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Reasons for Hope: Its Nature, Role and Future

Edited by
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The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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Preface
Hope as Being on the Way

Kuruvilla Pandikattu, S.J.

“The way to the promised land leads through the desert.”

If it is true that love hopes for everything, as the apostle Paul maintains in 1 Cor 13, 7, then of their very nature people who love are people of hope. Lovers and believers do live in hope. In our day to day discussions, we often refer to hope directly or indirectly. We hope for good weather, a good job, a pleasant family, a happy future. In challenging and difficult times, we never give up the hope that things will turn out better. Hopefully, we wish we have a brighter future. All little and great goals and desires we express in hope and in expectation. Yet hope, with its vision of fulfilment in the future, never lets us perceive a complete picture of the things for which we hope, but it does invite us to experience the reality of the present in a provisionally better way. Hope lets us transcend our fears, our limitedness, our doubts, our concerns and finally ourselves, thereby keeping the longing awake for the totally other (the ‘*ganze andere*’ of Walter Benjamin). The issue of the nature of this longing is discussed below.

The Hope of Love

Paul does not merely assert that love hopes, he also designates the object of this hope. In the ultimate analysis the concerns of hope go beyond beautiful weather or a home of one’s own, to EVERYTHING, that is, to the whole of reality. Walter Benjamin formulates it in a similar vein: “Our deepest longing is content not merely with the existing, nor with the possible, but with a totally different.” Whoever gives in to this hope, takes the risk that the object of his hope – the everything or the totally other – is not to be found in our limited plans, or imagination. It requires courage to leave behind the known and the expected and to be on the way or to dare for the unknown.

To hope means to depart, to walk on insecure terrain, to dare for the unknown, guided by the still voice within urging us forward. Consequentially, this necessarily implies the readiness to pass through the desert. The best example of this is the exodus event, when the people of Israel wandered from Egypt for forty years through the desert, inspired by the promise of liberation and expectation of the promised country, which was not seen earlier by any of the Israelites, and which when realised exceeded all their expectations. The reality of Egypt can be contrasted with the promised Canaan. It was a move from slavery (of body and spirit) to liberty (both political and religious); from misery to abundance (where milk and honey flow); from security (of the meat pots of which they were assured) to the uncertainty (the travails of the desert and the daily collection of the manna from the sky). The risk of the uncertain way lies between the known reality and the promised other. The way to the promised land leads through the desert.

Hope thus is the strength which takes humans out of the security of the known and makes them walk on the unknown way towards the promised future. Like Abram we are challenged to follow the demand of God: ‘Leave your country and your relatives and go to the land that I will show you.’ (Acts 7:3) Why should Abram give up everything, why should he set his whole family

in danger, when everything is in order and when he is assured of his daily bread? Because the challenge is bound to a promise:

I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD (Ex 6:4-8).

Hope does not give up things in vain. It is ready to give up because it seeks the Other, the totally different. The risk of hope leads to its inner goal in the promised land, the fullness of life. This promised land is at least partially revealed to us and shines now and then on the way.

The Ultimate Goal of Our Hope

Like the star which the wise men from the East believed in and followed from far, the hope that leads human beings is an age-old promise: “A great king is to be born.” They prepare for the way to seek him and to worship him. The star actually brings them, after a long and tedious journey, to a new born child, to a completely different king. Surely this infant Jesus, the child of a poor couple, unsettled the dreams of the wise men. Which king will ever appear in the powerless and simple form of a child, in a manger, in a poor village? Still the very presence of Jesus seems to have changed their expectations and filled them with a deep sense of fulfilment.

When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Mat 2:10-12).

The last and greatest goal of all hope, the deepest human longing has been fulfilled by this child, because it is God’s love made flesh, which we can touch, see and taste. The child is the unbelievably unimaginable love that makes itself small and delivers itself to the world to provide humans with everything they need.

It is a love that goes beyond the normal habits and criteria of the world, revealing its own absurd logic. It challenges the economic and social considerations of a world bent on profit motives. It reveals love in a world of naked injustice and horrendous crimes, of inhuman poverty and the unjust cries of the poor. It is a love that cares for such a wicked world, that wants to transform this world and make it a “home of love.” It is a love that hopes for peace, justice, unity and vibrates with the symphony of life. It is a love that dares to hope for all people – the weak, the powerless, the mighty and the rich. It is a love that risks everything so that the comfortable security and habits of people give way to a joy and openness which only the “poor in spirit” can relish.

We may hope to meet God exactly where humans live in poverty, in despair, and in illness. Again and again He is there, where the rich and powerful cannot imagine, although they have heard the story of the manger in Bethlehem. Such a God with His hope is present among the Israelites, who were persecuted by the Egyptians, among the Palestinians who are oppressed by the Israelites among the immigrants and the poor who are exploited by the rich. Such a hope is alive among the refugees who are rendered homeless by wars they do not cause, by the ordinary mothers and fathers who lose their children to terrorists or military strikes. The God of love and hope is present among the people who suffer ill treatment of all types. But that God of love comes

to them in totally unexpected ways, as the totally other. Only those who dare to walk away from the security of the known towards the darkness of the desert can experience Him. Only such pilgrims of faith can perceive the light shining from the morning star and remain true to their heart, even when things seem to go wrong. Hope is alive in the really hopeless situation; love is active in truly unloved situations. That is the promise given to humanity by a God who is totally different yet fully involved in the human history.

Conclusion

So the human hope, which is so crucial for believers and lovers, is to be on the way and open to the totally other. It is to have our eyes on the promised land, and our feet on the ground that is not always steady and hard. It is to have hands that reach out to others, especially the unfortunate. It is to have a glimpse of the promised land, but never a full grasp. We are on the way, guided by our vision of the future, without neglecting the present.

*Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth
Pune, India*

Introduction

Human Hope as Critical, Creative and Concrete

Kuruvilla Pandikattu, S.J.

“To hope means to be ready at every moment for that which is not yet born, and yet not become desperate if there is no birth in our lifetime.” Eric Fromm

Is there really any reason to hope for? Can we really trust the world and ourselves in today's world? It is true that ours is a world of terror, violence and crime. We do not need to look far to find the effects of evil and hatred. September 11! The war with Iraq! The continuing war in Palestine, the communal killings in India and the tragedy the murder of the innocent children at Beslan, Russia, are merely few pointers to the inherent destructiveness and so hopelessness that we feel so vividly.

In spite of this seemingly depressing situation in today's world, we believe that there is enough rationale to hope for. We wish to inspire both experts and ordinary people with a vision that cultivates hope for the promotion of humanity in particular and life in general.

In this volume the authors hope to reflect critically on the human phenomenon of hope, respond to it creatively and indicate its concrete expressions. In this manner, they hope to show that hope is a commitment to humanity that is inherent to human beings and open to fostering of life.

Articles that deepen and foster realistic hope for a better future were requested from scholars around the world to reflect on human hope. Some of these articles elaborate the dangers facing today's world with an intention of offering a deeper optimistic suggestions. A dialogical approach and tentative conclusions are sought. Some of the articles attempt to deal with frontier areas of research and trace hope therein. Personal experiences are also shared within a scientific or objective framework.

Our goal is to present a volume from interdisciplinary perspectives – multicultural, multireligious – by a group of international scholars. In short the goal of the volume could be summed up as:

- § To portray a realistic vision of the world that does not lead to despair or indifference.
- § To be prophets of hope even when the situation seems painful.
- § To contribute our little to change and improve the human situation.
- § To inspire the present generation and instill confidence in life.

Similarly, the main aims of the articles in this volume could be summed up as:

- § To deepen our awareness of some of the danger facing life today.
- § To offer some crucial problems and challenges facing humanity.
- § To be critical of the society without condemning.
- § To consider alternate forms of life.
- § To present creative vision as alternative.

The characteristics of the volume could be summed up as:

- § Multicultural milieu
- § Multi-religious context
- § Pluralistic paradigm
- § Egalitarian vision
- § Interdisciplinary method
- § Realistic analysis
- § Dialogical approach
- § International perspective
- § Hopeful outlook

In the context of the apparent hopelessness in the world, the response by scholars around the world to reflect on their own lives and to instill realistic hope has been overwhelming. All these articles attempt to stimulate critical optimism in the present world of ours. They base themselves on their personal experience or scholarly field and reflect on dangers as well as hope in the humanity. There is still hope to be traced out in our lives and in the world!

In the first part of this volume (*Critical nature for hope*) we deal with the bases and reasons for hope realistically in today's world. The articles deal with the theme of hope and elaborate general perspectives. In the second part (*Creative role of hope*) we deal with the nature, characteristics and features of hope. This is followed by articles which deal with the concrete realizations of hope (*Committed future of hope*). The focus of the volume is to orient ourselves to a world of realistic hope. Some personal experiences of fostering dynamic hope are also given here. It is hoped that this volume awakens us to a clarion call for hope, hope in humanity, in the world and in life itself. In short, we are the hope for the humanity and for the world today! The reader is thus presented with realistic challenges and ample opportunities.

The first article of Paul Schollmeier tries to contrast the human longing with animal aspirations and show that hope is not merely intrinsic to humans, but unique to them. As a moral being, human hope is for a better social order, who supplants vain hope and combats moral despair.

After having established the intrinsically human nature of hope, the next scholar Helen Petrovsky investigates the concept of hope. It is not merely the strongest human motivation, it is a lived experience, a promised and "senseless leap" (across time and likewise space) even "beyond life," hope as the pure projection of an ever open promise makes us what we are.

The Greek author Byron Kaldis studies on another aspect of hope: its asymmetry (with regards to the past and future) and reflects on this human predicament. Treating hope more an emotion or attitude or a purely psychological datum, the author looks at historical movement is par excellence a kind of social (non-psychologistic or non-atomistic) vehicle for hope to manifest itself on a grand scale. Finally it is in art and aesthetics that human hope finds its best expression. In the ascendant stages towards the vision of the Form of Beauty described by Diotima or in Ignatius of Loyola, a sense of cosmic hope *immanent* and, ultimately, *embodied* in aesthetic experience is uniquely assured for us.

In the next article George F. McLean studies the bases for hope. Going beyond the crisis of rationality and the subjectivity, the author confronts us with existential freedom in diverse cultures. After basing hope in human virtues, he studies the patterns of hope in the cultural traditions. To hope is a social human process and it is precisely in the dialogue between cultures that today's humanity can find the basis and reasons for hope, providing us with a deeper sense of values and meaning.

After having studied the nature of hope, the second part of this volume deals with the human experience of hope and its creative role. The first article relates hope with day-to-day life. Charles Ess traces some reasons for hope in spite of the ambiguity and uncertainty prevalent in today's world. Hope is attempting to help birth the good from the evil. It is the human way of overcome hatred and division with love and compassion, of recognizing and celebrating the presence of the Divine in both our joys and sorrows.

Michael A. Corey traces the glimmer of hope from the "hardcore commonsense notion," and in our trust in the future trajectory. Basing his hope in the faith in the future, he concludes that the extreme complexity that permeates the entire cosmos provides us with hope, "because if Mother Nature has gone to such radical lengths to give us a comfortable world to live in today, then she probably *won't* be abandoning us when it comes to the future."

Following this trend, Peter Heszler shows that hope goes beyond rationality and is immanent, i.e., rooted in the present. Further, based on the human good will and sense of responsibility, he traces a few reasons to hope for the future.

Similarly, the Spanish author Ignasi Boada traces the history of hope specially in the apocalyptic times and sees the reasons for hope in our contemporary times. He argues that there is hope in humanity that goes beyond the narrow individualistic understanding of humans and is deeply rooted in our collective experience.

Another author Joseph Ouseparampil focuses on the origin of goodness, human rights and truth borrowing from the rich Indian experience of *apauruseya* (authorless and so eternal and primary revelation) and sees in this experience as the basic reason for hope in humanity.

Beginning from the world of experience of unity author Zlatica Plašienková goes on to study meaning and values and arrives at hope which is based on a rational restatement of the unitary world-view in which the cosmos and the human race belong to the same structure.

In the third part the dangers as well as the openness of hope (the committed future) is treated primarily from personal view points or based on personal testimonials. Here hope is shown to be concrete.

After acknowledging the dangers posed by today's technological progress, Gernot Böhme traces the resources that was available in European culture and wonders whether these resources are sufficient in today's technological world, which goes beyond the European culture. This is followed by three articles which base human hope on human personhood or on concrete personalities.

Igor Kišš underscores the notion of death of persons in current, contemporary literature and seeks the help of Teilhard de Chardin and Paul Tillich in ushering in hope. *Humanitas* can win in history only if we apply ourselves towards humanisation.

Margaret Yee relates hope to the notion of human person. Acknowledging the multi-disciplinary standpoint in understanding human person, she studies a viable account of human person that does justice to the basic notion of hope that is crucial to being human.

Vasanthi Srinivasan studies the sage Vinoba Bhave and sees how hope is crystallised in his life through love and faith. His life and thought displays the intimate connection between the three cardinal virtues.

Finally, Pandikattu holds that to hope is to be always on the way, rooted to the earth and at the same time open to further possibilities, where the promised land lies at the horizon of our existence and expectation, never graspable in its entirety.

In the appendix, Peter Coopen dwells on his own personal experience and shared with us how he has inspired countless students with hope for the future.

I like to thank Professor George McLean for the constant support and encouragement he has given for this volume and for obliging to take up its publications.

Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth
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1. **Hope as Human**

Paul Schollmeier

“There are many hopes hoping, hoping at the same time, and today’s world is a world of polymorphous hopes.”

My purpose in this essay is to explore human hope not from the wondrous standpoint of divine revelation but from the more mundane viewpoint of human reason. I do not wish to deny revelation its due, but I do wish to explore our own reason and to see what hope, if any, it might render unto us. I shall argue that we may find in this earthly existence a worthy confidence in our meager beliefs despite their persistently perfidiousness objects.

God as Hope-Less

My title, I confess, might seem redundant. Hope would appear to be a distinctly human trait. Could a God possibly have hope? Any God worthy of the name ought to be pure intellect through and through. He or she would accordingly be omniscient and could see as far into the future as you please. One might even ask if a God could have either a future or a past. If he knows all, would not an immortal see the all in one grand, eternal, instant above and beyond our petty temporal distinctions and divisions?

A true God would also possess omnipotence, would he not? He may do with infinite confidence whatever he might wish to do. Indeed, for a being so powerful to wish would itself be to do. But could a God even have a wish? All is already done for a divine intellect and for him wish can have no role to play. A God is changeless, in a word, without a future or a past self. The divine being reigns far above our puny temporal preoccupations and perplexions.

But, then, could a God have a need for anything? I would imagine that he could not. A true God would be omnipresent. And if omnipresent, he would encompass everything. But only a being who lacks something can be destitute. What he lacks is of course what he needs. If he lacked nothing, he would need nothing. Hence, a God has all needs satisfied, or, better, he has no needs to satisfy. He is far beyond our impoverished temporal satisfactions and dissatisfactions.

Animals as Hope-Less

Other creatures, such as our fellow animals, are also without hope. But other animals have no hope for different and contrary reasons. I happen to believe that some animals have an intellect, if only a rudimentary one. But if you do not share my belief, then my argument will only be the stronger. Why? Because animals do not have an intellect sufficiently developed to enable them to have hope. They may imagine a future, but I doubt that they are aware that they do. But to have hope is at a minimum to know that an image is not true and yet to believe that it might become true.

But animals do have an unconscious attitude, which would be hope if it were conscious. They act as if they had hope when they act for the sake of an image not yet true. We might say that animals are creatures of unconscious wish. They form images, which anticipate the future, and

they act in accordance with their anticipations right or wrong. Animals are creatures of change, in other words, they live in a world of change. They must project in some way what the present bodes and what the future holds. Or else, they will be abjectly subject to alien entities.

But what is an unconscious wish if not an instinctual need? Animals other than humans are clearly finite creatures, as indeed are we humans. They, accordingly, cannot fail to lack some things, and thus they have needs for whatever they lack. But to find what they lack, they must use their imagination, must they not? Hence, they follow what they imagine to be true, or, rather, what they would imagine true. But, again, they would not appear to know that their images might not be true.

Both the gods and the beasts are thus hope-less. They can do well enough without hope, though we may have hope for them. The gods exist on an intellectual plane of a generality so exalted that they can be certain of everything. And they are without change or desire. The animals exist on an intellectual plane so particular that they can be aware neither of certainty nor of change and need as such.

