “appetitive” perception. The third and final activity of the soul is contemplation or reason. The pure rational part does the thinking, reasoning, etc. Contemplation or reason provides for the differentiation of humans from other animals. Aristotle notes that thought is somehow different from all other powers of the soul in that it alone is capable of existence in isolation from all other powers. Having a capacity to reason suggests an ability to determine right from wrong behaviour. It is important to keep in mind that for Aristotle desire and thought function as an activity of the soul to produce movement. Conjoined desire and thought are necessarily involved in hope. This will be dealt with later.

At the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle aims to identify the highest good for human beings: “Every art, and every science reduced to a teachable form, and in like manner every action and moral choice, aims, it is thought, at some good: for which reason a common and by no means a bad description of the chief good is, ‘that which all things aim at’” (Aristotle 1923 p.1). While most people believe that the highest good is the pursuit of wealth, honour, or bodily
pleasure, Aristotle said that all of these goods are deficient as the highest good in some way.

Material wealth is always acquired for the purpose of obtaining something else. Pursuing honour is not connected to anything characteristic of the person himself, but is about how others perceive him. Satisfying bodily pleasures is not limited to human beings. The person who lives a good life would focus to a significant extent on contemplation and learning or acquiring the intellectual virtues. But contemplation is in itself insufficient because there are two kinds of knowledge: knowledge of first principles or fundamental truths of nature, and knowledge that comes from inference, demonstration, or the application of these principles. The person who acts rightly develops the right character from which to perform right actions. Thus, Aristotle’s ethics is a character-based ethics. We must live a life of rationality and cultivate the virtues. We should cultivate the virtues to cultivate a life of happiness of which there are three basic components that are intimately connected. To be happy is to flourish or live well among human beings. Happiness is a constant state of living well in a human community. In order to live well in a community we have to live according to reason. It is reason that contributes to personal excellence and excellence in society.

Aristotle’s virtues differ from Plato’s four cardinal virtues—wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice. Aristotle’s character virtues include courage, temperance, and generosity. Neither Aristotle nor Plato considers hope to be a virtue. Plato’s “courage” survives in Aristotle’s assessment of what ought to be included in a list of virtues, and in that sense is a doubly important virtue, as are moderation and temperance. Both thinkers would find in the virtuous person moderation and courage. It is worth noting here that Aristotle taught that hope enables courage, so a virtuous person would necessarily have hope as one of his character traits.
or dispositions. The virtue of courage refers to confidence and fear concerning the most fearful thing—death. Virtues occupy the middle ground between excess and deficiency. For example, courage occupies the middle ground between cowardly and rash behaviour. Hope makes courageous behavior possible, and like Plato, Aristotle maintains that courage is the soldier’s specific excellence. Considering fear and cowardice, cowardice would be a deficiency—a vice—and recklessness an extreme—also a vice. When we consider the actions or feelings of fear or confidence it is hope that paves the way for the expression of the virtue of courage since it specifically affects the human appetite strengthening the irascible or conflicting appetites to withstand whatever threatens man’s well-being: “and the hopeful disposition⁴ creates confidence; we cannot feel fear so long as we are feeling angry, and any expectation of good makes us confident” (Aristotle 2000 p. 142). Since hope creates confidence, confidence is a stronger disposition than hope. It implies more certitude than hope. Hope requires a possible outcome rather than an outcome that one is confident that a strongly desired appetite will obtain.

In other words, Aristotle taught that hope enables confidence and courage because it involves excelling in challenging activities and projects, for without hope one could not be courageous nor could one have true confidence. Natural hope, he argued, includes qualities of the soul such as magnanimity and munificence, and coincides with courage because it strengthens the mind for a strenuous task. Aristotle explained that hope can be experienced for a variety of reasons, but in some cases it is unfounded. It can be found in experience: sailors are hopeful for success of safety in a gale because of their experience. This is well-founded hope. Hope that

⁴ Notice here the hopeful disposition. Hope leads to the “hopeful disposition,” much like persistent expressions of the feeling of anger would lead one to say that one has an angry disposition.
exists through lack of knowledge or experience can be unfounded in so far as a positive outcome is utterly impossible. Hope looks to the future and concerns only the movement towards what perfects the human person toward good objects or that enhance dignity. It must involve some element of difficulty, hard work, or striving; otherwise, when seeking the good that is easily achieved the person merely experiences desire. Desire pertains to the “concupiscent” or lustful appetite.

Gravlee (2000) says that unlike the hope found in the New Testament, which is “good hope,” Aristotle’s *elpis* (along with its verbal form *elpizō*) plays a more neutral role. He suggests that Aristotle’s hope is the rough equivalent of expectation. In *On Memory*, for example, Aristotle contrasts memory, which concerns the past, with *elpis*, the looking forward to the future, without any indication that this future will be good or evil. Gravlee points to the fact that Aristotle identifies a second source of being *euelpis*—what he calls hopeful or optimistic from good fortune. He cites *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.8.117a10ff to develop his idea. Optimists are not courageous because they gain their optimism through having won many victories over people. While similar to courage, it cannot count as courage because of the agent’s belief in the positive outcome from experience. Gravlee explores further whether his reading of Aristotle can unearth anything of value in being hopeful, and he suggests it can be found in linking hopefulness to virtue. To that end Gravlee introduces a couple of other notions: that being hopeful is related to something in the near or distant future and that being hopeful must have the possibility of being true, lest it is a mere wish.

Aristotle says that without hope there can be no deliberation since hope is the underlying cause of deliberation. The connection here is that without deliberation there can be no hope
because hope requires the thought that the hoped for positive outcome is possible. Aristotle makes clear that hope influences human action. He says that human good consists in the excellent performance of the human function, which itself consists in distinctively human activity, i.e., a distinctively human life. This can only be the activity of the distinctive parts of the human soul. Hope makes possible the virtuous act of courage, however a virtuous person decides on virtuous action for its own sake. Being courageous is virtuous even though it comes at the price of pain, as in courageous acts. Having taken these aspects of Aristotle’s teaching, Gravlee concludes that hope underlies both fear and confidence. If one has lost hope in a positive outcome and confidence in the worth of one’s actions, there can be no occasion for deliberation. Gravlee contrasts Aristotle’s more neutral view of hope to the biblical view that hope that is fervent and placed in God (I will deal with this later). Yet, Aristotle’s hope cannot be skeptical since it is confident, and he suggests that although we get to the negation of skepticism in hope from different perspectives we can agree that hope is not skeptical.\(^5\)

Moss gives us another view of Aristotelian hope:

According to Aristotle, to enjoy the pleasures, which are movements or new states, is to perceive them (1370a27–8). This terminology is derived from the *Philebus*. Since enjoyment lies in perception, remembering or expecting something can be sufficient for feeling pleasure (1370a30–1). There can be pleasures for both those who remember and those who hope, since imagination (*Phantasia*) is a feeble sort of perception (1370a28–9, Moss 2012 p. 29).

Aristotle also recognizes in the *Rhetoric* that one’s disposition can be hopeful.

\(^5\) Later in this paper it will be shown that one can be skeptical about a positive outcome but still hope for its occurrence.
Their hopeful disposition makes them think themselves equal to great things—and that means having exalted notions. They would always rather do noble deeds than useful ones: their lives are regulated more by moral feeling than by reasoning; and whereas reasoning leads us to choose what is useful, moral goodness leads us to choose what is noble (Aristotle 2000 p. 143).

Aristotle said that hope can affect one’s frame of mind, and a frame of mind is similar to a disposition. He is most unflattering to old men in the Rhetoric, taking the view that hope is of the future and thus diminishes with age.

They live by memory rather than by hope; for what is left to them of life is but little as compared with the long past; and hope is of the future, memory of the past. This, again, is the cause of their loquacity; they are continually talking of the past, because they enjoy remembering it (Aristotle 2000 p. 145).

In summary, hope, for Aristotle, is not a like noun such as “sad”; it is a like verb. It is of action, causing action or being disposed toward a way of thinking or behaving. Hope makes way for the virtue of courage—and herein lies its ethical significance. It is related to thought in at least one way. One thinks that the desired outcome is possible or achievable, and so hopes rather than believes. Hope is also a disposition, and one that differs from optimism. A hopeful disposition is more fundamental than an optimistic disposition because it includes an attitude of confidence and has a particular aim to achieve something in the future. An optimistic disposition may simply be a particular outlook that no matter what happens all will be for the best. The importance of Aristotle’s hope is twofold. First, hope requires thought and motivates certain—particularly courageous—ways of behaving. Second, he points out that it can be understood as a kind of disposition. Dispositions are tendencies to think, react, or behave in certain ways. Hope
is probably found only in human beings, unlike feelings or thought found in other animals, and so sets us apart just as do other defense mechanisms or coping strategies in which we engage.

**St. Augustine**

Like a colossus bestriding two worlds, Augustine stands as the last patristic and the first medieval father of western Christianity. He gathered together and conserved all the main motifs of Latin Christianity from Tertullian to Ambrose; he appropriated the heritage of Nicene orthodoxy—he was a Chalcedonian before—and he drew all this into an unsystematic synthesis which is still our best mirror of the heart and mind of the Christian community in the Roman Empire (Outler, 1958 p. 1).

Hope changed dramatically with the arrival of St. Augustine on the Christian stage. For centuries following, the teaching of St. Augustine would influence both theologians and philosophers. According to Augustine, hope lies not in the hoper but is placed in an unseen God. With God as your hope and your hope for salvation, God is the instigator of good behaviour. With God as the source of one’s actions one may enter into the kingdom of heaven, thereby achieving eternal, true happiness, which is unknowable in the earthly realm.

When Augustine ceased teaching philosophy and left the Manichean faith to practice Christianity, mankind became “the fallen”:

[St. Augustine] has a special place in the history of Christianity in the west, and through that place has left a permanent mark on the general consciousness of humanity. Augustine saw in the limited circumstances of his life and times an element of the universal, a clue to the very nature and destiny of man, a glimpse of what God intends for all of a fallen race (Chadwick 2009: 1).
The question of whether Augustine had “converted” in 386 to Christianity or to Neo-Platonism has been much discussed (Conybeare, 2006). The role and influence of the Bishop of Ambrose cannot be disputed, however, for it was he who was responsible for Augustine’s conversion to Christianity and Augustine drew heavily from him.

Regarding hope, Bishop Ambrose preached the following:

[W]e wait for things we hope for but see not…. Now it is well said that hope that is seen is not hope referring to the power and honour of riches in the world. You may see a man distinguished by his retinue and equipages, but he has no hope in his equipages which are seen. Nor is hope in the stars which he watches; nor the rich man in his possessions or the avaricious man in usury; but he hath hope who places his hope in him whom he sees not, that is, in the Lord Jesus Christ, who stands in the midst of us, yet is not seen. Finally, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard the things which God hath prepared for them that love him (Ambrose 2012).

Augustine would take the hope of the Greeks and Romans, adapt Plato’s work and place hope—now a virtue—squarely in the arms of God:

And therefore the apostle Paul, speaking not of men without prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice, but of those whose lives were regulated by true piety, and whose virtues were therefore true, says, “for we are saved by hope: now hope which is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” As, therefore, we are saved, so we are made happy by hope. And as we do not as yet possess a present, but look for a future salvation, so is it with our happiness, and this “with patience”; for we are encompassed with evils, which we ought patiently to endure, until we come to the ineffable enjoyment of unmixed good. (Augustine chapter 4 book xix 2013)

Whereas Aristotle’s philosophical goal was to create a system of enquiry through which all men could eventually learn all there is to know about the world, Augustine’s project was to forward Christianity—in a highly political way, since the promotion and practice of organized religion is
political.

In the introduction to the *Full Text of Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation No. 12* (Augustine 1950), the editors confirm that Augustine was a decidedly ambitious man:

We refer to the question of his worldly ambitions and success. As we look back through the ages to the scene of his wrestling with God, we tend to forget that Augustine's problems were made much more difficult by the very human preoccupation of work to be done and a living to be made, not only for himself, but for those that depended on him. At the time of his conversion he had the prize of success well within his grasp. Was he to surrender all, jeopardize all, for an idea that only with difficulty convinced him? It was from his own experience of grace at this juncture that he became its ardent apostle.6

For Augustine and other Christian Platonists, the intellectual and the moral are inseparable. In *Seventeen Short Treatises of St. Augustine of Hippo*, he makes clear the position he took in the *Enchiridion* as well as his position on hope in God.

The author admits the name of Enchiridion, but usually speaks of the work as on faith, hope, and charity, Aristotle to which heads he reduces the questions of Laurentius. The first he treats in the order of the creed, refuting, without naming, the heresies of the Manicheans, Apollinarians,7 Priscillianists, Arians, and especially of the Pelagians.8 The second is in the form of a brief exposition of the Lord’s Prayer. The third part is a short discourse on charity. From Ben. Retract, ii. 63. Aristotle also wrote a book on faith, hope, and charity, on the request of the person to whom I addressed it, that he might have a work of mine which should never be out of his hands, such as the Greeks call an Enchiridion. In which I think I have pretty carefully treated of the Manner in which God is to be

6 No page number available in on line document.

7 Priscillian, Bishop of Avila, was condemned, put to torture, and beheaded with four companions on charges of heresy by Emperor Maximus involving leanings toward Manichaeism, Docetism, and modalism (Webster dictionary).