Humans as Hope-Ful

My purpose, then, is to propose that hope is primarily a trait of rational, yet mortal, creatures, such as we ourselves happen to be. Our hope, I wish to suggest, is a postulate of our every thought and action. Without a rational emotion of this kind, we could neither anticipate a future nor alter one. Nor could we have a past either. We could only live in a clueless present.

We humans have an intellect which is not omniscient but, we might say, scient only. True, we do imagine that we know some unchanging truths, which are absolutely certain. But when we do, we only know our own ideas as such and assume them to be ultimate truths. Mathematical truths especially appear to possess certainty of this sort. But non-Euclidean geometries show that even these truths are not absolutely but only relatively true. We can never be sure that we can grasp even one truth true for all time.

Our truth can only be a truth relative to our experience, and our experience is indeed rather limited. We depend for experience on our impressions, which may or may not resemble their objects, which we conveniently assume to exist. But even these objects so represented are by all appearances subject to unrelenting change. We possess, then, only an awareness, which the ancients call belief or opinion. Consequently, we are acutely aware of time with its remembered past and its imagined future as well as its fleeting present. Belief concerns objects which can be other than they presently are.

By hope, then, I mean our belief in a future, which we think to be good in some way or other. A belief of this sort is for us cannot be eliminated because our belief attempts to encompass an object so unstable. We can have no certainty of any object beyond the ken of our senses. Nor can we even be sure of an object present to our senses. Our impressions need not resemble their objects nor any object at all. David Hume impressed this point upon us long ago.

We human beings also have a power, which is considerably less than infinite. Indeed, we are faced with the constant task of estimating our abilities as we grow out of infancy and as we decline into frailty. Our will, in short, has its limits. These limits arise in part from our knowledge, especially self-knowledge, as well as from our physical faculties. Obviously, a being with a less than perfect knowledge of less than perfect faculties can have only a less than perfect power. And too often do we embark on what we soon discover to be an erroneous course of action which we are unable to complete well or to complete at all.

With our self-knowledge, then, we can only formulate a wish, which is less than certain of fulfillment. But our wish itself is an expression of our hope. Our hope is what we prognosticate for a future, which we believe that we can, in part at least, make ours. We hope that we know the future course of events, and that we can live up to our anticipated role in the projected events. Without hope we could have no thoughts of any continuity in ourselves or in our surroundings. How could we? We ourselves constantly change, and we are constantly subject to changing objects. We might say that change is the fact that is the metaphysical fount of hope.

As if these limitations were not enough, we soon enough discover that our presence in this world is also finite. We do have a presence but we do not have an omnipresence. Hence, we experience lack, and we have a need for what we lack. But we are aware of our need. Our self-knowledge, though imperfect, gives us some indication of the fact that we have a lack and of what our lack is. We can thus formulate a rational desire and are not at the beck and call of naked instinct. Immanuel Kant would say that we have a practical not a pathological desire.

We may have hope because we are not without intellect but we are with desire. We need hope to scratch our very head or to wiggle our finger or to wag our tongue. We must even hope that our will or our finger or our tongue is there for us, and that they will function as they customarily do.

A Kantian might find my discussion somewhat perplexing. He or she might well recall the Kantian postulates of God, freedom, and immortality. These postulates rely on the presupposition that we possess certain, *a priori*, innate, moral knowledge. This certain knowledge is none other than the moral law, and this moral law Immanuel Kant takes to be an absolute fact of reason.¹ In lawfulness itself Kant finds a rock upon which to build the moral faith expressed in his postulates. This lawfulness is an indubitable truth inscribed within the reason of any rational being, human or not.

But my presupposition is that there is no truth indubitably true. Not even a moral truth can be possessed of such certainty. I am assuming that we can have only doubtful, *a posteriori*, acquired, moral knowledge. Our acquired ideas do not possess any certainty, but they do have greater stability than our sense impressions. These ideas we may refine by winnowing and weighing our impressions. We thus form empirical generalizations, including moral generalizations, with our particular paradigms.

Generalizations of this empirical variety I, too, take to be facts of reason, albeit acquired facts. And these facts of reason I take to be all the foundation philosophically allotted to us as a basis for our moral faith. But a faith thus acquired can find expression in postulates not unlike those, which our *a priori* rationalist expounds. With this more human faith we may, I believe, postulate a more mundane deity, a modest freedom, and a mortal identity. Though not certain, these postulates do give us a surety sufficient to inspire us with a human hope.

The postulate of God assumes that our generalizations will guide us in finding our way among our manifold impressions. Foremost among these general guides is none other than the proposition that the past bears witness to the future, and that its witness, though at times mistaken, will not be capriciously so. This proposition functions as a postulate, which assures us that our moral precepts will more often than not serve us well in all our actions.

Our divine postulate has this basic metaphysical function regardless of our moral predilections. Whether we take our actions to have value for their own sakes or for the sake of their consequences, we cannot abjure the principle of causality without practical paralysis. The uniformity of nature is a presupposition of any causal law and of any moral law without regard to whether a eudaemonist or a hedonist employs it.

¹ *Critique of Practical Reason*, 1.1. 46-47, 55-56.

But could we act on any general concept without freedom? We could not if we are to follow a moral principle, even one which we have acquired, for its own sake. We must postulate that we possess a will, which is free. Without freedom our reason could have no causality. We could only be subject to alien causes, such as those encountered in our passions. Freedom may thus rest on our ability to act in accordance with an acquired principle. This acquired principle we may formulate with the aid of our external impressions, hopefully without interference from internal impressions.

But this mere human freedom is not infallible. Our free will may be perfect but our knowledge is imperfect. René Descartes reminds us of this fact.² We thus possess a cause of motion within ourselves, but our causality possesses an imperfect form. Our empirical knowledge is quite fallible. For our general ideas, including our moral principles, we can rely only on our impressions which are not entirely trustworthy, and which concern no sure objects.

But, then, how could we engage in any action, free or not, if we had no self-identity? We must be agents who can endure change through time. Our rational powers must endure and so must our natural powers. These powers we know empirically through our experience. But we know only that we can endure not eternally but temporally. No more can our empirical knowledge tell us.

Our metaphysical postulates, though resting on acquired principles, can thus give us a moral faith, and this faith can in turn serve as a basis for a human hope. Our hope is a general confidence that our acquired principles reflect a harmonious nature, that with these principles we can participate in its harmonies, and that we can do so steadfastly. I thus espouse in place of a dogmatic, *a priori* hope a doxastic, *a posteriori* hope.

Towards a Meaningful, Moral, Human Hope

But human hope need not rise to a metaphysical level of such exalted, if merely human, height. We may find a faith more specifically moral sufficient unto the day. This less general moral hope rests on less general postulates concerning our society and ourselves. These more specific postulates are that our society possesses uniform laws or customs, that we may act in accordance with these norms of conduct, and that we may retain our identity within them. Human beings can create a moral world, we can recognize our metaphysical freedom, and we can acknowledge our mortal selfhood.

But hope of this moral variety presents a grave danger. Our moral hope can easily become a mere vanity. We may identify our divine postulate with human individuals of a particular political, social, or economic order. We may see our freedom as an ability to act within this particular human arrangement, usually for the sake of taking what we wish. And no doubt we can identify with our position in this comfortable state of affairs and with our possessions.

Our hope can thus fail to rest on global postulates and can easily fall prey to parochial postulates in a most pejorative sense. We may fail to postulate even a human world for our aspirations and postulate instead a world of our social set or caste. Our postulates may become a surety for our place in an impoverished world, which excludes those not privileged, usually by force or chance, to enjoy our prerogatives. We thus implicitly through our very words and deeds turn away those tacitly assumed less worthy than ourselves.

I must accordingly say a word about despair. Metaphysical despair is not unknown to us mortals. Despair of this kind can occur when we do not understand our place in the scheme of things, or when we feel our best efforts to be ineffective, or our continued existence is at stake.

² *Meditations* 4.

We feel ourselves in our very bones to be fallen without possibility of redemption. Despair of this horrific sort is rare, being the stuff of deep tragedy.

But despair that is moral we encounter much more often, especially in our day. Despair of this sad kind does exhibit its degrees. We may at times feel as though our moral postulates fail simply because we are out of sorts, for example. Or they may fail us because we find ourselves in unfamiliar circumstances, or because we experience unrelenting prejudice about our class or status. But we know also that these selfsame postulates can fail in a sense all too literal. The social world can give every impression of working quite well without us, we cannot find for ourselves any work within our society, and we come to question our very place within it.

Metaphysical hope must set limits to moral hope, of course. We must recognize and accept our finitude in thought, deed, and identity. And metaphysical despair can cripple moral hope. Its despair can in effect deny us everything. Moral hope, too, must present us with limits. Every society is finite in its information, its functions, and its resources. These limits find their expression in its conventions and customs. But moral despair snuffs out all hope even within a society. It finds its expression in ignorance, fear, and hunger. Our only hope, if hope there is, is for another social order. Hence, I suspect, we may follow the general restiveness and the many revolutions and migrations, which we see today.

But I must asseverate that moral hope ought not to set unnecessary limits for itself. Ought our social conventions and customs to create unnecessary and arbitrary moral despair? The question answers itself. My hope is that we can create social worlds filled with moral hope. But to fulfill this hope we need to lift up our eyes to our common cultural identities, if not to our humanity, and turn away from our material vanities, which prove so divisive.

I find, then, a moral imperative to combat moral despair. With true moral hope we must supplant vain hope. We can hope to live up to this imperative only if we allow ourselves to work toward a stable social order, if all persons can find a social role with its order, and if all have a secure social identity. Anything less is mere sectarianism, unworthy of our true metaphysical and moral selves.

Conclusion

My title, then, proves not entirely redundant.³ The title is redundant if we conceive of hope as a passion borne by a human being. But if we conceive of hope as a passion known by a human being, my title tells us how fragile our hope truly is. Philosophically human hope is not an eternal emotion which a rationalist would champion, nor is it an infernal hope which secularist would so stubbornly defend, but it is a temporal hope which a man or a woman attune to our rational estate in this vale of tears may cultivate. Human hope, especially our moral hope, we can construct only out of our particular impressions, which we must reflect on and allow ourselves to feel in our particular time and place.

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³ [Editor's Note: The author's original title was "Human Hope," which the editor took the liberty to modify.]

2.

Hope: Towards a Primary Investigation of Its Concept

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“If it were not for hopes, the heart would break.” Thomas Fuller

Everyone is well aware of the psychological dimensions of hope. We are ready to agree upon the fact that hope is a vital part of survival, a necessary projection into the future of that which remains unfulfilled or, at least, of the conditions of such fulfillment. We would also assume, perhaps, that hope seems to reach the farthest possible limit, and it is not by chance that in Russian there is well-known saying: what dies last is hope. But does hope really call for fulfillment? Or is it rather the promise of fulfillment, in other words, fulfillment unfulfilled? Is not this very promise endowed with a completeness affecting the nature, if not the essence, of hope? To answer these impending questions let us focus on the temporal aspect of hope.

Terminological Clarification

What does it mean – “to hope for” or, more intimately, “I have a hope”? What is the mode of “having,” of an implied possession of something that appears so hard to possess? Should we not instead turn to the more impersonal “there is hope,” hoping (but what other word can be used?) that language itself will point to the way it exists? So, it’s a question of existence! It is clear that hope does not exist as, for instance, things do, and yet no one will deny the existence of hope. The “is” of hope has everything to do with time, if time is viewed as subjectivity. (The subject is, in fact, a paradox of times, according to St. Augustine.) Hope seems to be embedded in the present without, however, fully occupying it. A form of presentiment, it likewise does not have a grasp on the future. A hollowing of the present *and* future, a trace escaping and mixing up both, the ecstasy of pure unfulfillment. (Hence, the utopian element associated with hope.) Indeed, the end of hope is an accomplished wish fulfillment. But there is *no end to hope* precisely because a lived life stays infinitely open. (Its closure – completion – being none other than death.) Shall we not say then – by way of a tautology – that the existence of hope is a form of human existence, a form organizing this existence into temporal circuits? Not of the present and not of the future, without any predetermined place, hope itself creates places and spaces.

Hope is also pure in the sense that it has no image content. Or, rather, that all the images it may use for its expression are accidental with respect to its essentially schematic function. Indeed, hope is formative – it provides for the exchange of times within the plenitude of a promise. And the latter is always already given in its endless delay. Can one really visualize it? (Though, psychologically, we cannot help representing our hopes – day-dreaming and wish fulfillment are only the most dramatic examples of hope rendered visible.) Being a promise, hope tends to link us with the past. As the very structure of our personality and ego, it comes from a time of which we know virtually nothing, whereas hope was already there. (And this is far from simply stating that dreams are shared by a collective. Besides the continuous background of hope – social and historical, – it seems to acquire unique discontinuous patterns giving birth to so many individual lives.)

Hope as Promise

But let us return to the delay inherent in the promise. Hope itself is nothing other than delay – a suspended goal, a constantly deferred implementation. The goal, though, is of the same order as hope: it never transcends the latter, never displays any purposefulness of its own. Thus, the end of hope is within hope proper (and this sheds new light on the initial idiom). Hope denies the empirical. And yet it is rooted in the everyday existence of man. Can we say that in hoping, i.e., in the experience of hope, we regain a sense of our own existence, which is otherwise blurred and forgotten? And if so, it would mean, by the very same token, that hope allows us to relate to being, opening onto a horizon that was previously closed. (Therefore, it is not the special privilege of Nothingness to uncover Being (if one follows Heidegger), but the same thing happens through the work of hope in its empty but meaningful completeness. And let us remember that “empty” has the positive implication of an emerging human life form.)

But what does it mean “to give up hope,” as if hope were in somebody’s possession? What is to “lose hope” in a broader sense? To become – all of a sudden – “hopeless”? In a way it perhaps implies giving oneself over to chance, allowing it to structure whatever is left of a living. It is turning into *a thing* among so many others and thus acquiring other regularities and meanings. What I have in mind is a recently published war memoir – nothing of the usual literary production, but instead notes taken after the event by someone who was simply anxious to remember, as if the person knew that his experience was of the order of forgetting, as every real experience in true fact is. Therefore, a series of mnemonic signs, a diary of sorts – never depicting, but simply registering the inhuman encounter of life and death in prisoners’ camps during World War II. A story of forced displacement and, of course, survival despite the closeness of physical death. There is a moment in this account when hope is given up, as it would seem altogether: everybody knows that the storyteller will not make it, that is, will not survive. Hope is given up and all that remains is some kind of bodily mechanics, a habit of living, perhaps, but already drained of any independent aim. The faint trace of a belonging which is on the wane. Maybe, it was not the very end of hope, but rather hope relegated to a community, taking its very shape and form, hope transformed into a purely “environmental” effect – the surrounding group of ailing people was from now on what was left of hope. *They* thought their companion was hopeless, and, indeed, the man himself had evidently given up all hope. And if he survived *against* hope, it is not because of a change in the daily ration, but because, paradoxically enough, there was room for hope. Hope itself displaced, but shared by a community of prisoners of war, and is it not this sharing, this partaking that finally helped the person to survive? Which would mean that hope is a community matter, so to say, that the community, too, is shaped after hope, forming a meaningful world of its own.¹

Hope as Experience

It is worthwhile to investigate in what way experience is or may be connected to hope. The kind of experience I have been referring to hardly has an equivalent for it in language (a point the diaries tend to confirm), since as such it stands at the limit. And if transformed into poetry – an impossible endeavor, to be sure – this experience would take the form of an almost untranslatable idiom: such is the case of the famous poet Paul Celan (whose poignant lyrical pieces, challenging language and meaning, have been so keenly analyzed in particular by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe). If experience enters language – the experience which seems to be outside the “normal” time of our

¹ On the philosophical implications of community see the works of Jean-Luc Nancy.

living, essentially a rupture, a break, a “caesura,” it does so by distorting it: either by rendering it flat and expressionless (words as memory signs) or by attacking it with expression, but of a kind that produces a mumbling, that finally renders it mute. Is there place for hope in this language, does experience give rise to it? So long as it calls for a reading, it does, but the reading is nearly impossible. The reading is such that from the outset it is deprived of the guarantees as well as the mere expectation of meaning. Meaning is what *may be* attained, but through the effort of reconstitution, perhaps of a (communal) recollecting. And hope is precisely the hope for this meaning which is necessarily split and fragmented, which bears unbearable traces. The synonym of a lost fullness, would it not attest as well to an exchange, to a possible relationship between “I” and the Other, which persists in the emptiness of all experience? This is what Celan may have in mind when he speaks of an “encounter,” when he *hopes* for it. In the hollow of the self – which, through rupture, returns to itself in the non-time of experience – there is also this remote proximity to the Other, which in Celan takes the form of hope for a dialogue. Thus, the murmur of language is imbued with an intention or, to be more accurate, with a latent address: poetry is still addressed to Someone, even if overtly it announces the final – and shocking – death of our God.

Therefore, hope is the presence of the Other (be it a community or individual) and this Other seems to be woven into the very texture of hope. The Other takes the form of a longing if only because hope hopes *for*. And this “for” is not so much a matter of content (we can easily say what our hope embraces), but, rather, of the transcendence or intention of hope – hope projecting itself beyond any possible limit, in this incredible sweep overcoming human time, as it were. One may hope, knowing there is nothing in one’s lifetime that will make this hope come true. Is one hoping onto death? Or is it not that such a hope is a way of associating oneself with the future, of achieving continuity where both nature and common sense speak only of the discontinuous? Is it not, in other words, a way of attaining historical fullness? Something definitely linked to utopian vision and an implicit (or explicit) sense of personal sacrifice. I cannot help recollecting the social hopes of my own grandparents which appeared in the stable guise of belief: the image of a better society meant for their children’s children – a projection, to be sure, into infinity – was the *raison d’être* of their lives. Involuntarily here we witness a kind of intermingling of the two basic currents of hope: one rising from the individual level and the other merged with ideology, that is, hope exploited, being slowly turned into a dogma, a set of rigid values, frames and rules. But the reification of hope is the loss of hope proper, of its fluidity and openness as well as fantasy dimension. Reification (objectification) is in fact the death of hope which necessarily avoids representation. Surely, the utopian element of hope can be traced in works of art, for example, but its discovery calls for mediations and can hardly be identified with a blunt and simple statement.²

Hope as Leap beyond Life

Finally, what is the impulse inherent in writing, especially if the subject matter is hope? Speculation itself is not without an addressee or, at least, a driving force: if initiated by wonder, it is propelled and encouraged by hope. By the hope that it will go as far as its inner logic dictates it, that it will not forget or lose its way, falling prey to either fear or ambition, in short, that speculation will assuredly persist. And what is the very idea (underlying this project) that we should focus on hope – as scholars and individuals, as professionals and simple living beings, that we should look into our special field or experience to find therein the grounds for hope? In other words, whence

² Texts as symbolic resolutions of real contradictions as well as “carriers” of silent voices – those reduced to muteness by the dominant culture – are one of Fredric Jameson’s primary concerns.

this desperate need to examine the very foundations of our living – does it not result from a total disillusionment in the way we once used to live? And, indeed, may we *hope* for something better – if not to be gained immediately, then at least in the future? It looks like values are being (once more) re-evaluated with so many “ends” we have already lived through: the end of history, of communism, of philosophy, humanism, art, etc. In the time of so many “ends” – which, according to Hegel would be the time of *beginning*, for the work of philosophy commences only at dusk (with actuality having reached its completion), in such a time when history is freed from any teleology, reducing its scope and final goal to the time of the present, in this new time which is thoroughly and resolutely “ours,” there still remains the horizon of hope. Inseparable from social discourse, hope, nevertheless, acquires a more local meaning, if by “locality” we understand communities as opposed to fuzzy global entities. It is not unlikely that hope is becoming more diversified, more private, repeating the contours of individual longings and desires. Each time it is filled with a singular meaning, each time attached to a singular community. There are many hopes hoping, hoping at the same time, and today’s world is a world of polymorphous hopes. Wouldn’t it be exciting to somehow reproduce their intricate patterns, an effort already implicitly at work on the art scene of today?

Thus we seem to have returned to the psychology of hope, the latter being one of the strongest human motivations. Hope *is* a life form which, on the (semi) conscious level, repeats the blind impulse of living. But hope is definitely more than that: an *abstract* form, it stretches into an unknown infinity. It is this senseless leap (across time and likewise space), this pure projection of an ever open promise that in the outcome makes us what we are.

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3. The Emerging Bases for Hope

George F. McLean

“*Que la raison a des raisons, que la raison ne comprend pas.*” B. Pascal

On face level many think of hope today as the chances one takes in lotteries, that is, as chance or fortune. Analyzing this early in his *Consolations of Philosophy*¹ Boethius showed its dangerous fickleness. It may lift one up; but then in an instant it can turn contrary and dash one to destruction. More tellingly, however, for those who would invest their hopes therein is the fact that it is external to one's real identity and person. When good it may generate excitement, but does not make one a better person. The changes it works are external, rather than internal; they can multiply responsibilities, but not provide peace. The goddess, Philosophy, directs Boethius to turn rather to the competencies of reason² which had always guided him in public affairs. This was his strength on which he must guide himself now in his present dire circumstances of exile and imminent execution. This was good advice and remains so. We must base on hope not on chance, but on our human capacities as rational animals and on the access to Being which this enables. However, in the interim the meaning of the terms has gone through considerable evolution. At the beginning of modernity reason was radically restricted. Its realm was no longer the classical notion of being. This was open to all that did or could exist, including infinite wisdom and love as the source and goal of all.³ Instead Descartes, “The Father of the Modern Mind,” restricted reason to what could be grasped clearly and distinctly by the human mind.⁴ All else was a pragmatic matter of being able negatively to avoid harm⁵ and positively to walk with confidence in the world.⁶ Basing his metaphysics on the “*cogito*,” for Descartes existence would not merely be restricted to what could be thought in these terms, but would itself remain an epistemological object. As Gabriel Marcel would show, it did not include the subject or all the richness of conscious human life that pertained thereto.⁷ As a result we have lived the paradox that as humaneness has been enabled by the development of science and technology, humanities itself has progressively been alienated, leading in the end to the apocalypse of the Second World War in which the most sophisticated technology meant systematic extermination through death camps and carpet bombing, culminating in the atomic holocausts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. If hope is to be found it will not be along such roads. It is then symptomatic of the present end of modernity (if not of history) and, in turn, of the millennia that attention now expands beyond the realm of objectivity to take account subjectivity, beyond intellect to will, beyond structure to goal, and beyond the scientific to the aesthetic by methods that are no longer merely analytic, but synthetic as well.⁸ This holds the keys to a great expansion of hope for our times, but this is not always or easily appreciated, indeed it can seem

¹ 1. Trans. R. Green (New York: Library of Liberal Arts) (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrell, 1962).

² Ibid.

³ Thomas Aquinas, *On Essence of Existence*, trans. A. Maurer (Toronto: PMI, 1949).

⁴ *Discourse on Method*, trans. D. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), II.

⁵ *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. D. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), VI.

⁶ *Discourse on Method*, II.

⁷ G. Marcel *The Philosophy of Existence*, trans. M. Harari (London: Harvill, 1948).

⁸ See my *Ethics at the Crossroads: Vols. I Normative Ethics and Objective Reason and II Personalist Ethics and Human Subjectivity*, (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1996).

instead to constitute a crisis, as is illustrated by the review of that very name.⁹ Aristotle was convinced that life is reasonable and hence set out in search of the principles and categories of each field of reality and knowledge with which to develop the science thereof. This project was vastly deepened when Thomas enriched it with the Christian discovery of existence. Unfortunately, many of a conservative bent interpret Aristotle's project anachronistically in terms of Cartesian rationalism, considering as safe, secure and worthy of human assent only what is established in clear, and reductivistically objective terms. In this light to open any new horizons available through human subjectivity is to threaten the foundations of ethics and to foreclose on a reasoned transcendent in ways that subvert personal dignity and social life. There is a council of despair: for them it is the end of Christianity, the collapse of the family, and the demise of human decency. Anything but a rationalistically reduced medieval paradigm threatens human tragedy. Faith is challenged and charity is orphaned as the passage to the new millennium appears as a Bridge of Sighs marked by Dante's famous words "Abandon all hope, all ye who enter here!" If then hope is to be regained it will need to be through the development of an ability to break beyond modern rationalism and to open to the new dimensions of the human life noted above which are now unfolding. To do this it is necessary to enter into the philosophy of our times in order to follow the extension of human consciousness beyond objectivity to subjectivity and thereby to the creative freedom which generates civil societies and cultures and hence enables new relations between peoples and with God.

From Objectivity to Subjectivity: The Realm of Hope

In the context of the dilemmas now being generally experienced at this point of transition between the millennia it is dangerous to raise the question of the role of philosophy. For if, with Aristotle, philosophy is something to be taken up when the basic needs of the times are cared for, then philosophy is in danger of being shelved for the present generation. On the other hand, philosophy may have to do with our nature and dignity – with what we are, and with what we are after – and hence the terms in which we live as person and peoples. If so then philosophy may be not the last, but the first consideration or at least the most determinative for life in our most trying circumstances. It is the contention here that the role of philosophy today has shifted from being a work of deduction by specialists working in abstraction from the process of human life, to deep engagement under the pressure of life's challenges at the center of human concerns. What is this difference philosophically, and what difference does it make not only for work in philosophy but for human hope.

The Crisis of Objective Reason

One way of approaching this is to begin from the philosophical divide we are crossing as we move on to the new millennium. For this we need to review the history of reason in this epoch. The first millennium is justly seen as one in which human attention was focused upon God. It was the time of Christ and The Prophet – Peace be upon them both! – and much of humanity was fully absorbed in the assimilation of their messages. The second millennium is generally seen as shifting to human beings. The first 500 years focused upon the reintegration of Aristotelian reason by such figures as Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd and Thomas Aquinas, as described above. The second half of the millennium, from 1500, was marked by a radicalization of reason. Whereas from its beginning

⁹ *Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: The Morely Institute).

human reason always had attempted to draw upon the fullness of human experience, to reflect the highest human and religious aspirations, and to build upon the accomplishments of the predecessors – philosophers sensed themselves as “standing on the shoulders” of earlier philosophers – a certain Promethean hope now emerged. As with Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, it was claimed that humankind would save itself, indeed that each person would do so by his or her power of reason. For this, Francis Bacon¹⁰ directed that the idols which bore the content of the cultural tradition be smashed; John Locke¹¹ would erase all prior content of the mind in order to reduce it to a blank tablet; René Descartes¹² would put all under doubt. What was sought was a body of clear and distinct ideas, strictly united on a mathematical model. It was true that Descartes intended to reintroduce the various levels of human knowledge on a more certain basis. But what he restored was not the rich content of the breadth of human experience, but only what could be had with the requisite clarity and distinctness. Thus, of the content of the senses which had been bracketed by doubt in the first Meditation, in the sixth Meditation only the quantitative or measurable was allowed back into his system. All the rest was considered simply provisory and employed only to the degree that it proved useful in so navigating as to avoid physical harm in the world. In this light the goal of knowledge and of properly human life was radically curtailed. For Aristotle, and no less for Christianity and Islam in the first 1500 years of this millennium, this had been contemplation of the magnificence and munificence of the highest being, God. For the enlightenment this was reduced to control of nature in the utilitarian service of humankind. And where the goals of human life were reduced to the material order, the service of humankind really became the service of machines in the exploitation of physical nature. This was the real enslavement of human freedom and the loss of truly human hopes. One of the most significant aspects of our current situation, it should be noted, is the “crisis of meaning”. Perspectives on life and the world, often of a scientific temper, have so proliferated that we face an increasing fragmentation of knowledge. This makes the search for meaning difficult and often fruitless. Indeed, still more dramatically, in this maelstrom of data and facts in which we live and which seem to comprise the very fabric of life, many people wonder whether it still makes sense to ask about meaning. The array of theories which vie to give an answer, and the different ways of viewing and of interpreting the world and human life, serve only to aggravate this radical doubt, which can easily lead to skepticism, indifference or to various forms of nihilism.

In consequence, the human spirit is often invaded by a kind of ambiguous thinking which leads it to an ever deepening introversion, locked within the confines of its own immanence without reference of any kind of the transcendent. A philosophy which no longer asks the question of the meaning of life would be in grave danger of reducing reason to merely accessory functions, with no real passion for the search for truth.¹³

First, with reason looking only to itself, religion was reduced to the service of the human rather than of the divine, and even then was given the status of a superstructure built parasitically upon the new reductively physical reality or even of a superstition. The religiously contextualized philosophical traditions not built in terms of the modern enlightenment reductionism were not understandable within that more restricted horizon. Hence the great Hindu and Islamic traditions were dismissed as mystifications and, for reasons opposite to those of al-Ghazali, the medieval tradition of Scholastic philosophy was denigrated. Second by the beginning of the 20th century

¹⁰ Francis Bacon, *Novum Organon, De Sapientia Veterum* (New York, 1960).

¹¹ 11. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London, 1690).

¹² *Meditations*, I.

¹³ John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Fides et Ratio* <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/>, 1998.

humanity felt itself poised for the final push to create, by the power of science, a utopia not only by subduing and harnessing the physical powers of nature, but by genetic human engineering and social manipulation. Looking back from the present vantage point we find that history has proven to be quite different from these utopian goals. Third, the power of science was diverted to two destructive World Wars and to the development of nuclear weapons capable of extinguishing the entire human race. Fourth, Hegel's and Josiah Royce's ideals and idealism would give way to William James's and John Dewey's concrete, pragmatic goals which could be achieved by human effort.¹⁴ Or at least this would be so until it came to be recognized that in positive or empirical terms it was not possible to articulate such social goals. At this point positivism would succeed pragmatism. But in turn and after only two decades, it would have to admit that its controlling "principle of verifiability" (and then of "falsifiability") was not intelligible in its own positivist terms.¹⁵ Fifth, Marxism as a scientific history and organization of society proved to be cruel and dehumanizing beyond belief; finally it totally imploded from its own internal weakness. Suddenly, the ideology on which meaning was conceived and life was lived by half of humankind was extinguished. It was as if the sun went down never to rise again. Sixth, on the other side of the Cold War the consumer society has shown itself incapable of generating meaning for life, but capable of exploiting everyone else, until at last it concludes that its ideology of a totally free market is destructive of the weak majority of the world. In sum, this century has been marked by poverty that cannot be erased and exploitation ever more widespread, two World Wars, pogroms and holocausts, genocide and "ethnic cleansing," emerging intolerance, family collapse and anomie. In the end it was indeed right to ask whether and on what basis hope could survive. The situation recalls the great meteorite which hit the Yucatan Peninsula eons ago sending a cloud of dust around the world which obscured the sun for years, killed off the flora and thus broke the food chain. Life of all sorts was largely extinguished and had to begin to regenerate itself slowly once again. In this light these negative forces are misnamed "postmodern"; they are rather the final critical period of modernity as it progressively collapses. Having become conscious of its own deadly propensities, modern philosophy begins to attack these evils by the only tools it possesses: power and control. Its attack then is not creative, but destructive. Knowing that it must arrest its inherent destructive urges reason destroys its own speculative foundations, all notions of structures and stages and, of course, all ethical norms. Everything must be trashed because the hubris of modern reason closes off any sense that it itself is the real root of its problem. In a paroxysm of despair, like a scorpion trapped in a circle of fire, it commits its own *auto de fe*. If there is to be truly a post-modern world – or in the words of Jesse Jackson if we can: "Keep hope alive" – it will need to be in other terms.

Subjectivity: A New Agenda

To read this history negatively, as we have been doing, is, however, only part of the truth. It depicts a simple and total collapse of technical reason acting alone and as self sufficient. But there may be more to human consciousness and hence to philosophy. If so in analogy to the replacement of a tooth in childhood the more important phenomenon is not the old tooth that is being lost, but the strength of the new tooth that is replacing it. A few philosophers did point to this other dimensions of human awareness. Shortly after Descartes, Pascal's assertion "Que la raison a des

¹⁴ William James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (New York, 1907); John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York, 1920).