8 The theological doctrine propounded by Pelagius, a British monk, and condemned as heresy by the Roman Catholic Church in 416. It denied original sin and affirmed the ability of humans to be righteous by the exercise of free will.
worshipped, which knowledge divine Scripture defines to be the true wisdom of man. Aristotle (Augustine 1847)

In his transitional stage from one as Christian philosopher to Christian Bishop, Christianity becomes a philosophy:

To Augustine, Paul reveals the “face of philosophy.” There follows a mythical genealogy of philosophia and philocalia, which Augustine later dismisses as utterly redundant (retr. 1.1.3)—and he then returns to his purpose: “but let’s get back to ourselves, let us, I repeat, Romanianus, do philosophy; thanks to you, your son has begun to do philosophy” (sed ad nos redeamus, nos, inquam, romaniane, philosophemur; reddam tibi gratiam, filius tuus coepit philosophari: c. Acad. 2.3.8). And “we,” he urges, are one; hence (this is implied, not stated) their philosophical project must be the same. He continues with a caveat: beware of thinking that you won’t find truth in philosophy; believe him who said “seek and ye shall find” (Matt. 7: 7; c. Acad. 2.3.9, Saak 2012).

In The Confessions, written in about 400, Augustine tells us that hope is God: “O my hope, who cleansest me from the impurity of such affections, directing mine eyes towards thee, and plucking my feet out of the snare. For I wondered that others, subject to death, did live, since he whom I loved, as if he should never die, was dead” (St. Augustine 2002 p. 84). The Confessions provide three things. First is Augustine’s frank testimony of his personal sinfulness and the power he came to recognize as God’s grace—protective, creative, redemptive power in every moment of his life. Second, he wished to make clear that he had once and for all left the Manichean faith and was an ardent Christian. Finally, The Confessions offers us his profound praise and thanksgiving in honor of God’s glory. Hope is in God and God is hope.

In his sermons he makes clear that hope is not to be of this time:

Our hope, brethren, is not of this present time, nor of this world, nor in that happiness whereby men are blinded that forget God. This ought we above all things to know, and in a Christian heart hold fast, that we were not made Christians for the good things of the present time, but for
something else which God at once promiseth, and man doth not yet comprehend (St. Augustine sermon lxxvii. p. 316).

Augustine says that hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage—anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain that (Brown 1988 p.132). This seems to be a direct borrowing from Aristotle’s teaching that hope makes way for courage and that hope is directed to a better future. The Augustine of The Soliloquies is sure that the soul needs not only the purging of earthly desires but also the presence of faith, hope, and charity, which is the enjoyment of its object, with no veil between; that is the vision of God (Ibid: 36).

For Aristotle, virtues were dispositions developed through years of learning and practice. Since dispositions gradually become second nature, moral character is hard to change. Aristotle’s definition of moral virtue required that the agent not only choose the act but choose it in accordance with a firm and unchangeable disposition. Augustine had a radically different account of happiness and the virtues. Augustine’s virtues were divine gifts, inseparable from faith in Christ. Not just anyone could acquire the virtues, as Aristotle claimed. Moreover, acting virtuously could not bring happiness, because God rewards true happiness in one’s afterlife. We become deserving of afterlife happiness by exercising the virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

Perhaps Augustine’s greatest work was his last. The City of God was written between 413 and 426. The twenty-two-volume work was written in defense of Christianity and in opposition to the claim that the sack of Rome was because Christians abandoned the old gods of Rome. In volume three, article twenty, he asserts that true happiness is not of this world and hope is to be of unending, eternal bliss:

If the population of Saguntum had been Christian, and had suffered as it did for the Christian faith (though, of course, Christians would not have
used fire and sword against their own persons), they would have suffered with that hope which springs from faith in Christ—the hope not of a brief temporal reward, but of unending and eternal bliss (Augustine 2013).

Aristotle made prudence the excellence of practical intellect and the foundation of all moral virtues. Augustine, on the other hand, established charity, a virtue of will. Only through charity can one love God and neighbour. Pagans, no matter how wise they might be or how well they may live, could not have moral virtue, including hope, since hope is to be found in God alone.

Contrasting faith and hope, Augustine observes that

… faith may have for its object evil as well as good, for both good and evil are believed, and the faith that believes them is not evil but good. Moreover, faith is concerned about the past, present, and the future…. Faith applies to one’s own circumstances and those of others…. But hope has for its object only what is good, only what is future, and only what affects the one who entertains the hope (Trabbic: 338).

Augustine decisively influenced the Christian understanding of hope and its role in ethics and knowledge. Faith, hope, and charity become the triadic virtues of Christianity. Since Christendom ruled the Western world, any philosopher who might question the rule of God or his rightful supremacy in the world was in grave peril.

Augustine’s position on hope invites skepticism on a couple of grounds. First, who today would deny that there are many “takes” on God? Second, the Christian idea that only in God can we place hope, and that our only hope should be for salvation, is highly questionable. In general one might seriously question if one can place hope in anything. Hope might be better understood to reside only in the hoper since only the hoper hopes. Further, people can hope for many positive outcomes in their day-to-day travails. One need not have only one hope, nor does one need to believe in one God or another, or any for that matter, to have hope.
Chapter Three: Kant and Kierkegaard

Immanuel Kant

Kant’s enormous contribution to philosophy includes some interesting ideas about hope. The following discussion is not meant to provide a definitive position on Kant’s view of hope, for two reasons. First, I shall not presume to adjudicate between scholars who have written about Kant on hope, and second, I would like to bring forward two different philosophical accounts of Kant’s view of hope if only to highlight the complexities of interpreting the interconnectedness of Kant’s notions of hope, morality, and God. The first interpretation presented is from Williams (2016) and Gardner (1999), which likens Kant’s concept of hope to the traditional Christian idea of hope in God. In the second part of the discussion I present O’Neill’s (1999) reading of Kant which describes Kant’s hope as a kind of faith in which he held that one need not ascribe any unique status to religious hope, or to Christian hope.

To begin with, it is important to make clear that Kant was not a theologian but an Enlightenment philosopher who lived in the era that followed the Thirty Years War (1618—1648). After one of the longest and bloodiest wars in Europe up to Kant’s time it is understandable that Kant would apply Enlightenment thought to the problem of religious and political tolerance in his work. In order to resolve the conflict between the two schools of rationalism and empiricism, Kant proposed his theory of transcendental idealism and concluded that the extent of our knowledge is determined by both empirical and rational principles. In order to develop his theory, he started with contemplating experience in general and then proceeded to
describe the kinds of knowledge made possible through it. He formed his theory based on an exposition of the kinds of knowledge that are possible, and he arrived at a priori analytic, a priori synthetic, and a posteriori synthetic knowledge as our ultimate sources of knowledge. These forms of knowledge are derived from their corresponding judgments.

We must take care, however, in turning our attention to an object which is foreign to the sphere of transcendental philosophy, not to injure the unity of our system by digressions, nor, on the other hand, to fail in clearness, by saying too little on the new subject of discussion. I hope to avoid both extremes, by keeping as close as possible to the transcendental, and excluding all psychological, that is, empirical, elements (Kant, 2004 p.802).

In other words, transcendental idealism was the development of his thesis that we know more than the ideas we have in our minds, because we also directly know of at least the possibility of “things-in-themselves.” These things-in-themselves are both empirically and transcendently real even if they cannot be directly and immediately known. The actual “phenomena” that we perceive, and which we think we know, are really the way things appear to us and are not necessarily real. Importantly, the mind can actively synthesize concepts to go beyond the domain of pure sensory data. Given his effort to bridge rationalism and empiricism, it is not surprising that he would disagree with Hume’s position on hope. Hume had argued that God was neither necessary to nor interested in such matters as human morality. He regarded hope as a passion: “This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflexion, because derived from it” (Hume 2010 p. 20). “A fit of the gout produces a long train of passions, as grief, hope, fear; but is not derived immediately from any affection or idea” (Ibid p. 282). In essay X of Enthusiasm and Superstition, Hume alleged that hope leads to enthusiasm: “hope,
pride, presumption, a warm imagination, together with ignorance, are, therefore, the true sources of enthusiasm.” Enthusiasts were Protestants of various stripes who experienced “raptures, being altogether unaccountable, and seeming quite beyond the reach of our ordinary faculties, are attributed to the immediate inspiration of that divine being, who is the object of devotion” (Hume b). In this context hope—a passion—was not regarded favourably by Hume. He scorned its manifestation found in “enthusiasm.”

Kant understood hope differently: “For all hoping has happiness for its object and stands in precisely the same relation to the practical and the law of morality as knowing to the theoretical cognition of things and the law of nature” (op. Cit. P. 806). In his Critique of Pure Reason, Kant said that all our questions of human reason and speculation combine into three questions: “What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope?” Answering his third question, Kant invoked the primacy of practical reason, so that theoretical reason may accept the postulates of God, freedom, and immortality “as a foreign possession handed over to it” (5:120, Williams 2016). Kant supported the position that theology may include logical contradictions without apology. He believed that happiness is an important good, and it is the natural and necessary end of every human being. This position essentially echoes Platonic and Thomistic traditions where happiness can be obtained after life in the presence of God. Perfect good comes after the assimilation of virtue and happiness. If a virtuous person suffers in this world, it is necessary to concede that God will grant them happiness in another world. In order to be awarded everlasting happiness one must strive for the highest good—God. This is the position from which Kant makes an argument for the highest good. He believed that if we act at all, we show at least some commitment to a hope for a future in which some action may take place and
may have some results. Since we have some thought of a future that is open to action in some respects, thought has the power to establish or give organized existence to the moral life and the life of action.

Kant’s understanding is that happiness is the natural end for human beings and goodness is our moral end; happiness will be distributed in proportion to our morality.

Happiness, therefore, in exact proportion with the morality of rational beings (whereby they are made worthy of happiness), constitutes alone the supreme good of a world into which we absolutely must transport ourselves according to the commands of pure but practical reason (Kant 2003 p. 814).

Our moral duty must be done even if our emotions conflict with the right moral action. By the power of our will and reason, human beings must follow the moral law. “Without ‘a God and without a world invisible to us now but hoped for’, the ‘glorious ideas of morality’ would be ‘objects of approval and admiration, but not springs of purpose and action’ (a813/b841), and the moral law would have to be regarded as an empty figment” (a811/b839, Gardner 1999: 217). Williams’ and Gardner’s reading of Kant’s hope regards his position as similar to that of other Christian philosophers. This would seem to be a plausible reading of Kant, however, Onoroa O’Neill (1996) provides a compelling alternative argument. O’Neill notes that “It is easy to miss the central place that hope has in Kant’s philosophy, and in particular in his philosophy of religion, because his discussion of religion often focuses on faith rather than on hope” (O’Neill p. 279). She argues that Kant’s hope is a kind of faith. She prefaces her lecture by citing Kant’s three questions that united reason. These three questions, cited above, are hardly new, she states, and proceeds to show how a Christian would answer these questions.
I can know God; I ought to love God and my neighbour as myself; I may hope for the life to come. Each answer picks out the underlying principle of one of the traditional theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity: faith centres on knowledge of God; hope centres on the life to come; charity centres on love for God and neighbour. (Ibid p.278)

O’Neill argues that rather than grounding hope in faith, Kant construes the basics of faith as a form of hope.

If religion is to be considered within the limits of reason alone, it must not merely be possible to make religious commitments: there must be reasons to do so. The reasons that Kant offers interpret religious trust or commitment fundamentally as a mode of hope: religious faith cannot be a matter of knowledge, and must be a matter of taking a hopeful view of human destiny (Ibid p. 280-281).

O’Neill then explores three questions that arise from this position:

First, does the reality that hope can fail show that, contrary to Kant’s view, we do not need to live in the light of (any sort of) hope? Second, does he show that only religious hopes as traditionally conceived will provide the right light? Third, does he show that religious hopes as traditionally understood, or any other specific hopes, can be reasoned hopes? (Ibid-p. 283)

O’Neill further questions if it is correct to insist that human reason must ask the third question that points to the future. She suggests that commitment to morality and action that required hope seems implausible since many people look to the future with fear. Worse perhaps is that some people hope unreasonably, living in delusion. Since these two considerations are true, Kant must show some view of the future if we are committed to action, for on his view all moral agents are obligated to act morally at all times. Thus, the moral law is a categorical imperative. That is, it applies to all moral agents, at all times, in all places, and without exception. One morally ought to follow the categorical imperative no matter what one might want. Unlike hypothetical
imperatives that are empirical, i.e., discovered through experience, the categorical imperative is known a priori. It is discovered by means of pure practical reason, not by experience. O’Neill points out that Kant asks not what must I hope but what may I hope. Despite this, Kant speaks frequently of what we must hope.

He there argues not only that we must hope that the moral intention can be inserted into the world to some extent, but that we must hope that the moral and natural orders can be fully coordinated in an optimal way in which happiness and virtue, our natural and our moral ends, are eventually perfectly coordinated in each of us (Ibid p. 285).