¹⁵ John Wisdom, "Metaphysics and Verification," *Mind*, 47 (1938), 452-498.

raisons, que la raison ne comprend pas” would remain famous though unheeded, as would Vico’s prediction that the new reason would give birth to a generation of brutes – intellectual brutes, but brutes nonetheless.¹⁶ Later, Kierkegaard would follow Hegel with a similar warning. None of these voices would have strong impact while the race was on to “conquer” the world by a supposed omnissufficient scientific reason. But as human problems mounted the adequacy of reason to handle the deepest problems of human dignity and transcendent purpose came under sustained questioning and more attention was given to additional dimensions of human capabilities. One might well ask which comes first, the public sense of human challenge or the corresponding philosophical reflection. They may, in fact, be one, the philosophical insight being the reflective dimension of the human concern. In any case, one finds a striking parallel between the social experience and philosophy in this century. In response to the extreme totalitarian and exploitative repression of the person by fascism and communism in the 1930s, there arose a progressive liberation: from fascism in World War II, from colonial exploitation in the 1950s and 60s, from minority oppression in the 1970s, and from Marxism in the 1980s. Like a new tooth the emergence of the person has been consistent and persistent. There has been a strikingly parallel development in philosophy. At the beginning of this century, it had appeared that the rationalist project of stating all in clear and distinct objective terms was close to completion. This was to be achieved in either the empirical terms of the positivist tradition of sense knowledge or in the formal and essentialist terms of the Kantian intellectual tradition. Whitehead wrote that at the turn of the century, when with Bertrand Russell he went to the First World Congress of Philosophy in Paris, it seemed that, except for some details of application, the work of physics essentially had been completed. To the contrary, however, the very attempt to finalize scientific knowledge with its most evolved concepts made manifest the radical insufficiency of the objectivist approach and led to renewed appreciation of the importance of subjectivity. Similarly, Wittgenstein began by writing his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*¹⁷ on the Lockean supposition that significant knowledge consisted in constructing a mental map corresponding point to point to the external world as perceived by sense experience. In such a project the spiritual element of understanding, i.e., the grasp of the relations between the points on this mental map and the external world was relegated to the margin as simply “unutterable.” Later experience in teaching children, however, led Wittgenstein to the conclusion that this empirical mental mapping was simply not what was going on in the development of human knowledge. In his *Blue and Brown Books*¹⁸ and his subsequent *Philosophical Investigations*¹⁹ Wittgenstein shifted the human consciousness or intentionality, which previously he had relegated to the periphery, to the very center of concern. The focus of his philosophy was no longer the positivist, supposedly objective, replication of the external world, but the human construction of language and of worlds of meaning.²⁰ A parallel process was underway in the Kantian camp. There Husserl’s attempt to bracket all elements, in order to isolate pure essences for scientific knowledge, forced attention to the limitations of a pure essentialism and opened the way for his understudy, Martin Heidegger, to rediscover the existential and historical dimensions of reality in his *Being and Time*.²¹ The religious implications of this new sensitivity would be articulated by Karl Rahner

¹⁶ Lu Xiaohu, "G.F. Vico and the Contemporary Civil World" in Wang Miaoyang, Yu Xuanmeng and Manuel B. Dy, eds, *Civil Society in a Chinese Context* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1997), pp. 37-46.

¹⁷ Tr. C.K. Ogden (London: Methuen, 1981).

¹⁸ (New York: Harper and Row).

¹⁹ Tr. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958).

²⁰ Brian Wicker, *Culture and Theology* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1966), pp. 68-88.

²¹ (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

in his work, *Spirit in the World*,²² and by the Second Vatican Council in its Constitution, *The Church in the World*.²³ For Heidegger the meaning of being and of life was unveiled and emerged – the two processes were identical – in conscious human life (*Dasein*) lived through time and therefore through history. Thus human consciousness became the new focus of attention. The uncovering or bringing into light (the etymology of the term “phenomenology”) of the unfolding patterns and interrelations of subjectivity would open a new era of human awareness. Epistemology and metaphysics would develop – and merge – in the very work of tracking the nature and direction of this process. Thus, for Heidegger’s successor, Hans-Georg Gadamer,²⁴ the task becomes the uncovering of how human persons, emerging as family, neighborhood and people, by exercising their creative freedom weave their cultural tradition. This is not ‘history’ as a mere compilation of whatever humankind does or makes, but ‘culture’ as the fabric of the human consciousness, the symbols by which a human group unveils being in its time, and the way in which it cultivates hope and indeed its very soul. The result is a dramatic inversion: where before all began from above and flowed downward – whether in structures of political power or of abstract reasoning – at this turn of the millennia attention focuses rather upon developing the exercise of the creative freedom of people in and as civil society as a new and responsible partner with government and business in the continuing effort toward the realization of the common good. This is manifest in the shift in the agenda of the United Nations from the cold war debates between economic systems and their political powers to the great conferences of Rio on the environment, in Cairo on the family, and in Beijing on women. The agenda is no longer reality as objectively quantifiable and conflictual, but the more difficult and more meaningful one of human life as lived consciously with its issues of human dignity and hope, of values and cultural interchange. What does this mean for philosophy? In the 1980s I was a member of the board of Directors of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP) which organizes the quinquennial World Congresses of philosophy. In the 1970s their themes had been the philosophy of science and the *Philosopher’s Index*²⁵ for 1970 had only 32 books or articles on culture. When it was proposed in 1980 that the next World Congress be on culture there was a veritable revolution in the ranks. It was said that culture was an issue for anthropology, not philosophy, but that year the *Philosopher’s Index* carried 120 listing on the subject. By 1998, however, there were 300 listing on culture and an additional 100 on values, with almost the same number on hermeneutics. If Marx spoke famously of standing Hegel on his head, in our lifetime the same has happened quite literally for the entire field of philosophy. The more integral human horizon situates the objective issues of power and profit in a context of human value, creative human freedom and cultures, in a word in the terms of human subjectivity. This calls upon philosophy most urgently to develop the new ways of thinking and interpreting which can enable people to engage life more consciously, freely and responsibly as new dimensions of human existence. Done poorly this can produce a new round of human conflict and misery, but done well this can be an historic step ahead for humanity and the real basis for hope.

From Subjectivity to Existential Freedom: The Challenge of Hope

²² *Geist in Welt* (Munich: Kosel, 1957).

²³ *Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. Abbott (New York: New Century, 1974).

²⁴ *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad).

²⁵ (Bowling Green University: Philosophy Documentation Center.)

Thus far, we have seen how the work of philosophers is fundamental to the great social changes of our day from totalitarian ideologies in which decisions are made from the top down to civil society in which power runs up from the responsible freedom of people organized in multiple groups in patterns of solidarity and subsidiarity. The challenge here is how the actions of these groups will be directed so as to provide the broad convergent action required for complex times. On the one hand, to depend for this upon the state would be to return to the previous top down pattern. Hence, it is necessary to see how this convergence can result from the pattern of values and virtues which constitute the cultural tradition of a people. On the other hand, if these be merely matters of preference and life style they cannot provide the governance required by a society. Hence it is necessary to trace these to their roots; the exercise of human freedom must be seen precisely as the existential issue of being in contrast to non-being, that is, as the basic drive toward human fulfillment. In these terms cultures are paradoxically matters of human freedom which are not always mere options, but matters of passionate commitment as is that of a mother to the care of her sick child. In this light we shall look first at the emergence of awareness of existence and its meaning for freedom as personal commitment, and in these terms at values and virtues as these constitute patterns of effective hope which guide our lives as cultures and cultural traditions. We can then look at the meaning of spiritual values for hope for social progress, and more grandly for civilizations as the largest human unities.

Existence and the Greek Fathers

Above we spoke of a second special Greek resource for the development of hope in our day, namely the opening by the Greek Church Fathers of an appreciation of existence as the proper term in which human freedom could be understood and directed. Just as Aristotle evolved the formal structures of Plato in a more active sense, thought here takes an additional step ahead, moving from the relatively passive level of essence to existence as that by which essences are made to be. Moreover, if for living things “to be” is “to live”, then “to be” for conscious, free and social human beings is to live in a conscious, free and socially responsible manner. Existence then is the place to begin in order to be able to understand the renewal in our days of the existential sense of human freedom and the possibilities of social progress which this opens. This existential sense of freedom can be traced from the Greek Church Fathers; it took on systemic form in the Islamic and Christian medieval syntheses of Avicenna and Aquinas; and it has been an object of special attention in this century with the development of the phenomenological methods for bringing to light human intentionality. Here we shall look at the first and the third of these, that is, at the classical Greek component and at its contemporary implications. Let us begin with the Greek Fathers. While the earlier Greek philosophers had supposed matter to be eternal, the issue was merely by which form matter was specified; the issue of existence in contrast to non-existence did not emerge. Forms were eternal and however much things changed or were moved by a final goal, yet they remained in a fixed cycle of eternal return. There was changes, but no radical role for hope. But by applying to the Greek notion of matter the Judeo-Christian heritage regarding the complete dominion of God over all things, the Church Fathers opened human consciousness to the fact that matter, too, even if eternal, stood also in need of a causal explanation. This shortly preceded Plotinus, who was the first philosopher to provide an explanation of the origin of matter.²⁶

This enabled philosophical questioning to push beyond issues of form, nature or kind to existence and, hence, to deepen radically the sense of reality. If what must be explained is no

²⁶ Maurizio Flick and Zoltan Alszegehy, *Il Creatore, l'inizio della salvezza* (Firenze: Lib. Ed. Fiorentina, 1961), pp. 32-49.

longer merely the particular form or type of beings, but matter as well, then the question becomes not only how things are of this form or of that kind, but of how they exist rather than not exist. In this way the awareness of being evolved beyond change or form;²⁷ to be real would mean to exist and whatever is related thereto. Quite literally, “To be or not to be” had become the question. By the same stroke, our self-awareness and will were deepened dramatically. They no longer were restricted to focusing upon choices between various external material objects and modalities of life – the common but superficial contemporary meaning of freedom – nor even to Kant’s choosing as one ought; all this remains within the context of being as nature or essence. The freedom opened by the conscious assumption and affirmation of one’s own existence was rather a responsibility for one’s very being²⁸ based upon a sense of others as an infinite good literally erupting into time. This is the basis for real hope. One might follow the progression of this deepening awareness of being by reflecting upon the experience of being totally absorbed in the particularities of one’s job, business, farm or studies – the prices, the colors, the chemicals – and then encountering an imminent danger of death, the loss of a loved one or the birth of a child. At the moment of death, as at the moment of birth, the entire atmosphere and range of preoccupations in a hospital room shifts dramatically. Suddenly they are transformed from tactical adjustments for limited objectives to confronting existence, in sorrow or in joy, in despair or in hope, in terms that plunge to the center of the whole range of meaning. Such was the effect upon philosophy when the awareness of being developed from attention to merely this or that kind of reality, to focus upon the act of existence in contrast to non-existence, and hence to human life in all its dimensions and, indeed, to life divine. Cornelio Fabro goes further. He suggests that this deepened metaphysical sense of being in the early Christian ages not only opened the possibility for an enriched sense of freedom and hope, but itself was catalyzed by the new freedom proclaimed in the religious message and the hope that derived therefrom. That message focused not upon Plato’s imagery of the sun at the mouth of the cave from which external enlightenment might be derived, but upon the eternal Word, Son or Logos through and according to which all things received their existence and which enlightened their conscious life. Moreover the Christian *Kerygma* sees redemption as having been achieved in principle by the cross, but as needing to be accepted and affirmed in a personal act of freedom by each person. The radical character of this hope, that of a passage from death to life, is symbolized in baptism by immersion in water and resurgence. Thus the new hope which accompanied the new sense of existence was that of being bursting into time.

It rejects being considered in any sense as nonbeing, or being treated as anything less than one’s full reality; – it directs the mind beyond the ideological poles of species and isolated self-interest, – it centers, instead, upon the unique reality of the person as a participation in the creative power of God – a being bursting into existence, who is and cannot be denied; – it sees life as sacred because lived in the image of God; one is sanctified in sharing this with one’s neighbors in what is now termed civil society, and with all humankind in what is fast becoming a global society.²⁹

It took a long time for the implications of this new appreciation of existence and its meaning to germinate and find its proper philosophical articulation. Over a period of many centuries the term “form” was used to express both the kind or nature of things and the new sense of being as existence. As the distinction between the two was gradually clarified, however, proper terminology arose in which that by which a being is of this or that kind came to be expressed by the term

²⁷ M. Adler, *The Idea of Freedom*, p. 187.

²⁸ George F. McLean, *Ways to God* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999), p. 184.

²⁹ Cornelio Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d’Aquino* (Torino: Societa Ed. Internazionale, 1950), pp. 75-122.

“essence,” while the act of existence by which a being simply is was expressed by “existence” (*esse*).³⁰ The relation between the two was under intensive, genial discussion by the Islamic philosophers when their Greek tradition in philosophy was abrogated as described by al-Ghazali in his *Munqidh*. This question was resolved 150 years later in the work of Thomas Aquinas through his notion of the real distinction between essence as existence. Paradoxically this rendered more intimate the relation of the two principles which as principles of being are related as act and potency, and which opened a new and uniquely active sense of being. This made it possible to carry Aristotle’s insights regarding the structure of civil society to the existential level and to see this as a self-creative work of human freedom in the third or existential sense of freedom cited above. This remained nevertheless in terms of objective knowledge. It was able to identify the exalted importance of the human exercise of freedom, the need for all to exercise it and even the hope for eternal salvific implications. However, this understanding did not yet enter into the distinctive inner subjectivity in terms of which freedom and hope are lived consciously. This is the heart of religion as loving response to God and neighbor, and thus the motivation of civil society and of the willingness to work out its challenges. This enables one to take full account of the differences between cultures in terms of which freedom is exercised, of the unique sacrifices and creativity of each person and people, or therefore of the ways in which peoples can relate most deeply even in being most distinct. All of this now has become newly possible by a phenomenological effort articulated in terms of values, virtues and cultural traditions. Should we say that this philosophical capability has been developed in response to the new sensibilities to these issues or that these new sensibilities have developed as a result of this philosophical insight? Probably the two are yet more intimately related such that the philosophical work is the reflective dimension of the broad contemporary evolution of human sensibilities enabling it to be better understood and more responsibly oriented. In any case, our effort here will focus on an examination of values and virtues as the cumulative exercise of the *arché* that is, of the responsible freedom which is at the heart of civil society. In these terms we shall seek to uncover afresh the conscious and hopeful exercise of existence as lived over time by persons and peoples in, and as, civil society.

From Freedom to Cultures: The Realization of Hope

Values: What Is to Be Hoped for

The drama of free self-determination, and hence the development of persons and of civil society, is most fundamentally a matter of being as affirmation or definitive stance against non-being implied in the work of Parmenides, the first Greek metaphysician. This is identically the relation to the good in search of which we live, survive and thrive. The good is manifest in experience as the hoped for object of desire, namely, as that which is sought when absent. Basically, it is what completes life; it is the “per-fect”, understood in its etymological sense as that which is completed or realized through and through. Hence, once achieved, it is no longer desired or sought, but enjoyed. This is reflected in the manner in which each thing, even a stone, retains the being or reality it has and resists reduction to non-being or nothing. The most that we can do is to change or transform a thing into something else; we cannot annihilate it. Similarly, a plant or tree, given the right conditions, grows to full stature and fruition. Finally, an animal protects its life – fiercely, if necessary – and seeks out the food needed for strength. Food, in turn, as capable

³⁰ Ivor Leclerc, “The Metaphysics of the Good,” *Review of Metaphysics*, 35 (1981), 3-5.

of contributing to an animal's sustenance and perfection, is for the animal an auxiliary good or means. In this manner, things as good, that is, as actually realizing some degree of perfection and able to contribute to the well-being of others, are the bases for an interlocking set of relations of hope. As these relations are based upon both the actual perfection things possess and the potential perfection to which they are thereby directed, the good is perfection both as attracting or hoped for when it has not yet been attained and as constituting one's fulfillment upon its achievement. Hence, goods are not arbitrary or simply a matter of wishful thinking; they are rather the full development of things and all that contributes thereto. In this ontological or objective sense, all beings are good to the extent that they exist and can contribute to the perfection of others. The moral good is a narrower field, for it concerns only one's free and responsible actions. This has the objective reality of the ontological good noted above, for it concerns real actions which stand in distinctive relation to one's own perfection and to that of others – and, indeed, to the physical universe and to God as well. Hence, many possible patterns of actions could be objectively right because they promote the good of those involved, while others, precisely as inconsistent with the real good of persons or things, are objectively disordered or misordered. This constitutes the objective basis for what is ethically good or bad. Nevertheless, because the realm of objective relations is almost numberless, whereas our actions are single, it is necessary not only to choose in general between the good and the bad, but in each case to choose which of the often innumerable possibilities one will render concrete. However broad or limited the options, as responsible and moral an act is essentially dependent upon its being willed by a subject. Therefore, in order to follow the emergence of the field of concrete moral action, it is not sufficient to examine only the objective aspect, namely, the nature of the things involved. In addition, one must consider the action in relation to the subject, namely, to the person who, in the context of his/her society and culture, appreciates and values the good of this action, hopes for and chooses it over its alternatives, and eventually wills its actualization. The term 'value' here is of special note. It was derived from the economic sphere where it meant the amount of a commodity sufficient to attain a certain worth. This is reflected also in the term 'axiology' whose root means "weighing as much" or "worth as much." It requires an objective content – the good must truly "weigh in" and make a real difference; but the term 'value' expresses this good especially as related to wills which actually acknowledge it as a good and as desirable.³¹ Thus, different individuals or groups of persons and at different periods have distinct sets of values. A people or community is sensitive to, prizes and hopes for a distinct set of goods or, more likely, it establishes a distinctive ranking in its hopes or the degree to which it prizes various goods. By so doing, it delineates among limitless objective goods a certain pattern of values which in a more stable fashion mirrors the corporate free choices and hopes of a people. These hopes constitute the basic topology of a culture; as repeatedly reaffirmed through time, they build a tradition or heritage about which we shall speak below. They constitute, as well, the prime pattern and gradation of goods or values which persons experience from their earliest years and in terms of which they interpret their developing relations. Young persons peer out at the world through lenses formed, as it were, by their family and culture and configured according to the pattern of choices made by that community throughout its history – often in its most trying circumstances. Like a pair of glasses values do not create the object; but focus attention upon certain goods rather than upon others. This becomes the basic orienting factor for the affective and emotional life described by the Scotts, Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith, as the heart of civil society. In time, it encourages and reinforces certain patterns of action which, in turn, reinforce the pattern of hopes and values. Through this process a group constitutes the concerns in terms of

³¹ *Laches*, 198-201.

which it struggles to advance or at least to endure, mourns its failures, and celebrates its successes. This is a person's or people's world of hopes and fears in terms of which, as Plato wrote in the *Laches*, their lives have moral meaning.³² It is varied according to the many concerns and the groups which coalesce around them. As these are interlocking and interdependent a pattern of social goals and concerns develops which guides action. In turn, corresponding capacities for action or virtues are developed. Indeed, Aristotle takes this up at the very beginning of his ethics. In order to make sense of the practical dimension of our life it is necessary to identify the good or value for which one hopes, toward which one directs one's life, or which one finds satisfying. This he terms happiness and then proceeds systematically to see which goal can be truly satisfying. His test is not passed by physical goods or honors, but by that which corresponds to, and fulfills, our highest capacity, that is, contemplation of the highest being or divine life.³³

Virtues: The Bases for Hope

Martin Heidegger describes a process by which the self emerges as a person in the field of moral action. It consists in transcending oneself or breaking beyond mere self-concern and projecting outward in hope as a being whose very nature is to share with others for whom one cares and about whom one is concerned. In this process, one identifies new purposes or goals for the sake of which action is to be undertaken. In relation to these goals, certain combinations of possibilities, with their natures and norms, take on particular importance and begin thereby to enter into the makeup of one's world of meaning.³⁴ Freedom then becomes more than mere spontaneity, more than choice, and more even than self-determination in the sense of determining oneself to act as described above. It shapes – the phenomenologist would say even that it constitutes – one's world as the ambit of human hopes, decisions and dynamic action. This process of deliberate choice and decision transcends the somatic and psychic dynamisms. Whereas the somatic dimension is extensively reactive, the psychic dynamisms of affectivity or appetite are fundamentally oriented to the good and positively attracted by a set of values. These, in turn, evoke an active response from the emotions in the context of responsible freedom. But it is in the dimension of responsibility that one encounters the properly moral and social dimension of life. For, in order to live with others, one must be able to know, to choose and finally to realize what is truly conducive to one's good and to that of others. Thus, persons and groups must be able to judge the true value of what is to be chosen, that is, its objective worth, both in itself and in relation to others. This is moral truth: the judgment regarding whether the act makes the person and society good in the sense of bringing authentic individual and social fulfillment, or the contrary. In this, deliberation, hope and then voluntary choice are required in order to exercise proper self-awareness and self-governance. By determining to follow this judgment one is able to overcome determination by stimuli and even by culturally ingrained values and to turn these, instead, into openings for free action in concert with others in order to shape one's community as well as one's physical surroundings. This can be for good or for ill, depending on the character of one's actions. By definition, only morally good actions contribute to personal and social fulfillment, that is, to the development and perfection of persons with others in community. It is the function of

³² *Metaphysics* XII, 7.

³³ Gerald F. Stanley, "Contemplation as Fulfillment of the Human Person," in *Personalist Ethics and Human Subjectivity*, vol. II of *Ethics at the Crossroads*, George F. McLean, ed. (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1996), pp. 365-420.

³⁴ V. Mathieu, "Cultura" in *Enciclopedia Filosofica* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1967), II, 207-210; and Raymond Williams, "Culture and Civilization," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), II, 273-276, and *Culture and Society* (London: 1958).

conscience, as one's moral judgment, to identify this character of moral good in action. Hence, moral freedom consists in the ability to follow one's conscience. This work of conscience is not a merely theoretical judgment, but the exercise of self-possession and self-determination in one's actions. Here, reference to moral truth constitutes one's sense of duty, for the action that is judged to be truly good is experienced also as that which I ought to do. When this is exercised or lived, patterns of action develop which are habitual in the sense of being repeated. These are the modes of activity with which we are familiar; in their exercise, along with the coordinated natural dynamisms they require, we are practiced; and with practice comes facility and spontaneity. Such patterns of hopes and capabilities constitute the basic, continuing and pervasive shaping influence of our life. For this reason, they have been considered classically to be the basic indicators of what our life as a whole will add up to, or, as is often said, "amount to". Since Socrates, the technical term for these especially developed capabilities has been 'virtues' or special strengths. But, if the ability to follow one's conscience and, hence, to develop one's set of virtues must be established through the interior dynamisms of the person, it must be protected and promoted by the related physical and social realities. This is a basic right of the person – perhaps the basic human and social right – because only thus can one transcend one's conditions and strive for fulfillment. Its protection and promotion must be a basic concern of any order which would be democratic and directed to the good of its people.

Cultural Traditions: Patterns of Hope

Together, these values and virtues of a people set the pattern of hopes for social life through which freedom is developed and exercised. This is called a "culture". On the one hand, the term is derived from the Latin word for tilling or cultivating the land. Cicero and other Latin authors used it for the cultivation of the soul or mind (*cultura animi*), for just as good land, when left without cultivation, will produce only disordered vegetation of little value, so the human spirit will not achieve its proper results unless trained or educated.³⁵ This sense of culture corresponds most closely to the Greek term for education (*paideia*) as the development of character, hopes and judgment, and to the German term "formation" (*Bildung*).³⁶ Here, the focus is upon the creative capacity of the spirit of a people and their ability to work as artists, not only in the restricted sense of producing purely aesthetic objects, but in the more involved sense of shaping all dimensions of life, material and spiritual, economic and political. The result is a whole life, characterized by unity and truth, goodness and beauty, and, thereby, sharing deeply in meaning and value. The capacity for this cannot be taught, although it may be enhanced by education; more recent phenomenological and hermeneutic inquiries suggest that, at its base, culture is a renewal, a reliving of origins in an attitude of profound appreciation.³⁷ This leads us beyond self and other, beyond identity and diversity, in order to comprehend both. On the other hand, "culture" can be traced to the term *civis* (citizen, civil society and civilization).³⁸ This reflects the need for a person to belong to a social group or community in order for the human spirit to produce its proper results. By bringing to the person the resources of the tradition, the *tradita* or past wisdom produced by the human spirit, the community facilitates comprehension. By enriching the mind with examples of values which have been identified in the past, it teaches and inspires one to produce something

³⁵ Tonnelat, "Kultur" in *Civilisation, le mot et l'idée* (Paris: Centre International de Synthèse), II.

³⁶ V. Mathieu, "Cultura" in *Enciclopedia Filosofica* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1967), II, 207-210; and Raymond Williams, "Culture and Civilization", *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), II, 273-276, and *Culture and Society* (London, 1958).

³⁷ V. Mathieu, "Civiltà," *ibid.*, I, 1437-1439.

³⁸ G.F. Klemm, *Allgemein Culturgeschichte der Menschheit* (Leipzig, 1843-1852).

analogous. For G.F. Klemm, this more objective sense of culture is composite in character.³⁹ E.B. Tyler defined this classically for the social sciences as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits required by man as a member of society.”⁴⁰ In contrast, Clifford Geertz focused on the meaning of all this for a people and on how a people’s intentional action went about shaping its world. Thus to an experimental science in search of laws he contrasts the analysis of culture as an interpretative science in search of meaning.⁴¹ What is sought is the import of artifacts and actions, that is, whether “it is, ridicule or challenge, irony or anger, snobbery or pride, that, in their occurrence and through their agency, is getting said.”⁴² This there requires attention to “the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs.”⁴³ In this light, Geertz defines culture rather as “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of intended conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.”⁴⁴ The development of values and virtues and their integration as a culture of any depth or richness takes time, and hence depends upon the experience and creativity of many generations. The culture which is handed on, or *tradita*, comes to be called a cultural tradition; as such it reflects the cumulative achievement of a people in discovering, mirroring and transmitting the deepest meanings of life in terms of which they shape their hopes. This is tradition in its synchronic sense as a body of wisdom. This sense of tradition is very vivid in premodern and village communities. It would appear to be much less so in modern urban centers, undoubtedly in part due to the difficulty in forming active community life in large urban centers. However, the cumulative process of transmitting, adjusting and applying the values of a culture through time is not only heritage or what is received, but new creation as this is passed on in new ways. Attending to tradition, taken in this active sense, allows us not only to uncover the permanent and universal truths which Socrates sought, but to perceive the importance of values we receive from the tradition and to mobilize our own hopes and life project actively toward the future.

The Genesis of Tradition in Community: The Birth of Hope

Because tradition has sometimes been interpreted as a threat to the personal and social freedom essential to a democracy, it is important to note that a cultural tradition is generated by the free and responsible life of the members of a concerned community or civil society and enables succeeding generations to shape their hopes and realize their life with freedom and creativity. Autogenesis is no more characteristic of the birth of knowledge than it is of persons. One’s consciousness emerges, not with self, but in relation to others. In the womb, the first awareness is that of the heart beat of one’s mother. Upon birth, one enters a family in whose familiar relations one is at peace and able to grow. It is from one’s family and in one’s earliest weeks and months that one does or does not develop the basic attitudes of trust and confidence which undergird or undermine one’s capacities for subsequent social relations. There one encounters care and concern for others independently of what they do for us and acquires the language and symbol system in

³⁹ E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (London, 1871), VII, p. 7.

⁴⁰ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), p. 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁴⁴ John Caputo, "A Phenomenology of Moral Sensibility: Moral Emotion," in George F. McLean, Frederick Ellrod, eds., *Philosophical Foundations for Moral Education and Character Development: Act and Agent* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992), pp. 199-222.

terms of which to conceptualize, communicate and understand.⁴⁵ Just as a person is born into a family on which he or she depends absolutely for life, sustenance, protection and promotion, so one's understanding develops in community. As persons we emerge by birth into a family and neighborhood from which we learn and in harmony with which we thrive. Similarly, through the various steps of one's development, as one's circle of community expands through neighborhood, school, work and recreation, one comes to learn and to share personally and passionately an interpretation of reality and a pattern of value responses. The phenomenologist sees this life in the varied civil society as the new source for wisdom. Hence, rather than turning away from daily life in order to contemplate abstract and disembodied ideas, the place to discover meaning is in life as lived in the family and in the progressively wider social circles of civil society into which one enters. If it were merely a matter of community, however, all might be limited to the present, with no place for tradition as that which is "passed on" from one generation to the next. In fact, the process of trial and error, of continual correction and addition in relation to a people's evolving sense of human dignity and purpose, constitutes a type of learning and testing laboratory for successive generations. In this laboratory of history, the strengths of various insights and behavior patterns can be identified and reinforced, while deficiencies are progressively corrected or eliminated. Horizontally, we learn from experience what promotes and what destroys life and, accordingly, make pragmatic adjustments. But even this language remains too abstract, too limited to method or technique, too unidimensional. While tradition can be described in general and at a distance in terms of feed-back mechanisms and might seem merely to concern how to cope in daily life, what is being spoken about are free acts that are expressive of passionate human commitment and personal sacrifice in responding to concrete danger, building and rebuilding family alliances and constructing and defending one's nation. Moreover, this wisdom is not a matter of mere tactical adjustments to temporary concerns; it concerns rather the meaning we are able to envision for life and which we hope to achieve through all such adjustments over a period of generations, i.e., what is truly to be hoped for and the pattern of social interaction in which this can be lived richly. The result of this extended process of learning and commitment constitutes our awareness of the bases for the decisions of which history is constituted. This points us beyond the horizontal plane of the various ages of history and directs our attention vertically to its ground and, hence, to the bases of the values which humankind in its varied circumstances hopes to realize.⁴⁶ It is here that one searches for the absolute ground of meaning and value of which Iqbal wrote. Without that all is ultimately relative to only an interlocking network of consumption, then of dissatisfaction and finally of anomie and ennui. The impact of the convergence of cumulative experience and reflection is heightened by its gradual elaboration in ritual and music, and its imaginative configuration in such great epics as the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*. All conspire to constitute a culture which, like a giant telecommunications dish, shapes, intensifies and extends the range and penetration of our personal sensitivity, hopes, free decision and mutual concern. Tradition, then, is not, as is history, simply everything that ever happened, whether good or bad. It is rather what appears significant for human life: it is what has been seen through time and human experience to be deeply true and necessary for human life; that is, what is hoped for. It contains the values to which our forebears first freely gave their passionate commitment in specific historical circumstances and then constantly reviewed, rectified and progressively passed on generation after generation. The

⁴⁵ H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroads, 1975), pp. 245-253.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Gadamer emphasized knowledge as the basis of tradition in contrast to those who would see it pejoratively as the result of arbitrary will. It is important to add to knowledge the free acts which, e.g., give birth to a nation and shape the attitudes and values of successive generations. As an example one might cite the continuing impact had by the Magna Carta through the Declaration of Independence upon life in North America, or of the Declaration of the Rights of Man in the national life of so many countries.

content of a tradition, expressed in works of literature and all the many facets of a culture, emerges progressively as something upon which personal character and civil society can be built. It constitutes a rich source from which multiple themes can be drawn, provided it be accepted and embraced, affirmed and cultivated. Hence, it is not because of personal inertia on our part or arbitrary will on the part of our forbears that our culture provides a model and exemplar. On the contrary, the importance of tradition derives from both the cooperative character of the learning by which wisdom is drawn from experience and the cumulative hopes and free acts of commitment and sacrifice which have defined, defended and passed on through time the corporate life of the community as civil society.⁴⁷ Ultimately, tradition bridges from ancient Greek philosophy to civil society today. It bears the divine gifts of life, meaning and love, uncovered in facing the challenges of civil life through the ages. It provides both the way back to their origin in the *arché* as the personal, free and responsible exercise of existence and even of its divine source, and the way forward to their divine goal, the way, that is, to their Alpha and their Omega.