O’Neill cites the *Critique of Pure Reason* in order to show that, for Kant, infinite progress is possible, however, only under the presupposition of an infinitely enduring existence and personality of the same rational being; this is called the immortality of the soul. Thus the highest good is practically possible only on the supposition of immortality. (*CPR* 122) (Ibid 285)

Accordingly, each of us may hope for an uninterrupted continuance of this progress, however long his existence may last, even beyond this life (*CPR* 123, Ibid p.286).

Infinite being, to whom the condition of time is nothing, sees in this to us endless succession a whole of accordance with the moral law: and the holiness which his command inexorably requires, in order to be true to his justice in the share which he assigns to each in the summum bonum, is to be found in a single intellectual intuition of the whole existence of rational beings. All that can be expected of the creature in respect of the hope of this participation would be the consciousness of his tried character, by which from the progress he has hitherto made from the worse to the morally better, and the immutability of purpose which has thus become known to him, he may hope for a further unbroken continuance of the same, however long his existence may last, even beyond this life, and thus he may hope, not indeed here, nor in any imaginable point of his future existence, but only in the endlessness of his duration (which God alone can survey) to be perfectly adequate to his will (without indulgence or excuse, which do not harmonize with justice) (Kant 2004 p. 199).
This position makes sense only if one assumed a possible eternal existence and a God to make it possible. This assumption is not limited to the Christian faith. Kant’s three postulates—freedom, God, and immortality—are not theoretical dogmas but presuppositions that have necessary practical reference. His postulates can be regarded as his attempts to limit the theoretical discourse yet extend practical discourse in order to have them complement one another. Kant’s postulate of God is not the Christian God of faith but a God whose recognition arises through one’s own reason. This being the case, it necessarily means that submitting to the will of God is submitting to one’s own reason.

Kant’s need of God arises because the relationship between the moral law and happiness is not guaranteed in this world. God becomes the means and thus necessitates the compatibility of virtue and realization of the highest good. The postulate of immortality is interwoven with the postulate of God. Taking into account the sensuous nature of human beings, Kant states that it is very difficult for a person to be righteous without hope. Immortality guarantees this hope and ensures that there is a place sufficient for the reckoning of happiness in proportion to worthiness to be happy. The postulate of freedom is given a special position among the three postulates. Freedom is a priori in that it is the condition of the moral law that we do know. It is because of freedom that God and immortality gain objective reality and subjective necessity. Freedom can be considered as the keystone of the structure of pure reason.

In her subsequent lecture, “Interpretation Within the Limits of Reason,” O’Neill suggests that Kant’s underlying line of thought appears to question rather than endorse much of Christian faith and tradition.
His task, he asserts, is that of the philosophical theologian, who approaches religion within the limits of reason. This task, he insists, is quite different from that of the biblical theologian, who defends ecclesiastical faith by appealing to church authority to guide his reading of scripture, and whose defense of faith does not appeal to reason (Ibid p. 291).

She concludes:

The censors of Prussia are long dead, but they were, I think, right to be worried. Although the surface of religion within the limits of reason alone presents a view of reasoned religion that seemingly takes Christian faith and scriptures seriously, Kant’s philosophical theology does not endorse religion in any straightforward way. Slightly below the surface of the work is a view of reason and of reasoned interpretation that assigns no unique status to religious hopes, to Christian hope, to Christian scriptures, to the Christian church, or to all that he held sacred (Ibid p. 308).

Kant’s hope is important to this discussion because it stands in the nexus of linking reason and faith. He asked in what may I hope, not what must I hope. He locates hope within the hoper who reasons. Righteousness, he thinks, requires hope, but does one require righteousness? It seems likely that one can enjoy moral esteem for doing the right thing, whatever that might turn out to be, without having either hope or God in the equation. Kant placed hope in the hoper and freed the hoper from the imperative of the Christian church that one must hope in God and place one’s hope in God. Thus, on this interpretation, his position is truly liberating.

**Søren Kierkegaard**

In this section I explore Kierkegaard’s concept of authentic hope and will show that he profoundly believed that one could only hope in God and God in turn is hope for salvation. For
Kierkegaard, there is no true happiness in this incarnation since happiness can only be found in eternal bliss after earthly death.

Socrates’ life and work greatly influenced Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard had studied him for ten years at Copenhagen University. The proclamation to “know thyself” is significant because it demanded that one examine the relation between oneself and the truth. It would provide the groundwork for Kierkegaard to examine the relationship of a person with himself, a person with his community, and a person with his God. Socrates had urged his fellow citizens to cease their preoccupation with reputation and material wealth and turn their attention to truth, wisdom, and the improvement of their souls, and this is precisely what Kierkegaard urged. “Know thyself” becomes a linchpin in Kierkegaard’s scheme. His view was that life, or existence in all its aspects, is subjective and ambiguous. Kierkegaard thought of Socrates as an “ironist” who brought us to a state of doubt about our life and our actions even while in the process of making decisions. He saw the Socratic tradition as a courageous examination of individual existence, an expression that was as close as possible to being free of illusion. Kierkegaard’s emergent philosophy became a springboard from which the existentialist movement arose. Deeply theological, Kierkegaard’s work provided a profound defense of Christianity, at the same time being critical of the ways we often conceive it. Despite his ardour for God, he was an anti-metaphysician. “The sense in which Kierkegaard is Socratic is, in part, reflected in his questioning, skeptical attitude toward the dogmatism and systematic absolutism of the German romantic and idealistic thinkers” (Popkin 1951 p. 274).

The church in Denmark was (and is) Lutheran. It was a state church in which all Danes were born Lutheran and thus de facto “Christians.” Citizenship and enrollment in the church were the same thing. Kierkegaard alleged that this reduced to nothing but a radical conversion
to Christ. The church sought to transform the sacred economy of God into a profane state religion. Kierkegaard felt that “official Christianity,” or Christendom, had departed so far from the Christianity of the New Testament that it needed to be torn down and rebuilt—not reformed. (Storm⁹)

Kierkegaard believed that few people were true Christians. In his view, his fellow Christians had not subjectively felt their faith. They were habituated to Christianity, went to church to profess their faith as a matter of custom, but they had not felt their faith to the extent that Abraham did in his obeying God’s command to kill Isaac. To recall, Abraham decided to do something ethically wrong and by most standards inconceivable—that is, to kill one’s own son on command of an invisible yet audible God as a demonstration of fealty to that God. Abraham had immutable faith that God’s good will supervened all. Kierkegaard concluded that it was the tension between cultural ethics and religion that caused Abraham anxiety. Abraham’s faith in the truth of God’s existence and guidance was a profoundly subjective truth.

Kierkegaard’s philosophical hope was a Christian hope completely infused by faith in God, not unlike Augustine’s. Kierkegaard believed that life itself is a task and that life’s task and authentic hope are intimately related. Authentic hope is an expectation for the possibility of the good. In a general sense hope pertains to a self that can take up the challenge of understanding oneself in relation to God. One must align oneself with God or God’s plan for the self. The person of faith sides specifically with the eternal rather than the temporal since, for Kierkegaard, the telos of spirit is the eternal. The divine command is rationally unapproachable; we must simply do it. Kierkegaard was not concerned with hope as an emotion because the emotions are

⁹ There is no pagination nor date on this website.
temporal in nature, like hoping the dog will not bite me. That kind of hope did not relate
infinitely to the self. One might care about the outcome, but the resulting outcome did not yield
meaning. Temporal, earthly hope was, for Kierkegaard, nothing but a deception that masked
despair. Kierkegaard claimed that there were three ways of despairing. The first kind (or way) of
despairing is to despair over one’s own self, one’s own being, or one’s own existential condition.
The self, for Kierkegaard, involved a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, God and man, and
despair are associated with an imbalance in either direction. This kind of despair tends to be
triggered by external events, by bad luck, and is not authentic despair. It is inauthentic because
one does not recognize that one is in despair, but just because a person does not recognize that
he/she is in despair does not mean that he/she is in fact free of despair.

The second kind of despair is more complicated. In this case the person in despair knows
that he/she is in despair but is unaware of its cause. This is a despair of one’s weakness of will to
be authentic. Authenticity requires recognition of one’s relationship with God. This second kind
of despair involves the realization that it is a weakness to despair over earthly things, instead of
allowing oneself to be open to the eternal, to salvation. This despair is found in the person who
has no concept of a true self, because his or her life is lived in a purely external way. This is
Kierkegaard’s aesthete. The third and deepest kind of despair is a despair of defiance. The
defiant person recognizes that he/she is in despair, tries to find some way out of it, but is unable.
Recognizing there is no way out, he/she becomes cynical and rejects the idea that there can be
any form of help. Resigned to this despair, they begin to think that despair separates them from
the common people. The only escape from any kind of despair involves giving oneself totally to
God, but before doing that he or she must recognize his or her self as having a soul. It is from this profoundly religious context that we explore Kierkegaard’s hope.

The notion of hope is scattered throughout Kierkegaard’s various writings. In *Either/Or* Kierkegaard explores the aesthetic life and the ethical life, and he concludes there is no either/or choice between the aesthetic and the ethical: both are necessary. The aesthetic life is based on pleasures, whether intellectual or physical, and the ethical life is based on moral codes and the infinite or the eternal. After extensively developing and thinking about these ways of being in the world, Kierkegaard concluded that the radical human freedom of the aesthetic inevitably leads to “angst” (dread), the call of the infinite, and eventually to despair. Once this is realized, the individual may enter the ethical sphere.

First we shall consider the hoping individuality. When, as one who hopes (and consequently to that extent is unhappy), he is not present to himself, he becomes unhappy in the stricter sense of the word. A person who hopes for eternal life is certainly in a sense an unhappy individuality, insofar as he renounces the present; but strictly speaking he is nevertheless not unhappy, because he is present to himself in this hope and does not come into conflict with the particular elements of finiteness (Kierkegaard 1843 [a]).

*Either/Or* is about a choice between the aesthetic-ethical life and the religious life, not between the aesthetic and the ethical. Religious life is that to which we must aspire.

In *Sickness Unto Death* Kierkegaard shows that he believes ethics is important to society, but only an individual can approach God, and an individual can only approach God through

10 There was no page number available in this electronic copy.
faith. An individual is an authentic person who does not merely adopt the prevailing views of his or her community but is a reflective person who knows herself. Depression and unhappiness can affect a person, but despair affects the self. The self, for Kierkegaard, is human will. Human will combines different aspects of our mind, our actions, and our personality into a coherent whole. The highest and most important level of relation is not between the self and others, or the self and itself, but between the self and God. The relationship one has with God is personal and involves subjective truth. Subjective truths provide a paradigm through which to understand faith and an inner self that objective truths, like mathematical and scientific truths, cannot. Faith in God takes over when objective knowledge reaches its boundaries and faith in God brings hope.

The unhappy one is absent. But one is absent when living in the past or living in the future. … These are the hoping and remembering individuals. Inasmuch as they are only hoping or only remembering, these are indeed in a sense unhappy individuals, if otherwise it is only the person who is present to himself that is happy. However, one cannot strictly call an individual unhappy who is present in hope or in memory. For what one must note here is that he is still present to himself in one of these. From which we also see that a single blow, be it ever so heavy, cannot make a person the unhappiest. For one blow can either deprive him of hope, still leaving him present in memory, or of memory, leaving him present in hope (Kierkegaard 1843 [b] p. 121).

In Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits, Kierkegaard distinguishes between heavenly hope and earthly or temporal (timelighedens) hope (sks 8:214ff; ud 112ff). This distinction appears to coincide with the distinction between Christian hope and human or natural hope in for self-examination (sks 13:103f, 99; fse 82f, 77). If we are to use terminology from current theories of hope, Christian (heavenly) hope is a general hope only, whereas human (temporal) hope can refer to both general and specific hope. General hope may be seen as a general trust or confidence in the future, one that hinders despair and paralysis. Specific hopes, on the other hand, have particular events or things as its objects (e.g. submitting an article before deadline). (Fremstedal, 2012: 52)

Fremstedal explains (and I agree with his reading) that in Kierkegaard one’s hope evolves. It
begins in infancy and is experienced as prereflective hope. This hope “expects the good,” although the outcome is uncertain. The next stage of hope is an egoistic and pre-rational kind of hope that involves calculation and manipulation. It is in contrast to Christian hope. This hope is pre-moral and appears to correspond to the “finite reasonableness” [endelig Forstandighed] of the reflective aesthete. It takes the form of hoping for happiness or hoping for rewards. One realizes that what one hopes for will be difficult to attain, and realizing this hope requires thought and judgement. This kind of hope can be found in everyone, but must be given up because it ultimately leads to despair—hopelessness. At this stage the individual has made the fundamental decision that the spiritual good is impossible. Once in this situation one can be on the road to vice. It is only in authentic hope that one sees one’s whole life as a time of hope. To lack this understanding is to be in despair. Despair can be characterized as an unwillingness to hope in an authentic way. To have authentic hope is the primary task of the self.

Finally, one must evolve to place one’s hope in God. This authentic hope involves grace, mercy, bliss, and the forgiveness of sins. This virtuous hope must also involve repetition. Like Aristotle’s virtue, it must be practiced. “Although Kierkegaard hardly offers any argument as to why human hope cannot provide a basis for general hope, I believe that this central claim can be rationally reconstructed if we take the object of general hope to be the highest good, or, in other terminology, the kingdom of God” (Fremstedel 2012 p. 53). Hopelessness can result from a loss or hardship, not just from sin. Fremstedal writes that Kierkegaard gives no explicit reason why human hope cannot provide a basis for general hope. General hope involves goodness, virtue, and grace.