Hope and Social Progress

This is a daunting challenge: it is necessary to avoid losing the civilizing heritage from all of the above civilizations, yet to establish a clear and firm identity which distinguishes the new nations to revive the religious roots of their identity, yet without falling into, or falling prey to, a fundamentalism which would impede progress; to develop the economic base, yet not at the cost of a new servitude; and to take one's place politically in the world, yet to retain and promote one's proper independence. While moving from a centralized to a more open economy, nations are engaged not only in balancing all the great forces of the world, but in integrating them into a new and viable whole. In this sense, here the future of civilization is in play. Truly humane progress will be possible only to the degree that peoples are able to find ways of inspiring their disparate elements with spiritual values in a way that promotes both the dignity of the human person and the social cohesion and cooperation of its peoples. Prof. S. Shermukhamedov of Uzbekistan provides us with an excellent description of spiritual culture. This is "the system in which the values of human society and humankind are reflected, impressed and incarnated with their needs, wishes, interests, hopes, beliefs, persuasions. This is the world of emotions, sensations, aspirations, views, wills, impulses and actions, as impressed upon the internal world of man and realized through the interaction between society and nature in which man is the subject of national and common values. Man is the highest value and his life, goodness, interests, harmony, happiness are the goals of society." These words reflect an important shift taking place in contemporary culture. Previously, in fact from the time of the great trio of Greek philosophers, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, thought had shifted in an objectivist direction. Concern was centered upon the way things were, rather than upon the human person who knows and engages them. This orientation was radicalized at the beginning of modern times which came thereby to be characterized by rationalism. It is then of epic moment that in our day we should become aware of not only the achievement of this orientation, but also of its limitations and of the way in which it has held us captive. Now the concerns rightly underlined by Prof. Shermukhamedov have come to the fore. They are reflected in the new hopes and aspirations of peoples. This provides orientation for our search further into the nature of spiritual civilization, its foundations and its significance for social progress. One of the most important characteristics of human persons and societies is their capability for

⁴⁷ "Toward a Rational Theory of Tradition", in K. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutation: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1963), p. 254.

development and growth. One is born with open and unlimited powers for knowledge and for love. Life consists in developing, deploying and exercising these capabilities. Given the communitary character of human growth and learning, dependence upon others is not unnatural – quite the contrary. Within, as well as beyond, our social group we depend upon other persons according as they possess abilities which we, as individuals and communities, need for our growth, self-realization and fulfillment. This dependence is not primarily one of obedience to the will of others, but is based upon their comparative excellence in some dimension – whether this be the doctor’s professional skill in healing or the wise person’s insight and judgment in matters where profound understanding is required. The preeminence of wise persons in the community is not something they usurp or with which they are arbitrarily endowed; it is based rather upon their abilities as these are reasonably and freely acknowledged by others. Further, this is not a matter of universal law imposed from above and uniformly repeated in univocal terms. Rather it is a matter of corporate learning developed by the components of a civil society each with its own special hopes and concerns and each related to the other in a pattern of subsidiarity. All of these – the role of the community in learning, the contribution of extended historical experience regarding the horizontal and vertical axes of life and meaning, and the grounding of dependence in competency – combine to endow tradition with authority for subsequent ages. This is varied according to the different components of tradition and their interrelation. There are reasons to believe, moreover, that tradition is not a passive storehouse of materials simply waiting upon the inquirer, but that its content of authentic wisdom plays a normative role for life in subsequent ages. On the one hand, without such a normative referent, prudence would be as relativistic and ineffective as muscular action without a skeletal substructure. Life would be merely a matter of compromise and accommodation on any terms, with no sense of the value either of what was being compromised or of that for which it was compromised. On the other hand, were the normative factor to reside simply in a transcendental or abstract vision the result would be devoid of existential content. The fact that humans, no matter how different in culture, do not remain indifferent before the flow of events, but dispute – even bitterly – the direction of changes hoped for their community reflects that every humanism is committed actively to the realization of some common – if general – sense of perfection. Without this, even conflict would be impossible for there would be no intersection of the divergent positions and, hence, no debate or conflict. Through history, communities discover vision which both transcends time and directs life in all times, past, present and future. The content of that vision is a set of values and hopes which, by their fullness and harmony of measure, point the way to mature and perfect human formation and, thereby, orient life.⁴⁸

Such a vision is historical because it arises in the life of a people in time. It is also normative, because it provides a basis upon which past historical ages, present options and future possibilities are judged; it presents an appropriate way of preserving that life through time. What begins to emerge is Heidegger’s insight regarding Being and its characteristics of unity, truth and justice, goodness and love. These are not simply empty ideals, but the ground, hidden or veiled, as it were, and erupting into time through the conscious personal and group hopes of free human beings in history. Seen in this light, the process of human search, discussion and decision – today called democracy – becomes more than a method for managing human affairs; more substantively, it is the mode of the emergence of being in time, the very reality of the life of persons and societies. One’s cultural heritage or tradition constitutes a specification of the general sense of being or perfection, but not as if this were chronologically distant in the past and, therefore, in need of being drawn forward by some artificial contrivance. Rather, being and its values live and act in the lives

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 245.

of all whom they inspire and judge. In its synchronic form, through time, tradition is the timeless dimension of history. Rather than reconstructing it, we belong to it – just as it belongs to us. Traditions then are, in effect, the ultimate communities of human hopes and striving, for human life and understanding are implemented, not by isolated individual acts of subjectivity – which Gadamer describes as flickerings in the closed circuits or personal consciousness⁴⁹ – but by our situatedness in a tradition. By fusing both past and present, tradition enables the component groupings of civil society to determine the specific direction of their lives and to mobilize the hopes and mutual commitments of which true and progressive community life is built.⁵⁰ Conversely, it is this sense of the good or of hopes and values, which emerges through the concrete, lived experience of a people throughout its history. This constitutes its cultural heritage, and enables society, in turn, to evaluate its life in order to pursue its true good and to avoid what is socially destructive. In the absence of tradition as the continuity of hopes and values, present events would be simply facts to be succeeded by counter-facts. The succeeding waves of such disjointed happenings would constitute a history written in terms of violence. This, in turn, could be restrained only by some utopian abstraction built upon the reductivist limitations of modern rationalisms. Such elimination of all hopes and expressions of democratic freedoms is the archetypal modern nightmare, 1984.

All this stands in stark contrast to one's heritage or tradition as the rich cumulative expression of meaning and hopes evolved by a people through the ages to a point of normative and classical perfection. Exemplified architecturally in a Parthenon or a Taj Mahal, it is embodied personally in a Confucius or Gandhi, a Bolivar or Lincoln, a Martin Luther King or a Mother Theresa. Various terms "charismatic personalities," (Shils)⁵¹ "paradigmatic individuals" (Cua)⁵² or characters who meld role and personality in providing a cultural or moral ideal (MacIntyre),⁵³ they supersede mere historical facts. As concrete universals, they express in the varied patterns of civil society that harmony and fullness of perfection which is at once classical and historical, ideal and personal, uplifting and dynamizing – in a word, liberating. Nor is it accidental that as examples the founders of the great religious traditions come most spontaneously to mind. It is not, of course, that people cannot or do not form the component groups of civil society on the basis of their concrete concerns for education, ecology or life. But their motivation in this as fully human goes beyond pragmatic, external goals to the internal social hopes and commitments which in most cultures are religiously based. It is necessary then to look into the nature of cultural traditions as constituted of freedom as it forms hopes and values, virtues and tradition, and to the hermeneutics whereby these can be interpreted in a progressive manner.

Civilizations in Dialogue: Hope for the New Millennium

At this turn of the millennium we stand a point not only of numerical change to the series 2000 or even of a change within a system as with a substitution of political parties, but at a point of revision of the very nature of world ordering itself. Earlier the issue was one of the possession of territory under the leadership of great Emperors or of physical resources and the military-industrial power that entailed. More recently we have seen the world divided by ideologies into

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 258.

⁵⁰ Edward Shils, *Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 12-13.

⁵¹ *Dimensions of Moral Creativity: Paradigms, Principles and Ideals* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978).

⁵² *After Virtue*, 29-30.

⁵³ "Toward a Rational Theory of Tradition," in K. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutation: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1963), p. 254.

great spheres. Since the end of the Cold War, however, it is suggested famously in the work of Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*,⁵⁴ that the world order is being remade on the basis of the pattern of civilizations. This reflects a deep transformation in interests and epistemology. Before, attention was oriented objectively, that is, to things as standing over against (ob-against; ject-thrown) the knowing subject. In this perspective their quantitative characteristics were particularly salient and were given major importance. In this century the subject and its intentional life or subjectivity and values, have come to the fore and phenomenological methods have been developed for their identification and interpretation. In any case, it is suggested that the new world order will be based not on the resources we have, but on the civilizations we are: not on having but on being. According to Huntington the notion of civilization seems to have developed in the 18th century as a term to distinguish cultivated peoples from the barbarian or native populations being encountered in the process of colonization. In this sense it was a universal term used in the singular and implied a single elite standard of urbanization, literacy and the like for the admission of a people into the world order. When the standard was met the people was “civilized”; all the rest were simply “uncivilized.” In the 19th century a distinction was made between civilization as characterized by its material and technological capabilities or by a more elaborate political and urban development, and culture, which was the hopes and values and the moral qualities of a people. However, the two terms have tended to merge in expressing an overall way of life, with civilization being the broader term. Where culture focuses on the understanding of perfection and fulfillment and the evaluation of what leads thereto; civilization is more the total working out of life in these terms. Hence civilization is culture, as it were, writ large. This appears in a number of descriptions of civilization where culture is always a central element: for F. Braudel civilization is “a cultural arena,”⁵⁵ a collection of cultural characteristics and phenomena; for C. Dawson: the product of “a particular original process of cultural activity which is the work of a particular people;”⁵⁶ for J. Wallerstein it is “a particular concatenation of worldview, customs, structures, and culture (both material culture and high cultures) which form some kind of historical whole.”⁵⁷ Taken as a matter of identity it can be said that a civilization is the largest and most perduring unit or whole – the largest “we”.⁵⁸ The elements included are blood, language, religion and way of life. Among these religion is “the central defining characteristic of a civilizations,”⁵⁹ as it is the point of a person’s or peoples deepest and most intense hopes and commitments, the foundation on which the great civilizations rest.⁶⁰ Hence the major religions (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Confucianism) are each associated with a civilization, the exception being Buddhism which came as a reform movement, it was uprooted from its native India and lives only in *diaspora* among other nations. Civilizations endure over long periods of time. While empires come and go, civilizations “survive political, social, economic even ideological upheavals.”⁶¹ International history rightly documents the thesis that political systems are transient expedients on the surface of civilization, and that the destiny of each linguistically and morally unified community depends ultimately upon the survival of certain primary structuring ideas around which successive generations have coalesced and which then symbolize

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 245.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 258.

⁵⁶ Shils, pp. 12-13.

⁵⁷ *Dimensions of Moral Creativity: Paradigms, Principles and Ideals* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978).

⁵⁸ *After Virtue*, 29-30.

⁵⁹ Ivor Leclerc, "The Metaphysics of the Good," *Review of Metaphysics*, 35 (1981), 3-5.

⁶⁰ *Laches*, 198-201.

⁶¹ A. Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (Edinburgh: Kinkaid and Bell, 1767; New York: Garland, 1971).

the society's continuity.⁶² But this does not mean that they are static. On the contrary it is characteristic of a civilization to evolve and the theories of such evolution have been attempts to achieve some understanding of the process, not only of the sequence of human events, but more deeply of the transformation of human self understanding and hopes itself. Famously, Toynbee theorized that civilizations are responses to human challenges; that they evolve in terms of establishing increasing control over the related factors, especially by creative minorities; that in the face of troubles there emerges a strong effort at integration followed by disintegration. Such theories vary somewhat in the order of stages, but generally move from a preparatory period, to the major development of the strengths of a culture or civilization, and then toward atrophication. In any case these imply extend cycles, extend over very long periods of time. It is significant that in the end, however, Huntington is not able to give any clear definition of civilizations, whereas Descartes would request just such characteristics for scientific knowledge. Huntington notes that civilizations generally somewhat overlap, and that while no clear concept can be delineated civilization are nonetheless important. Civilizations have no clear-cut boundaries and no precise beginnings and endings. People can and do redefine their identities and, as a result, the composition and shapes of civilizations change over time. The cultures of peoples interact and overlap. The extent to which the cultures of civilizations resemble or differ from each other also varies considerably. Civilizations are nonetheless meaningful entities, and while the lines between them are seldom sharp, they are real. In this light it can be seen that a shift of world order to a pattern not of empires or commercial blocks, but of civilizations bespeaks a great development in human consciousness and hopes beyond the external, objective and physical to the internal, subjective, spiritual and indeed religions. In contrast to Descartes it appears that what is most significant in the relations between peoples, indeed what defines them as peoples, is not a matter accessible by scientific definition, but is a matter of more inclusive aesthetic appreciation. It is in these terms that one's life hopes and commitments, personal relations and interaction between peoples are realized. Again we could ask whether this is the result of philosophical advances in opening for example the dimensions of phenomenological awareness or whether these philosophical advances are the result of social history. My sense is that the two proceed together with the philosophical providing the reflective dimension to the social process, just as the cultures provide the sense of perfection and hopes in the progress of civilization. In any case this reflects the present crisis of objective reason and its enrichment by subjectivity as the new agenda.

Conclusion

We have followed the issue of hope from the surface sense of chance and fortune to its deeper sense of human meaning. Thus we have followed the efforts of the human spirit to break beyond the long Western project of objective knowledge, especially in its increasingly rationalist structures, in order to embrace long forgotten elements of purpose and will, of harmony and beauty. As a result, an aesthetic syntheses of values and culture, of civilization and globalization, have become newly possible. To restrict the mind its older confidence in the object seems at first view to be more safe, but, as human awareness expands and people move on, the merely objective world appears to crumble. To hold exclusively thereto is the key to hopelessness, bitterness and despair. Nevertheless, to recognize the new dimensions of subjectivity is not to assure our hopes, for human freedom is classically subject to abuse and the new sense of freedom brings with it new and urgent responsibilities. These will require all that the heritage of objective knowledge, both speculative

⁶² *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII, 9, 1159b25-1160a30.

and practical, can provide. But to this there must be added an ability for personal and social creativity. These must draw upon the broad heritage of the cultures and face the challenge of drawing these together in new cumulatively cooperative manners. This is the road of hope that opens before us.

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4.

The Asymmetry of Hope: Reflections on a Human Predicament

Byron Kaldis

*To Hope, that kindles love on earth aright
Thou, for thyself and others, strength supply.
Dante, Paradiso, Canto xxv, ll. 44-45¹*

The Psychologism of Hope

Hope, akin to pleasure and pain but unlike geometrical concepts, is burdened by an ambiguity with regard to its logical antithesis: pessimism, despair or the feeling of the loss of all hope, can be considered either as contraries of hopefulness or as its contradictory. The controversy concerning the mutual status of these two elemental human conditions pivots around two positions. Either hope and its opposite cover the whole field of human emotions in this area, or, alternatively, they are seen as allowing a middle area in-between them. Either, that is, there is no middle ground between the two extremes, in which case the loss of hope means the immediate onset of despair and the suffering of the irreversible, and vice versa. Or, there is a sort of in-between condition in which human beings find themselves in a neutral state, neither hoping nor despairing. Curiously enough, acknowledging these two opposite views as the only ones possible is itself, of course, modeled on, or is an applied instance of, the logical relation sustaining the former alternative: for it, too, necessarily posits these two possibilities as mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive—hope and its opposite must either instantiate a relation of contraries or one of contradictories, nothing else being logically acceptable. Both these positions envisage hope and its opposite occupying symmetrically antithetical grounds.

The asymmetry between hope and its opposite that I have in mind can be briefly put as follows, though it occupies the whole discussion in this paper. In trying to ascertain the future or probe its eventualities in the darkness of the present, one is thereby trying to discover a motive for continuing exerting efforts towards a desired end. But being hopeful about the possibility of the outcome (i.e. its becoming a reality) implies that such a state of affairs is not only not conceived as essentially impossible² but it is also conceived as one the causes of which (other states of affairs)

¹ These lines are less well-known than the justly famous words Dante saw over the portal to Hell (*Inferno*, Canto iii) that proclaim horrifyingly and poignantly the everlastingness of suffering, and end with the impossibility of exiting: "*Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate*". This is reminiscent of Schopenhauer's irony against the optimists, the only difference being that for him exiting this wretched world is a possibility (cf. his remarks on Lessing's son): *The World as Will and Representation*, Engl. Tr., Vol. II, pp. 579ff and Vol. I., §§56-59. Dante's lines quoted above and his own orthodox Thomistic definition of hope (later in the same Canto) seem to imply that the sign above the entrance to hell is, despite its own warning, not eternal.

² My analysis here can also be put in terms of the distinction between the notions of 'contingent' and 'possible' as defined by Spinoza with regard to particular things, *Ethics*, Pt. IV, Def. III and IV. The difference between the two is this: 'contingent things' are those such that with regard solely to their essence, there is nothing in it (i.e. in the definition of such a thing) that necessarily asserts or not the existence of the thing; whereas 'possible things' are those which with regard to their productive causes we have no knowledge of whether these causes shall be actualized determinately. This means that in relation to the former definition, hope and despair are indeed equidistant, but in the latter case being hopeful as opposed to entertaining no hope or despairing (our two options with which I opened up the discussion) is not warranted for it assumes an additional possibility for which hopeful expectation must be implied. In this sense, in the latter case, even if we were warranted in assuming a hopeful stance towards the future possible things for other reasons (see next footnote) my thesis is still valid. For what I am claiming, at least at first, is that

can be ‘hopefully expected’ to be present in the future. But such a belief amounts to a vicious circle for the proximate or auxiliary ‘expectation,’ i.e. hope, is unwarranted as a premise (for it itself requires justification). By contrast, despair is an attitude towards a future outcome whereby the negation of a desired end is expected—but notice, that this expectation is not tinged with hopefulness. So the injunction that hope and its opposite are equivalent, even in the favorable case of allowing a 0.5 probability to each of the positive and negative versions of an outcome, and that hence it is rational to be hopeful, does not stand. For the two attitudes are not symmetrical, nor are any advantages accruing as a result of adopting one of the two stances, hope, forthcoming.³

I have started this discussion by introducing the standard psychological view of hope as an emotion or attitude. Implicit in this view is that any talk of hope must refer exclusively to individual human beings’ mental life. And I have indicated two positions whereby either hope and its opposite are simply contraries or, alternatively, contradictories – either way, symmetrical. Should we probe into it further, this symmetry vanishes (as all versions of pessimism or Hume’s skepticism have shown).⁴ Is there, though, a third possibility available? Could a plausible case be made for an alternative and what would that be? Such a third, alternative, approach as the one proposed in this paper brings in the asymmetry in a more straightforward manner and establishes it as fundamental (not merely as an indirect or empirical result).

One way of exploring this is to first notice the following. My remarks so far have been put forward on the basis of a tacit assumption. It was assumed—and is no less assumed in philosophical discussions of this topic—that hope and its opposite refer to primarily individual, psychological, conditions. That is, they are understood to be mental states of conscious beings, and what is more, of self-conscious beings who are none other than human persons as subjects of (self) consciousness. But this assumption naturally limits the subject matter unnecessarily. It is of course beyond doubt that hope is a feeling that can be experienced only by self-conscious beings as an internal condition. It must further be noted that such feelings or mental states are also second-order states par excellence whereby the individual self-conscious human subject attends to her or his other states and feelings. Hope and its opposite, that is, are considered in this common-sense picture (endorsed by science and philosophy) as second-order states in that they are self-conscious experiences the content of which are other (first-order) states: they are *about* these other states, in the classic phenomenological sense of ‘intentionality.’ The formal objects of hope are not external things or states of affairs but other conscious states internal to the subject of experience. Hope and its opposite are thus characterizations or evaluations of these other mental states. The question arising at this point, though, is how it is possible for such a second-order psychological mechanism to come about and be activated to function as an evaluative appraising or ordering. How is it possible for our mental apparatus to possess and exhibit this double feature or capacity arranged

the two attitudes are not symmetrical. At a deeper level, however, I would even argue that this asymmetry entails also that no supplementary premises that could be added in favor of hope (sociological, psychological, etc.) can tip the balance in favor of the rationality of hope. I do not have space to go into this by discussing arguments against the extreme Schopenhauerian view of suffering as quantitatively and qualitatively overbearing. It suffices to compare Cicero’s report of the opposite Stoic view in his *Tusculan Disputations* 5.40-1 on happiness requiring confidence about the good and the future.

³ For a ‘pessimistic’ logic demonstrating the errors of being hopeful see Francis Bacon’s Essay ‘On Earthly Hope,’ though it is somewhat qualified in his discussion of the positive political service that hope may be put into in order to avoid seditious behavior in a society of not actually satisfied people. Bacon is so vehement against the ‘folly’ of hope that he, unlike perhaps Schopenhauer, would not even welcome something like Pascal’s saying: “The only thing that consoles us in our misery is diversion, and yet it is the greatest of our miseries. For it is diversion that prevents us from thinking over ourselves and [thus] waste away imperceptibly. Without diversion we should be plunged into boredom, and that boredom would force us to search for a more solid means to get out of it; but diversion amuses us and makes us arrive at death imperceptibly.” Pascal, ‘Misère,’ *Pensées*, II, Édition Critique (par Z. Tourneur), Éditions De Cluny, Paris, 1938, §488, p. 249 [my translation].

⁴ See, e.g., Hume’s *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* or his essay ‘Of Suicide.’

in a hierarchy of two levels? What this question demands, in effect, is an explanation of the *prima facie* paradoxical phenomenon of one and the same mental substance or activity⁵ having the power to be self-critical, to be an evaluator of itself. It is not—as one might object—the same activity as when a human being criticizes or appraises his or her thoughts, plans, feelings, etc. Unlike this latter case, part and parcel of our everyday life, in the case of a mentalistic analysis of hope-qua-appraiser there is activated a kind of mental criticism (as we may name it) that is at first sight a peculiar mixture containing a part that is clearly constructed out of propositions and one other equally powerful part composed of feelings or emotions. According to this modified picture, a state of hope or despair is not simply an ‘objectively’ aimed at estimate of an external state of affairs nor one of an internal psychological state. Hope and its opposite are above all feelings or emotions with a powerful grip on human beings even—and perhaps more so—at times when we are perfectly aware of the lack of an external objective estimate or appraisal that could possibly justify such a feeling. Hope and its opposite, nevertheless, are not illogical or unexplainable states, even though it can be admitted that they are most usually indeterminate. Rather what is at first sight unexplainable, I must repeat, is this self-referential ability of our mental apparatus bestowing a second-order function upon itself by itself. Philosophy and psychology have of course put forward a variety of topological and other similar theories to explain this. They describe the human soul or the seat of the human mind as essentially divided into different but interrelating parts. Notoriously, such an interrelationship ascribed to distinct parts is fraught with epistemological difficulties, from Plato to Freud and down to neural networks.⁶ In a significant way, such topological theories repeat the problem rather than solve it.

A classic illustration of a straightforward mentalistic picture of hope in terms of pleasure and pain is that of Spinoza’s and a brief quotation at this point would help us keep a grip on this. All the elements are present here, including one version of the contrariety of emotions (i.e. as opposites without a middle ground). After having proved that the mind can be equally affected by an image of a thing past or future as it can be by one of a thing present, Spinoza extracts two Notes, the second of which gives a definition of the various terms involved. “Hope is nothing else but an inconstant pleasure, arising from the image of something future or past, whereof we do not yet know the issue. Fear, on the other hand, is an inconstant pain also arising from the image of something concerning which we are in doubt. If the element of doubt be removed from these emotions, hope becomes Confidence and fear becomes Despair. In other words, Pleasure or Pain arising from the image of something concerning which we have hoped or feared. Again, Joy is Pleasure arising from the image of something past whereof we doubted the issue. Disappointment is the Pain opposed to Joy.”⁷ One thing we should notice here is the exclusive identification of the pleasurable feeling of joy with the image of something past (and equally of its opposite, disappointment). Given his identification of the logical equivalence of degrees of affection by representations of past, future or present things, it appears that for Spinoza it cannot be the case that disappointment (and its parallel, despair) can be an appropriate mental state for future contingencies. Curiously, and I think in a self-contradictory manner, neither despair nor disappointment are allowed to be felt with regard to the possibility of a future filled with suffering

⁵ Whether one subscribes to a view of the mind as a *res cogitans* or as pure activity or event it does not really matter here, and I thus avoid taking sides on this. I therefore try to position the analysis offered here equidistantly from classical philosophical positions. I am not sure, though, that at a later stage of analysis, such neutrality must not be abandoned.

⁶ In the case of Freud we have an attempt at circumventing these epistemological difficulties by positing a meta-psychology comprising three levels or types of approach: topological, dynamic and economic.

⁷ Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part III, Prop. XVIII, Note II.

or to the fear that it shall indeed be so (we shall see below how this will take us to two interlinked issues, that of pessimism and freedom of the will).

Once, however, we abandon the individualist, purely psychological, perspective, all such problems are evaded. Instead we may occupy the higher ground by looking at hope, not as an exclusively mental phenomenon rooted in individual psychology, but as a metaphysical one or as something involving our self-positioning as creative beings within an encompassing universe. That is, I propose to look into the matter as a collective phenomenon or, better put, as an essentially human predicament which is not, though, confined to the individual's psychology. Rather, in the discussion that follows I shall be considering human beings as a whole and in their capacity to have distinct modes of experience reflected in distinct creative activities. These activities are art, history (including politics and ethics) and science. I propose a metaphysical schema in which these three modes of human experience are distinct spheres of activity in each of which the phenomenon of hope occupies a different place. The latter is conditioned by the parameter of time which is essential to hope as such. All three types of human thought and action are, however, colligated or underpinned by a further one, that of theology. The taxonomy proposed here must be understood in relation to this fundamental feature of the asymmetry between hope and its opposite. Let us now delineate this schema.

A human being is asked not to despair. One, we are often encouraged, can never really be beyond hope, for the future understood as an empirical possibility is always open. The contingencies of a hopeful as well as of a hopeless universe are hopefully (!) of equal valence. Yet is this actually so? Perhaps, possibly. But the outcome being contingent according to this view anyway is *ex hypothesi* never foreknown to a human being. So there is clearly a contradiction lurking in. But what is more, there is an asymmetry between holding out a hope for the future and experiencing the *tremendum* of despair. Even if there is a world beyond in which one can hope, it is still a contingency. Should such a possibility be posited instead as a necessity, then we are led into the realm of theology. Theology posits a principle or an *archē* from which everything else flows and unfolds in the form of reality understood as the object of experience of a conscious subject. If such an *archē* is posited as a beyond, there is still the question of the value of the here and now in relation to this beyond. Platonic metaphysics, Kantian transcendentalism of the thing-in-itself, Plotinian One, Judeo-Christian or Moslem Creator, Hindu or Buddhist truths are all but a restating of the problem of the relation of the here and now with the beyond. And while the latter may appear symmetrically both as the point-source of a past and as the end of an unfolding future, the human hope of encountering it is not symmetrical to the despair of missing it for ever certainly. Being enveloped in a sea of suffering and despair once possibilities turn out to be necessity cannot allow hope to compete with despair. Even if we were to be blessed with the vision of a life in a perfect world in the sense used in the theodicy of St. Irenaeus, it is still a logical contradiction to expect such perfection to be coherently possible or conceivable as the same by all. So why posit it or hope for it? Why is suffering necessary? "For hope to be possible" is the answer, given by Christian theodicy and Kant alike. But isn't this circular?

A clear illustration of the logical indispensability of positing a beyond the value of which determines the source and nature of hope as essentially of an otherworldly object is found in the patristic Christian tradition in the West in the thought of Augustine. He links hope to happiness and the eternal life: "[I]f anyone accepts the present life in such a spirit that he uses it with the end in view of the other life on which he has set his heart with all his ardor and for which he hopes with all confidence, such a man may without absurdity be called happy even now, though rather

by future hope than in present reality” But Augustine adds a crucial point: “Present reality without that hope is, to be sure, a false happiness, in fact, an utter misery.”⁸

Hope, as other than a purely psychological datum, is involved in different modes of human thought and activities, in different modes of experiencing the world and our lives in it. To understand how hope can be involved in the various human enterprises the dimension of time must be the axis of our analysis. Hope and its opposite are logically related to the idea of anticipation. There is necessarily a temporal aspect essential to hope—though, of course, hope is experienced in the present. This temporal aspect of hope and its opposite assumes different forms in the diverse human endeavors. According to which mode is prominent hope itself takes on, correspondingly, a different form and significance. The paradigmatic type of human activity in which hope appears in its commonplace form as anticipation is found in history, politics and ethics: it has to do with human social praxis. Here the dominant form of time is the future, and consequently politics and history are transformed into social and historical or secularized ‘theodicies’ in which humankind is expected to progress as a whole. Since the future is in principle open, given certain constraints that can be known to the human mind, the principal notion here is that of possibility. Hope must here be understood as a possibility. By contrast, in the case of science and technology, or in other words in the field of the discovery of the pre-existing laws of the physical universe (including human beings), the principal temporal mode is that of the past. The science of nature and its technological subjugation can be understood accordingly as a pre-meditation or perhaps, without straining the word too much, as a pre-moition. Consequently, in this field where the human mind is looking back, as it were, human hope appears as nothingness; there is really no place for hope to occupy, for the laws are to be discovered as pre-existing. No place, that is, except for the borrowed and hence attenuated sense of the expectation to have the order of nature discovered and laid bare.

We have so far seen two temporal dimensions, the future and the past in relation to hope. In both of these, hope is an external element, external, that is, to the actual process employed by the human mind in these two spheres of knowledge and action: the process and the end result anticipated are invested with the feeling of hope, but the latter is outside the process and the end. Neither the scientific or the historico-political process nor their respective ends embody hope or despair within them. Hope is simply added on. It is thus a mediated relation. And as such it cannot legitimize hope by itself. Therefore whether hope or its opposite, despair, should prevail on logical grounds is not symmetrical as the partisans of hope would like to have it (thus also loading the dice). There is, however, another human activity in which hope is embodied within in an unmediated relation: this is art, both in its creative and its evaluative moments. We may hence say that the temporal dimension appropriate here is that of the present. I should therefore put forward that art must be seen as an *apocalypse of hope in situ*. Hope is here actualized as a presence. But is this not an oxymoron? Have we not associated hope with temporal anticipation? It is paradoxical to claim that hope becomes actual in art for that erases the concept of hope itself, as we know it. Before we explore this any further we must first look at history and politics as one grand avenue which humankind traverses in hope of a better future. Historical movement is par excellence a kind of social (non-psychologicistic or non-atomistic) vehicle for hope to manifest itself on a grand scale.

⁸ *The City of God*, Engl. Tr., Penguin Books, 1972, p. 881.

World History and Hope

Let us start by asking a question that would eventually lead us to our ultimate point. Is there a social vehicle, other than politics and history, by means of which hope can be revealed and transmitted, or alternatively perhaps thwarted and silenced? Art, and in particular literature, appears to be such a specially designed medium. For though there does not seem, at first sight, to be any special reason why artistic creation and enjoyment should be uniquely related to, or be expressive of, hope and its opposite, there, nevertheless, appears to be no difficulty and hence no less of a disagreement in understanding the arts as having the power of transmitting or expressing certain ideas representing them via their special media. More often than not, a poem or a musical piece is evaluated by means of its morphic concordance with a certain feeling or mood that it supposedly evokes. This is not, though, what I have in mind when I am urging us to reconsider the place of art in understanding hope, and its special relation to it. One way or path taken primarily by E. Bloch in our times is to assign art the function of utopian hopefulness.⁹ This does not of course mean that all art or styles or kinds thereof can be taken to be equally promoting such a task. What this view asks us to consider instead is the question under what conditions and by means of what analytical tools could certain forms of art or artistic creations be injected with the function of a utopian expectation of progress.

The alternative way, I am proposing, in which the special relation between art and hope can be seen is to start by considering the institution of art itself as directly related to the human capacity for hope and despair. It is even better put when we phrase this starting point not in terms of a relationship between art and the feeling of hope—which would be rather circular, of course—but rather in terms of the notion of ‘embodiment’: art embodies hope and its opposite. What does this mean? Now, it is not uncommon for certain philosophical systems in the West to have propounded theories of historical development, namely, philosophies of history, in which the hopeful progress of humankind is either demonstrated as part of such a forward-looking process, or as just a chimera (though, precisely because it is exposed as such a chimera it is of no less value as an ideal or end in the latter picture, too). And, in parallel to this, a similar sort of project is expected to be (or sometimes is) carried out with respect to science, revealing the same common hopeful end of the march of the long-drawn human progress.¹⁰ In both of these, not unrelated, positions, what is regarded as hopeful is that a certain end is either proven to be assured to us once we looked at the process of historical (political-cum-scientific) progress—or not. That is, these pictures are pictures of unfolding hopefulness considered as an indispensable condition (as well as their opposites of hopelessness) that humankind is bound to attain (or alternatively never avoid, sadly).¹¹ The end itself, though, is described, explicitly or not, as something desirable and objectively good as a matter of course (in both the optimistic and pessimistic versions of these developmental ‘stories’). Yet such a description of the ultimate end for which we shall now have reason to rejoice in hope—despite our current state of personal or worldwide suffering—is in no way embodied in, or being related as an aspect thereof to, the process by means of which the ultimate end is to be attained.

⁹ E. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, MIT Press, 1986. My discussion below in terms of the ‘not-as-yet’ is intended as an alternative approach to that of Bloch’s own.

¹⁰ Of course this has proven another misplaced hope ever since Hume pointed out the impossibility of justifying induction as a logical process a limitation that was carried forward in our century in the work of Popper, Hanson, Kuhn and Feuerabend. Popper, in particular, has made clear that the justification of the validity of science cannot be furnished by science itself: *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 1980, p. 55. As in my analysis, such a justification is an extraneous element. The additional attack on the analytic-synthetic distinction carried out by Quine has supplemented this.

¹¹ A locus classicus of the hopeless state of earthly commonwealths never to be evaded is of course Augustine’s position: see, e.g., *The City of God*, Bk. XIV, Chap. 25.