Not surprisingly, this Christian philosopher puts the rightful place of hope in the kingdom
of God or, more explicitly, in God. The following quote from Fremstedal (p. 54) makes the
dynamic of this hope clear:

Following Paul, Kierkegaard understands Christian hope as “hope
against hope.” Kierkegaard interprets this as hope in “the night of
hopelessness,” that is, hope when there is no human hope. Man must die
(afdø) to the world and lose all trust (tillid) or hope in human assistance
before there is the hope of Christian faith.\(^{18}\) Christian hope is presented
as a gift of the holy spirit. That is, when there is no hope from the pre-
Christian perspective, the holy spirit offers new hope. Rather than
involving miracles or wonders, Christian hope relies on divine grace, in
particular the forgiveness of sins. Presumably, the point is that
forgiveness makes possible not only salvation but also the realisation of
the kingdom of God.

Notice here that Fremstedal points out that God confers hope. This echoes Augustine’s hope.
Hope is an expectation for the possibility of the good, and it is not a mundane wish. A mundane
wish occurs when something has been lost, and the loss causes suffering, yet there is also
suffering for no apparent reason. The wish to be freed from suffering is temporal, but hope and
faith are related to the eternal through the will.

Kierkegaard clearly distinguishes between wish and hope in *Upbuilding Discourses in
Various Spirits*: “The wish is indeed the sufferer’s relation to a happier temporality (faith and
hope are the relation to the eternal through the will), and the wish is, as it were, the tender spot
where the suffering hurts, the tender spot that the suffering continually touches” (Kierkegaard
1993 p.99). Hope is joyful when turning away from worldly materialism and egoistic aspirations
in the choice to die in that way of being—the choice to be with God:

But if the matter of the wish is so sad, how joyful is the matter of
hope! There is a hope that is born and dies; a brief hope that is
forgotten tomorrow; a childish hope that the adult does not
recognise; a hope to which one dies; but then—in death in the
decision of death, there is born a hope that does not die at birth,
because it is born in death; through this hope, underneath the pain of the wish, in the decision the suffering one is with the good. (Ibid pp. 99-100)

Hope is pitiful if one does not fully, consciously, and committedly align one’s life in the practice of true faith:

He really goes further, and reaches faith; for all these caricatures of faith, the miserable lukewarm indolence which thinks, “there surely is no instant need, it is not worth while sorrowing before the time,” the pitiful hope which says, “one cannot know what is going to happen... It might possibly be after all”—these caricatures of faith are part and parcel of life’s wretchedness, and the infinite resignation has already consigned them to infinite contempt (Kierkegaard 1848 [b] p. 26).

Despite the fact that an individual exercises hope through will, and God can give hope, it does not derive from arbitrariness and favoritism of God choosing and infusing some people with hope. Christian hope is gained through prostration and prayer to God throughout one’s life and entire being.

Kierkegaard’s hope brought him deep suffering and a denial of corporeal pleasure, except perhaps a walk in the streets of Copenhagen—the streets in which he fell and died in hospital some forty days later, the hospital in which he refused communion from his parson who visited him daily.

When asked if he wanted it, he said, “yes, but not from a parson.” He was willing to die without communion rather than contradict himself, for he had said that the Lutheran Church had to be abandoned as long as God was being mocked in the churches. “The Parsons are royal functionaries, and royal functionaries are not related to Christianity.” This information
comes from pastor Boesen’s own notes which he kept of Kierkegaard’s final days (see Lowrie’s *A Short Life of Kierkegaard*, p. 253ff., Storm\(^\text{11}\)).

Hope, for the Christian Kierkegaard, was immutable. It did not bring feelings of comfort in any ordinary sense of the word, nor did it bring happiness—solace perhaps, in the trust of life in the hereafter, but it was a lonely hope. His sense that Christians did not truly examine their faith set him apart from his countrymen. A constant angst was written into the narrative of his life. It is interesting to note further that he thought of ordinary hope as a deception that masks despair. Self-deception is a coping strategy—a refusal, conscious or unconscious, to face the situation head on, to unmask the present or possible future pain. Once again we find the notion that hope “wards off” the unpleasant possibility of future pain. In this sense, somewhat akin to an activity undertaken by fear of one’s contingency with all its joys and insults, hope flies straight into the “arms” of God.

\(^{11}\) No pagination nor date on this website.
Albert Camus

In this section I will use two of Camus’ texts, *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger*, to depict his position regarding hope and the absurd man. I raise the question: Does Camus abandon his position on hope in *The Rebel*? We are on firm ground in *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger* in claiming that Camus rejected the usefulness of hope, but we are not on such firm ground in *The Rebel*.

Camus is often associated with existentialism, but he refused the term. In fact he attacked the thinking of Kierkegaard for giving up on reason altogether on the grounds that only metaphysical rationalism can provide valid knowledge.

This clear condemnation of existentialism on his part was often missed by commentators. In an effort to dispel what had become and still is a common misconception, Camus stated in an interview in 1945: “non, je ne suis pas existentialist.... Et le seul livre d’idées que j’ai publié: *Le Mythe De Sisyphe*, était dirigé contre les philosophes dits existentialists” (Raskin 2001).  

Camus was not as interested in working out the relevance or applicability of different philosophical positions as he was in discovering how people might live together while holding different philosophical positions. He never claimed that he was a philosopher. He explored if and how a person can live with full awareness of the absurd. Awareness of the absurd is awareness

12 No pagination in this on line journal.
that there is no meaning or purpose in life, nor need there be. Humans are no different than ants working in an anthill, following patterns, signals, and instructions. According to absurdism, there is a fundamental disharmony or conflict between man and the universe. Humans want order, meaning, and purpose in life, but the universe is indifferent and meaningless. Once a person realizes this, they can see the absurdity of life. In some respects Camus’ approach mirrored the Stoics’ approach to life. Sorabji (2014) tells us that a similar account of freedom was given by Epictetus in Epictetus, Discourses 4.1:

By making sure that your heart is set only on what is within your power, you can be freed from both inner tyrannies and outer, so that you are enslaved to nothing, not to house, farm, horses, clothes, furniture, family. As if writing for academics, he adds books, and, finally your own body. He gives his students a large number of exercises to rehearse setting their hearts only on what is so fully under the control of their will that no tyrant could take it away. They are to engage in the mental exercise of imagining a threatening outer tyrant. You can tell him that he cannot put you in chains, only your leg, since you have identified yourself only with a will (an inadequate rendering of prohairesis) that cannot be constrained. In other words you have created a self, and a self which is inviolable.

For angering Zeus, Sisyphus was condemned to roll a stone uphill for eternity. In Homer’s Odyssey book 11, Odysseus says:

And I saw Sisyphus at his endless task raising his prodigious stone with both his hands. With hands and feet he tried to roll it up to the top of the hill, but always, just before he could roll it over on to the other side, its weight would be too much for him, and the pitiless stone would come thundering down again on to the plain. Then he would begin trying to push it up hill again, and the sweat ran off him and the steam rose after him (Homer 1998 p.16).

From this myth Camus constructs his theory of the absurd in his essay The Myth of Sisyphus:
The fundamental subject of *The Myth of Sisyphus* is this: it is legitimate and necessary to wonder whether life has a meaning; therefore it is legitimate to meet the problem of suicide face to face. The answer, underlying and appearing through the paradoxes which cover it, is this: even if one does not believe in God, suicide is not legitimate (Camus 1955 p.3).

Camus is concerned with suicide in its literal form, however, his main concern is with what he terms “philosophical suicide.” Philosophical suicide is a way of shutting down our questioning minds. The most common way to commit suicide is to defer to a ready-made belief system like those provided by religion. The reason, he says, that we believe in God is that we long to know what life is about, but life responds with impassive silence. For example, most of us would like to believe that there is justice in life, that good people get rewarded and bad people get punished. Often the opposite is true. In fact, we must notice that there is randomness involved, and the indefiniteness of life creates insecurity. However, if we believe in a just God, we have a source of ultimate justice to look forward to even if life does not give us justice. The bonus of this position is that we do not have to experience the uncertainties and insecurities that life shows us. The cost is that we commit a kind of mental suicide by shutting down the part of ourselves that would keep us open to questioning life. We shut down the very part of us that would let life’s fundamental questions remain open and unanswered—much like life itself. Religion is only one way of shutting ourselves down. We can use science or culture to achieve the same effect.

Philosophical suicide is about stopping the process of questioning life. Because religion is the most common way of committing philosophical suicide, Camus thought that existentialism requires atheism.\(^\text{13}\)

\[^{13}\text{I am of the persuasion that it is sufficient to be an agnostic and still be an existentialist.}\]
A compelling alternative to philosophical suicide is to approach life honestly and to confront life’s uncertain nature. This awareness Camus calls “the absurd.” The absurd is not merely a fleeting awareness of life’s difficulties but is a fundamental part of our existence. Our particular experience of life’s difficulties is only an expression of the fundamentally absurd nature of life itself. The absurd plays out in many ways, but the most important dynamic lies in the tension between our natural yearning to know what life is about and life’s silent response. It is this tension that makes suicide, both literal and philosophical, such a powerful issue. It is possible to confront life’s absurdity without falling prey to philosophical or physical suicide. He calls the kind of person who can avoid these traps “the absurd man.” The absurd man lives “without appeal”—someone who unflinchingly recognizes the absurdity of life yet manages to keep life’s questions open and alive. By the unflinching recognition of the absurd nature of existence the absurd man avoids philosophical suicide.

Fully recognizing the absurdity of life also means remaining defiantly unaccepting of it. The absurd man is ever scornful of having been condemned to an unreasonable life. The element of scorn in the absurd man is exactly what keeps suicide from being a valid option. Suicide would be a way of going along with our absurd condemnation by confirming that life is so wretchedly absurd that suicide is our only option. If one is condemned to prison, for instance, the most defiant thing one can do is enjoy the experience. Enjoying the experience negates the condemnation. Camus says there is no fate that cannot be overcome by scorn.

On this point Camus and I disagree. One does not need scorn to overcome fate since scorn can be a destructive means of coping. A more fulfilling way to deal with life’s blows is to salvage what one can and move on, knowing full well and facing fully that to dust we shall
return—full stop. If we conceive Sisyphus as happy, does that not negate scorn. As a result, suicide is not a reasonable response to the absurd. Suicide is not an expression of the kind of defiant non-acceptance that is integral to becoming aware of the absurd. Human existence is also absurd because it is so repetitive and futile: get up, ride the streetcar to work, ride the streetcar home, etc. This existence is absurd because it gives us no real reason that our repetitive struggles will amount to anything. All of our great struggles will end in dust. Camus finds that in terms of the repetitive and futile nature of our existence, our condemnation to the life of the absurd is a lot like that of the mythical life of Sisyphus. Sisyphus did not have hope for redemption, nor hope for escape, but scorn alone:

Sisyphus, proletarian of the Gods, powerless and rebellious, knows the whole extent of his wretched condition: it is what he thinks of during his descent. The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory. There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn (Camus, 1955 p.77).

Although many of us lead similar lives, Camus says we are neither tragic nor heroic because we are unaware that our tasks are hopeless, that life itself is absurd. To realize that, and to rise above it, is the true victory. “The struggle towards the summits is enough in itself to fill a man’s heart. We must conceive Sisyphus as happy” (Ibid p.77). Camus says that we can take the absurd as either the starting point or the conclusion of our deliberation. One must distinguish whether we are talking about the feeling or the concept. He addresses the thought of existentialist thinkers like Kierkegaard, Jaspers, and a few others. He sees them as making an advance in thought and attitudes, yet he believes they went astray because they engaged the absurd but did not follow through on the consequences of living the absurd life. The things that one believes in become
shorter lived when honestly contemplated. This insight is one of Camus’ profound contributions to understanding belief.

Living is never easy. Camus writes that it is that return, that pause, of Sisyphus that interested him. This is the moment of consciousness. It is not the tormented self but the consciousness of it that intrigued Camus. He argues that Sisyphus’ consciousness of his own pointless fate is what makes the myth tragic, yet contrary to what we might expect, Camus states that his awareness crowns his victory. Sisyphus exemplifies the absurd hero trapped within fate and a meaningless world yet somehow able to overcome it. When he leaves the heights and travels toward the base of the hill again he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock. Consciousness overcomes fate, takes hold of it and creates individual meaning. Furthermore, if there is no larger meaning in life (such as God or life after death) then in living it we can create our fate. The trials of Sisyphus are relevant to each of us. Melancholy rises in our hearts. We struggle with our rock, yet whatever happens our fate is completely up to us: “one always finds one’s burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the Gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well” (Ibid p.77).

The concept of the absurd and the role that hope might play in life is found in both *The Stranger* and in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Meursault recognized the futility of hope, in fact, the ill-advisability of having hope because it distracts him from paying attention to his current reality. Similarly, in *The Myth of Sisyphus* we find:

> But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity (Camus, translation by O’Brian, p. 3, 1955).
The absurd is, in part, the human being who is rational and expects things to be rational. This person is also motivated by a nostalgia for rationality—for making sense and for things working out the way they ought to.

In *The Stranger* (1946) the protagonist, solipsistic Meursault, awaits his execution. Meursault is an example of the absurd man. Does *The Stranger* advance the same idea of the absurd found in *The Myth of Sisyphus*? If one looks at the characters, there is a qualified yes. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus says that philosophy, art, life, and literature flow together in a way to compel one to see the importance of taking a stand in life. It is tempting to read Meursault as every man, but part of the point in *The Myth of Sisyphus* is that there is no every man. When a person comes to grips with the absurd, one recognizes that there can be no every man. Meursault lacks conviction in his life and seems to be entirely superficial, at best non-committed to anyone including himself. One might feel that Meursault is a sociopath, that is, a person with extreme antisocial attitudes and behavior lacking conscience. He certainly might impress one as a man who is asocial, that is, one who lacks an inclination to engage in social interaction and or has a pronounced preference for solitary activities. Asocial people are frequently judged harshly in our society and without doubt that judgement had a direct impact on Meursault’s life. An absurd man, simply put, is a man who recognizes the absurdity of life. This recognition flies directly in the face of the religious simply by saying there is no God, there is no meaning in life, so just get on with it. Make the best of the climb.

We follow Meursault through two sections of the book and we recognize that the main thing that binds the sections together is the absurd. Briefly, Meursault works in an office and his
mother has just died. The people who really matter to her are “accidental friendships.” It is hard to tell what values Meursault actually has because he epitomizes an absurd man’s life. Meursault tells us a little about his mother, but he does not show us that he is connected to her in any deep way. We see her as a person only at the very end:

Almost for the first time in many months I thought of my mother. And now, it seemed to me, I understood why at her life’s end she had taken on a “fiancé”; why she’d played at making a fresh start. There, too, in that home where lives were flickering out, the dusk came as a mournful solace. With death so near, mother must have felt like someone on the brink of freedom, ready to start life all over again. No one, no one in the world had any right to weep for her. And I, too, felt ready to start life all over again. It was as if that great rush of anger had washed me clean, emptied me of hope, and, gazing up at the dark sky spangled with its signs and stars, for the first time, the first, I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe (Ibid p. 74-75).

*The Stranger* might seem to depict a life that is a sequence of events that have no connection to each other. However, the kind of life that Meursault leads does not necessarily lead to what happens on the beach with his shooting of “the Arab,” but it does lead Meursault into it. Killing the Arab gets Meursault into the great cogs of the French justice machine. Once there, like in all justice systems, the wheels turn and sometimes in a confounding way. “They had learned that my mother died recently in a home. Inquiries had been conducted at Marengo and the police informed that I’d shown ‘great callousness’ at my mother’s funeral” (Camus, 1942 p. 41).

The Judge then launched into an account of what I’d done. His first question was: Why had I sent my mother to an institution? I replied that the reason was simple; I hadn’t enough money to see that she was properly looked after at home. Then he asked if the parting hadn’t caused me distress. I explained that neither Mother nor I expected much of one another—or, for that matter, of anybody else; so both of us had got used to the new conditions easily enough. The Judge then said that he had no wish to press the point, and asked the Prosecutor if he could think of any more questions that should be put to me at this stage (Ibid p. 55).
Nonetheless things happen the way they do with a kind of regularity. With his refusal to submit, Meursault’s life flows into a complex mechanism of laws, appearances, and judgement. *The Stranger* provides for us the trajectory of a man’s life—a man who gradually came to realize his investment in his own life, the people around him, and the world. His life does not make sense to him, but there is an important element of personal experience. There really is no one absurd man, yet Meursault provides an example of the personification of Camus’ absurd: the absurd is the bond between a human being and the world. It is the interface between the indifference of the world and human enterprise.

Simultaneously the world is irrational, even the world of other human beings who want things to be rational. Meursault’s life signifies that. He is repeatedly invited to fit into another’s scheme, to fit into somebody’s understanding of how things work, all of which he rejects. It is essential to understand the disjunction between the man and the world in the absurd. Man, the world, and the connection between them are realized in the absurd man. Meursault fits Camus’ ethical construct to the degree that he lives without hope in the very end. He is neither negative nor positive. He barely commits himself to anything. Where he might not necessarily fit as an example of the embodiment of the absurd is the fact that he lives an isolated life amid the lives of other people, yet there is no reason for an absurd man to live that way. In fact, there is no reason for a person living in full awareness of the absurd to live one way or another. It is awareness, not an ethics.

Meursault views and describes much of what has occurred around him from a detached position, and his arc takes one through the necessary steps for the acceptance of the absurd. He is
a nihilist who inhabits an absurd universe. His emotional indifference to others, even to his mother and his lover, is ultimately the reason for his death sentence. After he has killed a man, “the Arab,” for no apparent reason, he is put on trial. The focus of Meursault’s murder trial quickly shifts from the murder itself to Meursault’s attitudes and beliefs. During the trial there is very little attention paid to Meursault's actual crime. Instead his entire fate rests on society’s (and authority’s) perception of his character. The judge takes offense to Meursault’s rejection of Christianity. His atheism and his lack of outward grief at his mother’s funeral represent to the judge a serious challenge to the morals of the society in which they live. Consequently, the judge and society label him an outsider. During his imprisonment, Meursault comes to terms with his death and comes to his personal understanding of hope. He comes to believe that hope only tortured him because it created the illusion that he could change the fact of his death. The hope he felt at the idea of having another twenty years of life prevents him from making the most of his final days or hours. Meursault came to believe that hope disturbed his calm and understanding, and inhibited his ability to fully come to grips with his situation. All he might hope for is an expedient death, but why bother?

*The Myth of Sisyphus* addresses the need for individual rebellion against absurdity. In *The Rebel*, revolt moves beyond the individual and fights against the world’s injustice. It may be that the movement from an individual confronting absurdity to the individual’s social belonging was Camus’ attempt to answer new historical questions that arose after two world wars. It is worth trying to see if Camus’ position on hope, that is, that hope is pointless, is sustained in *The Rebel*. It seems he has had a change of heart. On the face of it, it seems that Camus espouses hope in this work, specifically a “hope for a new creation.” This hope for a new creation is in order to
resist murder and oppression that are the outcomes of revolution. Camus explores whether capital murder, either institutionalized or individualized, can be justified in any way. He explores both the value of the individual and the effect that moderation and excess have on the intentions and actions of rebellion, and finally, the relationship between rebellion and art.

In part 1 of *The Rebel* Camus gives us a brief definition of rebellion. He starts his complex examination of different kinds of rebellion by looking at the relationship between rebellion, history, and murder. In the second section, “metaphysical rebellion,” he once again uses elements of Greek mythology; he also uses Roman history and the Bible in his examination of the history and spirit of rebellion. Next he turns to Nietzsche and Hegel, in order to develop an understanding of rebellion’s relation to nihilism and modern belief systems. The section titled “Historical Rebellion” presents Camus’ exploration of archetypal manifestations of rebellion within the context of the French Revolution. He examines incidents and individuals within the context of his theory, exploring ways in which the origins of events became corrupt. This leads him to a consideration of the communist revolution, and during this conversation he suggests that this revolution constitutes the embodiment of various forms of terrorism in order to guarantee the continuation of its political self-interest. At this juncture Camus makes it clear that rebellion derives from the rational and revolution from the irrational.

In “Rebellion and Art,” Camus compares rebellion with the act of artistic creation, claiming both arise from essentially the same psychological space of desiring to realize or understand the value of individual human existence. In “Hope at the Meridian,” we learn that we must continue to recognize the importance of the rebel. Renouncing rebellion leads to a conformist society where justice takes the form of a police state. In this state the rebel is now
seen as a tyrant, someone we should see with repulsion instead of seeing that the rebel makes us realize that we could be wrong. The rebel creates value whereas the rest of society is living off of the values they inherited from previous upheavals of the status quo. To get us to this understanding, Camus sets his writings in the mid-twentieth century, after two world wars have damaged the world’s collective psyche and driven parts of it (specifically the Soviet Union, with which he is largely concerned) into profound social, political, and spiritual instability. Rather than write about abstract ideas or decontextualize murder, he considers whether murder is ever justified, by examining the subject in both philosophical and historical terms. The conclusion of The Rebel gives us an expression of hope that through moderation, in both the individual and society, the pure and altruistic spirit of rebellion will take its proper place as a key aspect of humanity’s odyssey in its search to improve itself. Despite this hope, Camus urges us to rebel for the present, not for the future and certainly not for history. His position on hope, therefore, remains unchanged. The rebel confronts his or her reality head on.

Jayne M. Waterworth

In 2003 Jayne M. Waterworth published A Philosophical Analysis of Hope, to which we now turn. The following is not intended to be a review of her book but is intended to illustrate that hope need not be understood as a feeling or a virtue and that the opposite of hope is not hopelessness and is not a “bad thing.” Most authors, including Waterworth (2004), contrast hope and despair in order to come to a clearer articulation of what hope is. Earlier in this thesis it was shown that the opposite of hope is not despair and one need not feel despair in the absence of
hope. However, this notion is so embedded in Western vernacular that Waterworth is worth considering given her insightful work on hope. Waterworth raises Wittgenstein’s question and subsequently constructs a cogent and compelling argument that animals do not hope. “A dog believes his master is at the door. But can he also believe his master will come the day after tomorrow?—and what can he not do here?—how do I do it?—how am I supposed to answer this?” (Waterworth, 2004 p. 5) She proceeds by suggesting that Wittgenstein is asking us to consider what it is that we do when we hope. She concludes that it is dubious at best that dogs hope, although she acknowledges that dogs have feelings:

> Hope has a kind of complexity which makes it not best rendered as an emotion in the sense that fear and anger are still classified. There are feelings, like nausea, for example, where there is no belief or thought involved, and fear is more like nausea than is hope. Despite its element of desire hope is a highly cognitive phenomenon (Ibid p. 8).

Waterworth makes a distinction between expectation and desire. One cannot hope without desire; desire is partly constitutive of hope. Expectation is also constitutive of hope, but the expectation in hope is anticipation. The Oxford English Dictionary states that the etymological root of anticipation lies in the idea of “seizing or taking possession beforehand,” thus the root carries the connotation of activity. Anticipation may involve either negative or positive feelings. It is an “estimative reckoning” (Ibid p. 10).

In one instance Waterworth categorically locates hope within the person. “When one hopes there is no doubt that one hopes” (Ibid p. 10). She goes on to say that fear is not the opposite of hope and she distinguishes hope from expectation. The distinction, she says, can be made that expecting x is more value-neutral than hoping for x. Expecting something to happen in
no way implies that one is invested in the outcome. Because one expects the Ottawa Red Blacks to win the Grey Cup in no way means one hopes they will. One may simply not care. One who hopes they win the Grey Cup cares if they win.

Waterworth claims that there are three components of hope: anticipation, desire, and uncertainty.\textsuperscript{14} Hope cannot be subsumed under expectation because I can expect many things to happen, e.g., I expect the aging process will cause me loss of hearing and diminished eyesight, but I do not hope for this. Further, Waterworth contends, expectation has as its etymological foundation “looking out for,” and this, she says, suggests a passivity and a connection between expectation and certainty. There is no such certainty in hope. Summarizing the distinction between hope, expectation, and anticipation Waterworth says:

> When one hopes for an objective, its arrival is actively sought for and prepared for prior to its coming. Although in some particular contexts expectation may on occasion signify a lively expectation, that which one anticipates always signifies an active orientation towards the objective in question (Ibid p.14).

The statement above makes the claim that hope results in an active preparation for the sought-after outcome. She makes the following points: 1) Expectation differs from anticipation because sometimes in expectation there may occasion lively expectation; 2) But that which one anticipates always signifies an active orientation towards the objective in question.

Unlike anticipation, hope does not necessarily result in active preparation for the sought-after outcome. There are many examples where preparation for an outcome is impossible. One can hope that one’s beloved Labrador retriever will not succumb to congestive heart failure, but

\textsuperscript{14} Notice that the idea that the desired outcome is thought to be possible is left out here. She seems at least in this instance to leave out what she sometimes considered to be an essential component of hope: thought.
there is no way that a person can prepare to thwart the onset of congestive heart failure even
though one exercises her daily, provides good nourishment, and so on. A person can hope for a
long, healthy life for his or her dog, but he or she cannot prepare for the kind of end the dog will
have. The owner can prepare to intercede to shorten any suffering the dog may have resulting
from congestive heart failure and choose to euthanize her. The dog would die then, not from
heart failure but because of the lethal injection.

Later in her discussion of hope Waterworth says that hope expresses a relation of care
and concern.

While I would agree that while states of affairs in the past may spur new
hope for the future, I take the view, as indicated in chapter 1, that one
cannot hope for an objective in the past in so far as the relevant past
circumstance remains unknown. Hence, waiting for news of accident
victims I may hope a loved one emerges relatively unscathed or that
casualties will be low all around. Once confirmed news arrives, my hope
is fulfilled or dashed. One may also hold to hope where it is expected
that outcomes may (or even will) be unknown—there may be neither
survivors nor indicators of how people died, and it made me hope, for
example, that the death of those involved was quick and painless. In
these cases, hope expresses a relation of care and concern rather than its
being a stimulus to action (Ibid p.34).

Note here that, perhaps unwittingly, Waterworth shows that hope can be related to something
that occurred in the past. A person can hope there was no suffering. It seems that if a person
hopes there was no suffering, they hold that hope because hope would ward off feelings of
sadness in the hoper. Hope is relational. It connects the person in the present to an event either in
the future or in the past. Another grizzly example comes to mind. There is a rumor that Descartes
nailed his wife’s dog’s feet to a board and used vivisection to prove it had no soul. This rumor
has never been verified. It is reasonable to hope that the claim is untrue for many reasons,
including revulsion at the purported act, the loss of any respect one might hold for Descartes, etc.

A person might hope that what is rumored to have happened in the past did not happen—for the dog’s sake, for Descartes’ sake, for his wife’s sake, and for the hoper’s sake.

Since Waterworth claims there needs to be a distinction between hope, expectation, and anticipation, one way to approach this is to consider the affective state that is either a precursor or result of the cognitive state of hope. To begin with, as earlier noted, hope is not merely an expectation, nor is hope anticipation because hope allows for positive feelings where anticipation can be affectively neutral, affectively positive, or affectively negative. When considering anticipation we need not accept that what one anticipates always signifies an active orientation towards the objective in question. A person can anticipate a thunderstorm tomorrow based on the weather forecast today. He or she can sit in an armchair passively accepting the forecast and indifferently anticipate tomorrow’s thunderstorm. He or she may, however, develop an active orientation toward what he or she anticipates if they have a daughter swimming across Lake Ontario and the severity of the forecasted thunderstorm would mean a halt to her crossing.

Anticipation, unlike hope, need not involve personal investment. Personal investments involve strategies, and these involve means of approaching, advancing, or protecting a person or thing. If a person has a coping strategy, that strategy provides the means by which a person approaches, advances, and protects him- or herself. If we suppose that a coping strategy or ego defense is a “human doing” then Waterworth’s position that hope is unlike feeling would support this thesis, as would Taylor:

Coping strategies refer to the specific efforts, both behavioral and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events. Two general coping strategies have been distinguished: problem-solving strategies are efforts to do something
active to alleviate stressful circumstances, whereas emotion-focused coping strategies involve efforts to regulate the emotional consequences of stressful or potentially stressful events (Taylor, 1998). Thus, defense mechanisms or coping strategies are one way of looking at how people distance themselves from a full awareness of unpleasant thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Defense mechanisms can be unconscious, although one can be conscious of using them to save face—intellectualization, for instance.

Waterworth claims that acting with hope concerns not only what objectives are set but also how one approaches those objectives. She also maintains that the objectives of hope reflect the character and temperament of the hoper. Coping strategies are personal and the choice of strategy reflects the temperament of the hoper, whether consciously or unconsciously. Since coping strategies are often unconscious we might not realize we are engaging them or are engaged by them other than the objective of feeling relief from a current discomfort. Importantly this “objective” might be entirely unconscious. Therefore, even though Taylor says that emotion-focused strategies involve efforts to regulate the emotional consequences, we need not assume that the effort is conscious. Nor do we need to agree with Waterworth that we “set objectives” when we hope. To set an objective is to set a course of action through which a person may obtain their desired outcome. A woman may fervently hope that a thunderstorm does not impede her daughter’s progress across Lake Ontario while in no way requiring her to set an objective. The objective of hoping for her daughter’s success is her strategy to relieve the angst arising from the

15 No pagination in on line document.
possible fact that her daughter will fail to achieve her goal. This is not “set.” It is an unconscious desire to relieve discomfort.

Waterworth claims that hope is a stance and despair is a response that one may adopt. This is an important point because the next section argues that there is no reason to adopt hope even though having hope seems to suggest more positive outcomes in medical research. For now, suffice it to note that Waterworth understands hope as sometimes volitional. She writes:

Hope is not willed, nor is it an urge or sensation. Neither is hope compelled by particular situations. This applies equally to despair. Adopting hope or despair is not an active ‘doing’ (though its having been done may be expressed in action.) However, one may be considered partly responsible for becoming the kind of person who is likely to hope or to despair in situ (Ibid p.16).

Our positions are thus similar because a coping strategy is not willed, nor is it an urge. One can with maturity choose one coping strategy over another and be considered partly responsible for one’s choice and subsequent behaviour.

Waterworth argues that one may place hope in a doctor or in another human being, but, as I have said, hope is not a marble to be placed in a kind of pocket. Rather we may place trust in our physician’s ability. I may hope you are successful in your charitable fundraising. She says:

Take, for example, a fugitive who places his hope in his brother. The brother then has hope for his fugitive brother, and may be the fugitive’s only hope for money or a safe hiding place. However the brother may or may not respond to the needs of his fugitive brother (Ibid p. 18).

16 I suggest hope is sometimes volitional because although we find ourselves hoping for an outcome we can choose not to hope.
The fugitive does not place his hope in his brother. He hopes to be spared. He places trust or confidence in his brother in his hope that the bond between them is strong enough that his sibling will respond since he has the means to provide money or safe haven.

It is reasonable to accept Waterworth’s claim that hope can range from determinate (short term: I hope to win the race) to indeterminate (long term: I hope to be a good parent). Indeterminate hope has a more tenuous relation to conditions in the present. She claims further that in hope we respond actively to achieve the desired outcome. This may not be the case. One might actively respond in such a way as to promote one’s desired outcome, but this need not be the case. For instance, a person can hope that the ship is not lost at sea and have absolutely no agency in whether or not this is the case. One might summon naval resources to save the ship in question, but one might not have the ability to do so and thus would be unable to act to gain the desired outcome.

Waterworth repeatedly asserts that hope involves striving, yet as I have pointed out this is not necessarily the case. What striving is involved in hoping a ship is not lost at sea? When she says one achieves one’s goals through striving she continues to assume that one can always act in ways to favour our chosen outcome, and she says that despair is in action: “hope and despair are mirror images of each other; hope is to striving what despair is to non-striving” (Ibid p. 26). The fact that hope need not involve action has been made clear in the ship example above.

While her distinctions are interesting and often insightful, it would have been helpful if she had emphasized that despair is not the opposite of hope, as I will argue. I shall maintain that hopelessness is the opposite of hope, and like indifference, it need not have any connotation of
either pleasant or unpleasant feelings. Waterworth implies that to be hopeless need not mean to be in despair, nor need it imply the provocation of unhappy feelings:

If a situation is judged to be hopeless, then what is conveyed in that judgement is a belief that there is nothing which may be done to remedy or improve the situation. … To be judged hopeless by another is to be assessed as having less than a minimal competence in some (relevant) respect (Ibid p. 51).

She makes clear that pointless and hopeless are not synonymous. Most importantly for this discussion, she distinguishes between the mood or feeling of hopelessness and hopelessness itself.

Hopelessness is the obverse of hopefulness. Being hopeful is, to stretch a metaphor, rather like a piece of elastic. When the tension of the elastic holds and it is comfortably in place, everything within its bounds is supported and the elastic goes unnoticed. When it loses its elasticity, its absence is felt as everything it previously supported sags or droops. Neither hopefulness nor hope has any specific feeling typifying its occurrence or presence, but hopefulness has a distinctive kind of deflating or deflated feel when it occurs like a lack of buoyancy (Ibid p. 53).

Even though Sir Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote: “Over live it—lower yet—be happy! Wherefore should I care, I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair” (Tennyson 1842\textsuperscript{17}).

Despair often leads tragically to suicidal ideation and the action of committing suicide. Despairing does not necessarily involve inaction. “Jack” John Peerless Fleming, an aircraft pilot, survived a Japanese prisoner of war camp in World War II. He most certainly was in despair

\textsuperscript{17} No pagination on this online document.
when he saw his childhood friend flayed alive for what the Japanese said was insubordination. He was not inactive after seeing this—on the contrary. He designed and built a radio that he and his fellow prisoners hid in the fire pit. It was operated in the Japanese Prisoner of War Camp Kuching, Sarawak, Borneo, from September 1942 to August 1945. The news they heard—using the radio—of the allied victories gave the men genuine hope for freedom (Fleming 1981).

“These news broadcasts let everyone in the camp know the progress of the war and contributed immeasurably to the mental well-being and morale of all the prisoners of war” (Ibid p. 275).

Furthermore, he actively made sure that his deportment in no way drew attention to himself nor demonstrated anything but respect for his captors. He hoped to live, despite his despair. There is no question at all of the despair the men felt in that camp, nor is their question of their hope in their despair. The terms are not mutually exclusive. One can be in anguish (despair) and not know it. People can be so deep in despair that they have no feeling whatsoever. Finally, if one follows Kierkegaard, the fervent practice of one’s homage to God is because of despair, and this is a long way from inaction.

In Waterworth’s discussion of objectives and objects she says that the hoper stands in a particular relation to a state of affairs of the world, and it minimally involves anticipation of a goal which is achieved through striving (Ibid p.26). This position seems self-evident on the face of it, however, in thinking about it further hope does not entail goals necessarily. The fact that one stands in relation to one’s desired outcome does not mean that the outcome is a goal. As earlier discussed, a person can hope that a ship survives the storm, but that is not my “goal.” Hope can have a goal, however. A person can hope to win the pie contest at the local fair, and so
my goal is to make the best pie with the flakiest crust and the most flavourful filling to achieve the goal of winning.

In chapter two of her work Waterworth examines “phenomena in the neighbourhood of hope.” She argues that hope is not best thought of as an emotion. While memory and imagination are necessary conditions for hope, they are considered to be faculties whereas hope is not. She proposes that hope be viewed as a “primitive phenomenon,” in a class of its own. It is plausible to regard hope as a primitive phenomenon in some sense, but it need not be in a class of its own. Defense mechanisms or coping strategies are primitive phenomena. One defense mechanism is intellectualization. Intellectualization allows one to bracket one’s feelings and look at all possibilities through reason, of intervention that may change a negative outcome. For instance, a person who has just been given a terminal medical diagnosis, instead of expressing their sadness and grief, focuses instead on the details of all possible medical procedures. Hope is like this. Hope might well be considered as one of the primitive phenomena we call defense mechanisms or coping strategies.

Waterworth notes that hope has been regarded through the ages as either a virtue, a passion, or an emotion, and she further notes that hope is contrasted with both despair and fear. She deals directly with Spinoza, Descartes, and Hume to consider their treatments of hope and affiliated emotions. She points to the fact that Descartes sees hope as changing its nature to become confidence, and Hume construes opposite emotions as mixing to produce other emotions. Both philosophers get it wrong, she argues. Hope lacks what it takes to be an emotion, which she defines as “cluster concepts having a set of criteria such that a ‘sufficient number’ of them must be present for the concept to be applicable, though no one of them is necessary or
sufficient (Waterworth p. 41). Neither desire nor hope has characteristic sensations or physical symptoms like feeling one way or another. When one thinks of orchestrated hope, one can, she says, behave in certain ways to enhance the likelihood of the desired outcome being realized. Hope’s constitutive desire and its anticipation, however, can be present when there is no direct action to be taken. Waterworth asks us to remember that what is hoped for is seized by the mind before it is actualized in the world.

It may not be that what we hope for may be seized by the mind. It may never be actualized in the world and it may have been actualized in rare situations in the past, as in we hope that those killed in a plane crash did not suffer or feel the crash coming and that Descartes did not torture animals.
Chapter Five: Sorting Out Hope

Before moving forward let us briefly review where we have been. We saw that the ancients understood that hope was a goddess who could ward off biting sorrow. Through Aristotle we learned that hope paved the way for courage and that one could be said to have a hopeful disposition. St. Augustine and Kierkegaard implored us to place hope in God, asserting that only in the heavenly kingdom could we find happiness. For them, hope was in God and God was hope. Faith, hope, and charity were virtues in the Christian’s scheme and hope was God-given. Kant’s hope was more like a faith, and Camus warned us that hope is a delusion which prevents us from facing the absurd (life) head on, in order to fully engage in the present.

In the following sections our attention turns to modern hope and its relation to the religious: is hope only God-given or correctly understood as only in God? The locus of hope, I argue, is in us, individually, and not in any other entity. Having established that hope is in us, it will be shown that we need not believe either that God confers hope or that hope is a virtue. One can hold the Christian belief in hope, but my argument is that it is not necessary to hold this belief, nor is it a sufficient or necessary position from which to understand hope philosophically. Whether hope is a feeling or a passion is explored with the resulting conclusion that there are other ways to understand hope. Although hope is often spoken of as a desire, a distinction between the two is provided as well as a distinction between hope and optimism. It is further argued that the opposite of hope is not despair. The final line of questioning pursues whether one ought to hope or if one might be well advised to recognize hope as a coping strategy and consciously choose whether or not to engage in hope.
**Hope Is Not a God or Goddess**

Gods and goddesses come and go; their strength and popularity wax and wane. We need not be historians or theologians to recognize that hope has been personified as gods and goddesses cross-culturally and through human epochs. For example, as noted above, Elpis was the Greek goddess of hope who brought comfort to the suffering. Hlin was the Norse goddess of protection and consolation. She was believed to bring comfort, consolation, and solace to mourners, soothing the pain and weight of their grief. The Roman goddess of hope, Spes, was represented as a girl bearing flowers or grain, as was Elpis. Hanuman, the Indian monkey god, provided courage, hope, knowledge, and devotion. Even though many cultures over time have personified hope as a god or goddess, not all cultures have.

In the Christian bible we find the God of hope: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the holy spirit.”\(^ {18}\) Earlier we touched upon Christian hope from medieval to modern times. The philosophers discussed are representative of people who hold Christian belief systems and they played, and continue to play, an important part in the lives of believers. Christian believers know—in the Kierkegaardian sense—that their hope is solid because it is grounded in the word of God, and they know that “God cannot lie.”\(^ {19}\) “God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set

\(^ {18}\) Romans Chapter XV verse 13 New International Bible.

\(^ {19}\) (Hebrews 6:18).
before us may be greatly encouraged.”

“God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”

It is a hope that is “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” It is a hope that cannot be moved by circumstances or what the eyes see because an unseen God is known in his faithfulness.

What if one does not believe in the Christian God? We create or hold beliefs to ground our understanding of the world around us. Once we believed the earth to be flat, but that did not make it so. In the creation myths of some east-coast Indigenous people, for example the Iroquois and Lenape, the great spirit created their homeland by placing earth on the back of a giant turtle—it was turtles all the way down. That does not make it so. We can go pointing to beliefs and belief systems to which we cannot, or choose not, to adhere. Some belief systems—Hindus, Buddhists, Celts—did not or do not have a god or goddess for hope. Nor in the rich panoply of Egyptian gods is there a god of hope. This complex hierarchal culture apparently saw no reason to recognize, worship, or defer to a god of hope, yet they prayed to a myriad gods. Since that is the case, and since humans who worshipped in those faiths undoubtedly had deep hope for their loved ones’ safety or relief of pain, we must concede that hope must be neither god nor goddess, nor is it conferred by God. If our hope is not in God, where might hope be?

The Locus of Hope

20 Numbers 23:19.
21 New International Bible.
22 Hebrews 11:1.
The locus of hope is in us, individually. Collectively we may hope for the same thing, but hope remains in each hoper. Although Christian tradition places hope in God, it is not imperative that we follow this tradition nor adhere to its beliefs or practices. Many of us need not agree with, “But now, lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you.”\textsuperscript{23} I would never claim that a person who hopes for world peace need think that they are obliged to “place their hope” in any God. Their hope for world peace is in them.

I am arguing that morality, understood as a system of reciprocal claim making, in which everyone is accountable to everyone else, does not need its authority underwritten by some higher, external authority. It is underwritten by the authority we all have to make claims on one another. Far from bolstering the authority of morality, appeals to divine authority can undermine it (Anthony, 2007 p. 229).

Just as some faithful Christians believe that they place hope in God, some sports fans say they place hope in an athlete and some parents think that they place hope in their children, but do they? Hope is not a marble that one can put in the pocket of our athletes or children. When we place hope in an athlete we are hoping that our chosen athlete will perform well and in so doing make us feel better—make us the winner too. We hope \textit{for} them (and us), not \textit{in} them. Hope \textit{is in} us. Taken another way, we might say we place hope in an athlete because we assess they are the best in their field. We trust their ability. We hope our assessment of them is correct. Hope is in the individual hoping. Third, we might say that we place hope in an athlete that they will, despite an injury, have enough common sense to rest from their pursuit of dominance in their field if they are placing themselves in danger of further injury. We hope that the athlete has common

\textsuperscript{23} Psalm 39:7.
sense and good judgment. It is we, individually, who are hoping.

Placing hope in our children shares the same dynamic as it does when it is claimed that we place our hope in an athlete. It is the parent who hopes. However, if a parent hopes that their child does well, lives a creative, healthy, moral, compassionate, independent life, the parent has the responsibility to make that possible, to their best ability, by providing a nurturing, loving, supportive, and learning environment. The parent hopes, and this hope implies the need for right action. If a parent is in a concentration camp and is deprived of any means to support the attainment of the life for their child then sadly it becomes a wish. Like wishes, the locus of hope is in individuals. Individuals hope and they simply cannot attribute their hope to anything or anyone else.

We have thus far established that hope is not a god or goddess, that non-sectarians or members of some faiths do not place hope in divinities. We must conclude then that God does not “confer” hope. There are non-sectarians and members of different faiths who hope fervently, similarly some religious leaders teach that faith has nothing to do with veracity. Zen Buddhists teach that the strength of their faith and conviction has nothing to do with whether a belief is true or not. The “truth” of our faith is in us only, nowhere else. Thus, whether one believes gods confer hope has nothing to do with whether that is true. Since belief has nothing to do with truth in our day-to-day existence, there is no sufficient reason to believe gods confer hope or to believe in any god or goddess for that matter. Thus it seems hope is not god-dependent. As I earlier mentioned, the argument that hope is a virtue fails on the same grounds.
Hope Is Not a Feeling

In the same way the irascible faculty is so denominated from anger [ira]; though at the same time there are several other passions in it, as hope, daring, and the rest (Aquinas 194724).

And there may be an intermediate state, in which a person is balanced between pleasure and pain; in his body there is want which is a cause of pain, but in his mind a sure hope of replenishment, which is pleasant (but if the hope be converted into despair, he has two pains and not a balance of pain and pleasure25) (Plato 1999, p. 35).

In the company of Plato, St. Thomas Aquinas, Spinoza, Rousseau, and Hume, Kierkegaard regarded hope as a passion and/or a feeling. As suggested, there may be another way to think of hope. Let us consider the following definition of emotion. Emotion is an animal's expression of an organic synthesis and may involve intermittent expression of one sort of feeling or another—obtained through its individual biochemistry—of interconnected mind-bodily processes whose structure is partly shaped by the culture in which the animal was raised, and to a limited extent the culture in which the animal is currently living. Feelings can be considered a subset of emotions. Noted above is the claim that animals other than humans express feelings and have emotions. There seems to be no ground to suggest that animals can or do hope. We often recognize what a person is feeling by facial expression or physical gesture. How could we recognize a person as having a feeling of hopefulness? Courage and positive feelings are not the same feelings, but both can derive from hope. Thus hope is not a feeling but its precursor. Feelings are the result of conscious or unconscious stimuli experienced by an animal. Feelings

24 No pagination on this on line publication.
25 Notice here that Plato says hope is converted into despair. Not that despair is the opposite of hope. Aristotle would have hope converted into courage.
sometimes—though not always—result in affective behaviour that we can witness. I could have the underlying feeling of apprehension that is expressed in the affect of fear and the consequent behaviours of fight or flight. Hope, then, like feelings, may result in some behaviour or other. We have seen throughout this thesis that whether hope is regarded as a virtue or a feeling, it gives rise to a feeling of tenuous optimism and/or attenuated fear.

If we go back to Elpis, Elpis lessened the feeling of pain in the present (whether bodily pain or pain arising from painful thought). The pain was ameliorated by the positive thought of a better situation to come. She also was the comforter in danger. Hope caused particular feelings to arise in the subject. In common parlance, if we have hope then that hope helps one look forward optimistically. Having the thought of some future positive outcome makes one feel better. Hope paves the way to having one feeling or another. Sorabji advises that the Stoics believed that “the appearances may first produce an initial shock, a ‘pre-passion’ or ‘first movement’, before they lead on to assent or judgement, which is said to be the real emotion.” The same can hold in our understanding of hope: appearances produce an initial reaction before they lead to assent or judgment. Once an outcome is judged possible then hope results in having optimistic or positive feelings.

It seems clear that hope is not a feeling for two reasons: it is antecedent to the tenuously pleasant feeling of achieving a desired outcome, and while it resonates with an emotion-based model it is insufficient to claim that hope itself is a feeling. Hope requires thought—thought that the hoped for is possible, even if only remotely. Wishes do not require thought. Hope can be distinguished from a desire because, as Hume remarked (Brennan 2005, p.5), there is no way for reason to offer an assessment of the desire itself. But in hope we have the application of reason,
the assessment that one has reason to be of the opinion that the hoped-for outcome can be realized.

Schroeder (2004) makes a clear distinction between hope and desire:

What is it, then, that separates desires from other pro attitudes? The answer generally offered by the standard theory is that there is exactly one basic pro attitude, namely desire, and any other pro attitude is a complex of desires and other things. So, for instance, it is sometimes held that to will that p is simply for one’s strongest (first-order) desire to be a desire that p,12 that intending that p is desiring that p and believing that one will bring it about that p,13 that hoping that p is desiring that p while believing p not very likely,14 and so on (p. 21).

Goldman (2009) says that desire is a kind of emotion. In the quotation below Goldman distinguishes desire from paradigm emotions—irruptive motivational states such as anger—but it nonetheless is an emotion.

[P]aradigm emotions … are complex states involving cognitive, affective, and functional elements, some of which may be absent in less than prototypical instances or forms of the emotions. This structure will repeat itself in the case of desires, as they may be affected by interaction with emotions, and as they may in turn affect the reasons we have for acting. … [W]e have seen that weakness of will suggests that desires include both felt urges and implicit evaluative judgments, and that emotions, as related and resembling psychological states, contain both these and other elements (Goldman p. 89-90).

Hope, then, promotes the felt urge.

The Opposite of Hope Is Not Despair

Hopelessness is commonly regarded as causing despair, or hope is seen as the opposite of despair. The Oxford English Dictionary (2008) defines hopelessness as feeling or causing
despair. Because the dictionary defines hope as it is commonly understood, this does not make the definition philosophically correct. The OED defines intentionality as a noun and “The fact of being deliberate or purposive,” yet gives it a separate and different philosophical definition: “The quality of mental states (e.g., thoughts, beliefs, desires, hopes) which consists in their being directed towards some object or state of affairs.” Second, there is a connotation of undesirability in hopelessness. Just why this is might arise from centuries of the Western world’s adherence to Christianity. We need only think of the word “sound” and its opposite, “soundless.” There is nothing negative in being soundless, nor is there anything negative in the opposite of boned: boneless. Many creatures are boneless and this is neither good nor bad. A turkey can be “boned”—be rendered boneless, before roasting, but that is neither good nor bad. It is simply a fact. Thus I maintain that hopeless can be regarded as a fact with neither positive nor negative connotations. Hopelessness is simply being without hope. That does not necessarily imply despair. To be without hope is merely to look at one’s options and possible outcomes without experiencing emotion or without giving thought to the favourability of one kind of outcome or another, the same way Camus’ absurd man might go through life. Moreover, I have no hope regarding the outcome of the Grey Cup. I attach no personal meaning and am not invested in the outcome, but it does not follow that I am in despair. As we saw earlier, hope requires an investment of one sort or another by the hoper. Not being invested in the future does not mean one lives in despair. Further, a person can be hopeless and still act in ways that lay the groundwork for an outcome that would bring pleasure to oneself or others. In feeling despair one feels wretched, downtrodden, luckless, trapped, but not necessarily hopeless. One can despair at the unpleasantness of their grueling employment—feel trapped, unable to enjoy promotion or
success or be confident of safety—like the coal miners in Rita McNeill’s moving ballad, “It’s a Working Man I Am”:

It’s a working man I am
And I’ve been down under ground
And I swear to God if I ever see the sun
Or for any length of time
I can hold it in my mind
I never again will go down under ground
At the age of sixteen years
Oh, he quarrels with his peers
Who vowed they’d never see another one
In the dark recess of the mines
Where you age before your time
And the coal dust lies heavy on your lungs.

The miners are trapped into working in the mine—the only employment that is possible for them—and the song clearly depicts that they feel despair, but the miners may still have hope in being comforted when they return home and they hope to see the sun.

A person devoid of hope may nonetheless be optimistic that their actions will bring about a good outcome as in, “I have little hope that our efforts will reverse the outcome of the election, but we can remain optimistic that all is not lost.” Simply not to hope is a straightforward decision to live in the moment with no need to hold either an optimistic or pessimistic attitude to life. When learning that a person dear to me was diagnosed with cancer, after the shock of hearing it, I was quick to realize that I could best support that person by attentively listening to her. Not to hope for one outcome or another meant that I could give her my undivided attention and focus on her needs rather than mine.
Hope Is Not Optimism

Earlier we saw that one could be hopeless and optimistic at the same time. The following shows that hope is not the same as optimism. An optimist is confident in the future, and believes that things will be fine or have a positive outcome. Hope, on the other hand, brings the feeling or thought that something wanted might happen. One can hope for a positive outcome and reason or believe it is possible but improbable. The optimist believes in a positive outcome no matter what. When an optimist encounters a difficult situation, he or she can adjust his or her approach to the dilemma because of his or her positive approach. The resulting behaviour may include being humorous, being persuasive, noticing opportunities, and exhibit tenacity. When I was a child there was open disapproval of Pollyannas—those people who behaved in excessively cheerful or optimistic ways despite all evidence or reason. There was, in fact, a little ditty oft repeated which pointed to the ludicrousness of being optimistic despite the preponderance of prevailing evidence that it was inappropriate to be optimistic. In some cases it was considered to be a form of self-delusion. The ditty went: “The optimist fell ten stories at each window a bar, and as he was falling he yelled to his friends, ‘All right so far.’” The connection with the optimist’s consumption of alcohol was not meant to be flattering. While amusing, it pointed further to the kind of behaviour an optimist might indulge in. The optimist and the hopeful person could well be deluding themselves into thinking that the desired outcome is attainable, but optimism and hopefulness are not synonymous. Optimists and a pessimists alike may hope.
No Necessary Need to Hope

Stoicism was a philosophical movement founded in Athens in the late fourth century BCE by Zeno of Citium.

The capstone of stoic philosophy was an ethic of the consolations of identification with the impartial, inevitable, moral order of the universe. It is an ethic of self-sufficient, benevolent calm, with the virtuous peace of the wise man rendering him indifferent to poverty, pain, and death, so resembling the spiritual peace of God (Blackburn 2008).26

The benevolent calm in a wise person or sage could be seen as exhibiting a kind of apathy. Diogenes Laertius distinguished two kinds of apathy: the apathy that is found in the sage and that found in the fool:

A fool’s apathy is insensitivity whereas apathy in the sage is stability of the soul founded on immovable reason. The tranquil soul is like a walled garden, protected from the noise of the city.85 Next, there is courage, steadfast and upright, always equal to whatever fortune may bring56; courage gives effective force to one’s struggles against public misfortune, causing the movement from pity (miseratio) to compassion (misericordia). Finally, there is if not contentment in the sense that term came to have in Descartes—at least one’s acceptance of the situation, with a focus on the present and recognition of what is hidden and underappreciated in human history.87 No longer susceptible to regret, the sage experiences neither hope nor fear (Strange: 2004: 159).

For the stoic, then, there is no need for hope for there is neither forward thinking nor backward reflection. The stoic sage is in the moment. Hope, understood as a defense mechanism, could, like any defense mechanism, delude a person or prevent them from understanding a situation as it actually is. For instance, if one uses “projection” as a defense mechanism, one fails to understand oneself and most certainly misreads others. Intellectualization involves using

26 No pagination in this document accessed on line.
reasoning to block confronting an unconscious conflict and its associated emotional stress. It can be beneficial, however. For instance, it can be used in an emotionally charged situation to deflect feelings of anger or disapproval, thus avoiding confrontation. Hope is much like this. On the one hand, it could be used like projection and in that instance deludes the hoper into thinking one thing is possible when in fact it is not, and in the other instance it could be like intellectualization. Rather than be paralyzed by fear, one can hope for a better outcome than one that seems readily apparent.

The stoics seemed to use intellectualization to defend their worldview, and they spurned displays of emotion: “In fact the stoics considered emotions to be harmful mistaken judgments based on the childish habit of regarding oneself as the centre of things. People should follow cosmic reason and see themselves as its singular moments in the rational universe” (Knuuttila, 2005:6). Further,

But I wish to share with you to-day’s profit also. I find in the writings of our brother Hecato that the limiting of desires helps also to cure fears: ‘cease to hope,’ he says, ‘and you will cease to fear.’ ‘But how,’ you will reply, ‘can things so different go side by side?’ In this way, my dear Lucilius: though they do seem at variance, yet they are really united. Just as the same chain fastens the prisoner and the soldier who guards him, so hope and fear, dissimilar as they are, keep step together; fear follows hope (Seneca 1917- 25, epistle 5).

Hope is closely linked to our quest for meaning in life, and that has been intimately involved in the various stories of higher beings who ease our suffering, who promise us bliss and whose gift is life everlasting.

If hope gives one courage to face the future then it works just fine as a coping strategy, but it is not a necessary strategy. There are other strategies that are equally successful—like
adopting a stance to live each day without assignation of “meaning” to one’s contingency. These strategies do not involve acting for one god or another. The transcendent and ontological option bearing hope simply does not work if one abhors killing in the name of any god. The Incas sacrificed countless people (usually children) to their god in order to bring rain to end the community’s suffering from drought. These actions or other sacrificial actions brought hope, and in this day and age how can we regard that as anything but tragic?

But there is another option for meaning, and for our interpretation of religious art, which is to look only within life itself. This is the immanent option. It is content with the everyday. There is sufficient meaning for human beings in the human world; the world of familiar, and even humdrum, doings and experiences. In the immanent option, the smile of the baby, the grace of the dancer, the sound of voices, the movement of a lover, give meaning to life (Anthony 2007 p. 190).

While touching, Anthony’s “meaning giving things” in life do not give meaning but depth, texture, and pleasure, just as suffering of all kinds adds dimension, texture, and sadness. We do not need to attribute meaning to life. Life is. In all its complex forms, it is. There need be no cosmic reason for either suffering or joy. There appears to be no cosmic reason for hope. Similarly there appears to be no cosmic reason why one should not hope. There are human reasons to hope, but those reasons may not be sufficient. They may cloud the moment, affect one’s judgement, and steal the beauty and magnitude of the very present—and in this we hear Meursault loud and clear.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

This thesis has shown that hope can be found across cultures and through millennia. The intent of this exploration has been to provide an historical sketch of hope in Western philosophy followed by an analysis that shows that contrary to the often held position that hope is a feeling, emotion, or virtue, or that hope is a god or in god, hope is none of these. Instead I have argued that hope provides a means of coping, and since a means of coping can be construed as a means of defense, hope can arguably be considered to be a defense mechanism.

In order to arrive at such a conclusion we needed to understand the broad sweep of hope’s role in the human condition and how hope has been understood in Western culture. We saw at the outset that the ancients, while personifying hope as a goddess, understood that hope wards off the biting care of sorrow. Hope was believed to cast away soul-crushing misery. Hope guarded people from the full awareness of the magnitude of their pain. She brought analgesia. Hope was not a feeling but was the result of the intercession of the goddess, the result of which deadened or subdued feelings of pain.

Through Aristotle we learned that hope is not a virtue; it is antecedent to the virtue of courage. Hope required reason. I have argued that hope is like this. I have shown that despite the “soul-crushing” pain of internment in a WWII Japanese prisoner of war camp, hope emboldened or gave courage to pilot Fleming to build a radio that provided the men with reason to believe their hope of liberation was reasonable. Hope deadened the pain of loss of freedom, loss of friends, loss of humanity.

The ancients, while providing us with insight into what hope is, also signaled what hope
is not. Hope is neither a feeling nor a virtue, but promotes virtuous behavior. Hope also requires thought. Once again I have argued in favour of the ancients’ teaching of what hope is not. Where Aristotle erred, I contend, was that hope was always of the future: “hope is of the future, memory of the past” (Aristotle 2000 p. 145). As I have earlier contended, hope can be for an outcome of an event in the past. We can hope that Descartes did not torture animals.

The clarity of the presocratic and Aristotelian insights into hope got lost once Christians began to interpret Aristotle; once theology and philosophy became muddied into religious doctrine the distinction between reason and belief also became muddied. Clement of Alexandria famously declared, “I believe in order that I may know” (credo ut intelligam), and St. Augustine said “I believe in order to understand.” The obfuscation of faith and reason continues to this today.27

While Aristotle’s philosophical goal was to create a system of enquiry through which we could eventually learn all there is to know about the world, Augustine’s project was to forward Christianity. Augustine believed that intellectual inquiry into faith was an act of faith in pursuit of understanding. His teachings resulted in the transformation from teaching leadership and the discipline of examining humans and nature in philosophy, to teaching about the power of God and His exercise of power over people’s hope for life everlasting. Augustine undoubtedly knew that the exercise of power over humans does require understanding of human nature, but its appeal is to the weakest and most fragile. The people over whom he held sway included, but were not limited to, those who needed to be lead, those who sought rules to govern their thoughts and behaviour, those who sought solace, comfort, and peace, and a means to acquire what they

27 The Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church
http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p1s1c3a1.htm
needed and desired. The Christian God of hope would attend to them if they believed. In 427
Augustine interpreted the fall of Rome as a good sign for Christians. He argued that the
barbarian invaders had spared most of the churches that provided refuge for all. Christians had
always suffered and would always suffer in this world, and to end human suffering one must
place hope in God for life everlasting free from the pain of this world.

Whereas Aristotle sought to understand, to teach and lead by example, Augustine would
teach that belief supersedes reason. Belief in the unseen is required of Christians and this Unseen
held the balance of power. Through Augustine hope is transformed from a god that is an
intermediary that brings relief to a prevailing God of power that can damn one to hell if one does
not practice the Christian faith, a power so demanding of fealty that He commanded Abraham to
kill his own son. The Christian God of hope held more power even than Zeus, to whom Elpsi
defered, enough power to damn a person to eternal suffering. This intimidation and the
imposition of the laws of God vetted by Christian philosophers, complete with their claims of
what hope is, holds some sway today. Hope, still a God, also became a Christian virtue, and it
was taught that only Christians could be virtuous because virtue is a God-given blessing. I have
shown that this is a patently false claim. To understand my claim that hope is not a god-given
virtue I have asked that we consider only the fact that hope resides in many cultures that do not
espouse a Christian God. Hope, a Christian virtue, nonetheless is regarded by some (like
Buddhists, Stoics, and existentialists following Camus) as fatuous.

For centuries it was exceedingly dangerous for philosophers to challenge the church’s
teachings. I have shown that Kant and Kierkegaard handled their predicament differently. Kant
rejected the metaphysical argumentation of the omnipotence of God and God as hope. The
pietism of his parents, dominant in seventeenth-century Germany, maintained that the visible church was less important than the invisible church that included all of humanity. Kant opposed pietism and he opposed pietism’s teachings because he believed that those teachings impeded thought. Kant provided what I consider to be a cautious “push-back” against religion’s control over philosophy and hope. I suggested earlier that Williams’ and Gardner’s reading of Kant’s hope leaves us with an interpretation of Kant’s position on hope in much the same way as other Christian philosophers regarded hope. However, given Kant’s opinion that the religion of the day dulled reason, O’Neill may more accurately reflect his position. As earlier noted, O’Neill suggests that Kant interprets religious trust or commitment fundamentally as a mode of hope: religious faith cannot be a matter of knowledge, and must be a matter of taking a hopeful view of human destiny. Even Kant could not completely extricate hope from faith, thus whether wittingly or unwittingly, from Aquinas to the early moderns, hope is in the God of the Christians.

Kierkegaard was ravaged by anguish and struggled with the true apprehension of a personal God. He believed redemption from pain could be realized only through death. His hope for salvation lay in his complete subordination to an unseen God that was within him yet to whom he looked up. His psychological angst lead him to place himself within the power of God, to relinquish himself totally to that God and to hope only in him. However, if one believes God is hope, this is beyond the scope of philosophical discourse and is better left to theologians.

Camus came on the scene like a breath of fresh air, sometimes bracing, at other times calming. He took a bold view of life and its meaning or lack thereof. Like other existentialists, Camus believed that control over people by authority (whether church or state) or demands that our beliefs, values, or rules be blindly obeyed destroys individualism and renders us like
automatons. Automatons become whatever people in power coerce them to be and may well become dehumanized. Camus consistently stressed that a person’s judgement determines what is to be believed rather than those imposed by arbitrary religious or secular values. He went so far as to claim through Meursault that hope is a waste of time and distorts the present. This is an extreme view of hope, similar to the stoic’s extreme views of acceptable human deportment. Buddhists, however, eschew hope and they are not extreme in their beliefs—quite the opposite. Thus I have argued that to go forward in life, to enjoy it to its fullest, one need not have hope. I hasten to say that it would be unusual in our Western world not to have hope, but it cannot carry the moral import of being right or wrong. Nonetheless I have argued that hope can be delusional or thwart a healthy awareness of what is actually going on in the world and may in fact impede appropriate action.

Through arguing that hope is in us, not in a god or goddess, I place the responsibility of invoking the defense of any unwanted behavior (such as killing in the name of God) on individuals. If some believe that placing hope in God protects them from suffering and is an effective means to move forward in life with compassion and respect for others then surely there can be no harm in this. I have argued, however, that to place hope in an invisible god or goddess is an act of faith, and this does not rescue it from the claim that it is delusional. Recall that Incas were deluded into sacrificing children in hope that this act would bring rain.

I have claimed that hope is always in us individually, that it cannot be placed in some thing or another person. It is the hoper singularly who hopes even though the hoper may be part of a collective. We have seen that the hope within the hoper is not a feeling but gives the hoper relief from unwanted feelings of despair. It has been argued that despair is not the opposite of
hope for at least two reasons. One, “hopeless” is the opposite of hope just as “boneless” is the opposite of boned. Two, a person can be in despair and still have hope. If despair and hope were opposites, this could not be the case. One might well consider the opposite of despair to be optimism, and while this consideration has not been taken up heretofore I have demonstrated that hope and optimism are not the same. I agreed with Aristotle that having a hopeful disposition is more fundamental than an optimistic disposition because it includes an attitude of confidence and it has a particular desired outcome, whereas an optimistic disposition may simply be a particular outlook that no matter what happens all will be for the best.

The final argument proposed that it is not *necessary* to hope. One can live a fruitful and productive life without engaging in hope, and there are other defense mechanisms that can serve equally well. Hope, I have argued, is not a feeling, nor is it a virtue; it provides one means by which humans can cope with dangerous, difficult, or troubling situations. Hope is a coping strategy. Many people, and in different ways, experience themselves “hoping.” Many, and in different ways, understand hope, and many in different ways abjure hope. My intent has been to bring my thoughts about hope into philosophical discourse and to recognize that further work is needed.
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