End and process are somehow kept as disjoint. Such an ultimate end, in relation to which all past and present worldwide historical processes acquire meaning and thus hopefulness and justification, does not enter into the specification of the process which will carry us towards, and finally place us at, it. This is by no means curious. For such a teleologically understood end must be such as to lend its justification over to the process—not the other way round, understandably. Hence the controversy between proponents of optimistic philosophies of history and their pessimistic opponents as to the grounds on the basis of which the historical process which is (or is not) expected to lead us to the desired end contains the necessary elements for doing so (e.g. Kant’s ‘the cunning of nature,’ Hegel’s ‘the cunning of reason,’ Schopenhauer’s or modern sociobiology’s ‘the death of the individual for the survival and improvement of the species’ and so forth). Quite obviously, discerning the presence of such required elements no less than their desirable functioning is itself necessitated by a hope: the hope of attaining the end, the hope that *this* process and *that* end are not to remain for ever unrelated—and yet they are never to be one and the same precisely because of the need for such a relation. Hence we see the asymmetry of hope and pessimism again here. For as the statement of these requirements is phrased, it becomes rather obvious that we can either not say the same of the pessimistic school, or we can re-phrase the statement by saying that the ‘pessimist is hoping-that...’ in which case we have reduced the pessimist thesis to an absurdity.

Let us go on, however. We have reached a point at which the hopefulness of the desired end at which human history is expected to culminate depends on an externally introduced factor: the hopefulness of finding the required element in the process that will convey us to the end. Now, this sounds almost like a trick, cheating and not cheating at the same time. For Kant, at least, there is a proof that the required elements, reason and moral development, are present or can be secured by various means.¹² Nevertheless, what I am claiming here is that wishing to detect such a presence or claiming that it exists are themselves human attitudes nourished in the fount of hope. They are posited even before the actual proofs of universal progress begin to unfold as to the presence or absence of the ‘fuel’ of historical development. The asymmetry reappears again: the pessimist cannot first hope not-to-find the hidden ‘fuel,’ nor can the pessimist be expected to start the whole project of detecting the opposite of what his rivals hold, i.e. despair, nor of detecting nothing at all in an attitude of, or motivated by, hope (namely, the hope of not finding anything other than despair) without making his position suspiciously close to that of his opponent. This is, naturally, something that the pessimist thesis would reject as at least internally incoherent.¹³

Art as Hope

In what different sense then could art be said to ‘embody’ the promise of hope or perhaps the despair of pessimism?¹⁴ In what ways radically different to those of history and politics could hope

¹² See Kant’s third *Critique* [Teleological Judgment], *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone*, and his political and historical essays, esp. ‘Eternal Peace,’ ‘Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective’ and ‘Contest of Faculties.’

¹³ I do not know whether, unlike the camp of hope, the pessimist can proceed on the basis of a wager of coherence in his position, or whether like his opponents insist on constructing a coherent theory.

¹⁴ In what follows, I do not of course mean to exclude the possibility that art forms and subjects may indeed express despair or arouse melancholy. But what I wish to point out is that even in these cases art is the symbol of hope beyond simple psychologism or historicism (discussed in the two previous sections). My analysis may be better understood if we modeled it on a distinction drawn by Freud between temporary mourning (for an object lost) and melancholy (a kind of perpetual narcissism) in his 1917 [1915] essay ‘Mourning and Melancholia’: art, in my sense, may be like the former but not like the latter. Cf. E. Panofsky, R. Klíbanky & F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholia* [now in French translation].

and its opposite be found embodied in art (rather than in a social progress where my analysis showed that they are *not* embedded but simply brought in from without)?

I believe the discussion so far furnishes us with a view with which to contrast the distinct nature of art in the following sense. What we have seen takes place in rationalist philosophies of history is that hope and its opposite enters the picture of the relation between process and desired end from an outside, separate, perspective. It is an external ingredient or missing link. In art, by contrast, though still viewed as the embodiment of hope and its opposite—as I have already claimed—such an embodiment is, unlike the case of the rationalist unfolding of history, such that the element of hope is internal to the relation of means-ends. In order to understand and appreciate this view more fully we must first lay aside all the diverse theories of beauty and of art as such. We must, that is, avoid getting entangled in a discussion evaluating the merits of different approaches to art or to kinds of art. We must, rather, look at art as a unified phenomenon irrespective of diverse local concepts or definitions. Taken as a whole, and from the perspective of an examination of hope other than a psychological state of the individual subject of consciousness, art appears to be analyzable as a kind of human endeavor that unites intrinsically the urge for the attainment of a desired end with the process required to achieve it. In artistic creation and enjoyment, taken together for our purposes here, hope becomes manifested by a symbolic form. Art is the symbol of hope. Art is an unmediated mode of revealing the power of hope, despite being its symbol. For in certain significant realms of human experience and cognition, such as for instance in theological *anagogical* semantics, the symbol is not externally related to its representatum.¹⁵ But when we say that art reveals the power of hope, it is natural to ask: hope for what, though? Is it for the attainment of an individual or social good? No. What hope symbolically represented in art signifies must not be understood as merely a state of affairs external to artistic creation or enjoyment (as such a good would be). Strictly speaking, however, art does not re-present hope. To take art as the symbol of hope does not license the conclusion that hope is thus indirectly revealed or metaphorically pointed to or even felt metonymically. On the contrary, as in doctrinal theological semantics in the West, the symbol is our only reality to be grasped. In creating and enjoying artistic objects and events the human mind presents to itself directly the very possibility of hope—though not of hope as the not-yet of an expected outcome. Whereas in history and politics, human beings remain in a state of expectation viewing the attainment of the desired end from afar (and acknowledging it as precisely such, an ‘end,’ a ‘completion’), thus hoping for it, in creating art human beings create and experience hope as such. Not a hope-for-something—rather, the phenomenological *epochē* of hope itself. Unrestrained by an external world of empirically ascertained reality, unattached by an epistemic relation to an object, unadorned by a not-yet end, hope-in-art is an unmediated relationship of the human mind with itself. One clear illustration of this is the function of imagination—understood both as one of the faculties of the mental (psychology) or philosophically as in the philosophy of mind as well as in literature. Understood as freedom from external objects and their connections, imagination affords us a way of seeing, analogically, how the creations of art are also embodiments of hope without the need of positioning an object or state of affairs as the desired and hoped-for end. In other words, whatever else art is or can be (politically motivated, psychologically explainable, etc.), we can discover in art, in all its multifariousness, the symbol of hope per se.

This is after all a theologically sounding conception, and is indeed theologically inspired. For like the concept of principle or *archē* found in the beginning of all philosophy, to say that art is the

¹⁵ See for instance the proofs for the validity of the special category of the theological virtues by means of the notion of ‘participation’ given by Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, II, Q LXII.

symbol of hope posits art as the principle or *archē* of creating the very possibility of hope as such without an external object and without being taken as simply a feeling of the possibility or not of a desired state of affairs. Art is the Creator-God of hope. The *pure* experience of art is the experience of hope, not of a hoped-for. If it might be objected that to understand 'hope' per se we must unavoidably make use of the ordinary idea of something being hoped-for, and that our analytical enterprise is thus in the end being reduced to the ordinary psychological one of explicating a mere psychological feeling or mental state, the reply must initially be in the affirmative. We do indeed need the ordinary, familiar, concept to start with, but we must then discard it in order to move on to a higher plane and understand 'hope' as now furnished by the particular activity of art.

If a second objection is raised to the effect that this analysis reduces hope to art, the reply is that this is misconceived. Our project would be misguided if it were to reduce hope to art already defined in a particular way. Rather, the aim of our project is also to re-formulate art, too, in a new fashion. What could, then, be a more concrete formulation of this project (itself quite 'hopeful'!)? One avenue opening up on the side of the activity of art would point to a redefinition of the concept of art itself. This would, understandably, enlarge the field of art pushing its contours beyond the customary ones: new forms of art may be acknowledged as symbols of hope. On the other hand, another path would be something in the line of what is already indicated: this would point to a reformulation of the concept of hope symbolized in all artistic endeavor. To see how these two paths may intersect, thus allowing us to position our thesis only on this intersection, let us take as our starting point the notion of art as pure creation (a standpoint related to the importance of imagination mentioned above). In creating an object recognized as an artwork modernity has ushered in a critical attitude against the centuries old received view about what constitutes a bona fide work of art. In transcending the limits imposed on how to recognize an artwork modernity put in question the traditional acceptance of the belief that in order for something to count as a work of art a certain social understanding or a certain socially constituted approbation is indispensable. If, by contrast, as modernity has shown, anything can count as such an artistic creation, the social dimension is dropped. Criteria internal to the individual idiosyncrasy are equally valid. Granted this, there still remains an ambiguity in the midst of modernity, for different strands of it, all claiming equal title to it, are pushing forward both a psychologistic and a sociological criterion of what art is. This is the locus of our first intersection of art as creation: individualistic as well as socially recognized. In an act of creation as this takes place in the special case of artistic creation hope is brought into being, not as a merely expected-for, nor as a not-as-yet, but, rather, as a completed whole, and simple without parts. Hope, that is, is brought forward completed. It shines forth. It is symbolically presented, not re-presented. There is no yet-to-be-known. Even in the case of artistic understanding, as opposed to creating, the process of critical understanding and evaluation involved is not a process of an awaiting for an outcome to be accomplished. Aesthetic creation and appreciation embody hope in themselves. Aesthetically coming into contact with an object-created (I leave out the experience associated with the aesthetic appreciation of nature, sometimes welling up the feeling of the sublime) is a condition of hope in that the coming forth into being of such an object and its aesthetic reception is a manifestation of the human power of uniting process and end into a simple whole. It is in such a uniting, a forging or welding together, that the deeper significance of hope as not merely a not-yet to be expected must be sought for and experienced. Even the process needed to accomplish the understanding and appreciation of an object as a work of art during which a temporal succession of mental states takes place, a critical evaluation, now a yes, now a no, a succession of propositional attitudes, nevertheless, despite such

a temporal ordering, the end-result is still a completed, yet simple, whole. It is simple in its formal apprehension, nothing left to be added on to it, waiting for nothing either in hope or in despair. Each time an art object is created and appreciated as such, there is nothing to be added on—for this is the meaning of creation and appreciation. Both are complete, or assumed to be so, and that assumption is sufficient. Hope is an assumption of completeness depicted in its symbolic form as art.¹⁶ If this is found objectionable on the further grounds that hope involves necessarily the sense of the incomplete, the not-as-yet, the anticipated, this is really not a problem for the approach advocated here. It is rather a problem for history and politics where, naturally, the endeavor for something to be accomplished is indispensable or where the effort of practical reasoning is a necessary condition. By contrast, in the case of art there is no need to posit such an effort for this is not the realm in which practical reason has to bring about anything.¹⁷

In the ascendant stages towards the vision of the Form of Beauty described by Diotima in the *Symposium*, in the *Beatific Vision of God*, or in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Loyola, a sense of cosmic hope *immanent* and, ultimately, *embodied* in aesthetic experience is uniquely assured for us. Let us notice what the lines of our motto from Dante, spoken by Beatrice, make clear: not only is hope related to love in setting it right, but hope must also be itself kindled or given to oneself and others, as a kind of strength. To accomplish this, hope, too, must be given strength. An extraneous power indeed. But also one that is dependent on us. If this appears naturally circular let us finally acknowledge that art, as the embodiment of hope must necessarily involve love.¹⁸

Athens, Greece

¹⁶ There are two paths along which my thesis may be developed and its foundations strengthened but lack of space precludes further analysis. One is Kierkegaard's threefold division between the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious stance in which the individual finally becomes universal, as in *Fear and Trembling*. The other is Schopenhauer's aesthetics based on the primacy of the Platonic Idea. In both cases there is a search for the eternal that allows the vanishing of the aleatoric thus permitting hope to hold the stage. Art is such a case.

¹⁷ In Wagner's *Parcifal*, after an unusually long musical overture the hero is ushered in on stage by his evil act, at the start of the drama, void of all moral and other knowledge of his act no less than of himself that he is able to express in words. Art gradually transfigures him (and us) in the end. Wagner himself, though, in his 1879 essay 'Must We Hope?' is unbearably short-sighted.

¹⁸ Unlike Stoic fortitude, courage and equanimity in the face of adversity, the case of love in relation to hope was made early by Boethius in his *Philosophiae Consolatio*. It is significant, though, that in this latter work the metaphysical issue of the freedom of the will is dealt with as the primary problem. I have no space to discuss this, but I believe that it is central to any discussion of hope. I can only remark here that my thesis about art as the locus of hope can accommodate free will. It also ties up with my discussion of contingency and possibility in the first section above.

A recent classic re-statement of the link between suffering, hope and love is M. Unamuno's *The Tragic Sense of Life*, Engl. Tr., N. York, 1954, esp. pp. 203ff. But, significantly, Unamuno makes two important additional points parallel to mine: one, he links beauty to hope ("beauty is the goal of hope", p. 201); and two, he emphasizes the temporal dimension. The difference is that for him charity is the way to achieve the perpetuity of the beautiful in hope, whereas I maintain that it is art that arrests momentaneity and thus embodies hope.

5.

Significance and Reasons for Hope

Charles Ess

“To say that the freest man is the one who has the most hope is perhaps above all to indicate that he is the man who has been able to give his existence the richest significance, or stake the most on it.” Gabriel Marcel

It is often thought that it is easier to be hopeful when we are young. But I find it is easier to be hopeful as I grow older. As a philosopher, I find good reasons and evidence for hope. And as a religious person, I firmly believe that humanity has good grounds for hope.

To be clear: I write this from a Christian perspective – but one, I hope, that is not exclusive. On the contrary, one of my grounds for hope is the increasing awareness of what the diverse religions of the world share with one another. The more I learn, the more I sense each religion – its traditions, beliefs, rituals, practices, and aspirations – as a voice lifted up, in ways utterly distinctive, and in ways consonant with the others, to form a rich and complex choir of human praise and celebration.

Philosophical Reflections

It is also appropriate for a philosopher to reflect on hope. Philosophers, I think, are often well-attuned to what Nietzsche identified as the rich ambiguity and uncertainty of existence. Where others see clear, if not simple (or, at worst, simple-minded) options and choices, philosophers regularly see multiple perspectives and possibilities, and always at least one good argument for every possible side. A philosopher’s ability to confront and analyze the complexities of ambiguity is especially useful as we consider whether or not there are grounds for hope in our days. Our world has never been better interconnected. Those of us privileged with access to global news and information face a barrage of data, events, and developments – all of which seem to careen off in multiple directions simultaneously, leaving no clear impression of a single movement in either positive or negative directions. Perhaps we can be well served by a philosophical approach that is accustomed to ambiguity and uncertainty – indeed, one that sees uncertainty and ambiguity to be central features of existence, always to be expected, rather than a temporary condition we hope to replace with singular vision, belief, certainty, and reality. Indeed, as we have learned and continue to learn at the cost of great human suffering, the path towards singularity all too frequently lands us in dogmatism that mistake their partial view for the whole truth, and thus illegitimately – if not violently – exclude views and peoples who deserve equal hearing and status. While the messiness and uncertainty of confronting existence as intrinsically ambiguous and multi-faceted are more demanding than the comforting certainties of a single view – perhaps part of our hope must rest on our increasing ability to affirm a plurality of views and perspectives, rather than insist on a single, exclusive truth.

Reasons for Hope

Given that as prelude, what reasons for hope do I see? One of the set of reasons I forward here are prompted by what many believe to be one of the greatest dangers humanity faces – namely, a runaway technology that threatens to enslave rather than liberate us.

As both existentialists and postmodernists have argued with considerable effectiveness, Western enthusiasm for the spread of reason and democracy, of social progress and material improvement through science and technology, has been seriously blunted by the rationalized authoritarianisms and technically-perfected genocides of the 20th century.

Yet, American enthusiasm for technology remains high – even as Americans recognize that their ever-more enthusiastic embrace of new technological gadgets and devices, though these often buy an increase in efficiency, does not result in an increase in personal or family leisure time, much less a sense of happiness or contentment. We are apparently caught up in a kind of helpless race towards a cyber-hell in which the machines will be our masters (so the popular science fiction images of the Borg in *Star Trek* and the computers of the *Matrix*).

But precisely here, in the face of what otherwise seems to be an overwhelming and inevitable technological “progress,” there are signs that here a hopeful middle ground may be found, one that involves humans reasserting control over the technologies that surround and infuse our lives. While some seem willing to simply bow down before the increasing dominance of technology, whatever its effects on our lives and cultures – others are starting to insist that it is technology that must serve humanity, not vice-versa. This insistence, moreover, is shared cross-culturally. Gandhi stated that “What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. Today, machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of the millions.” This same concern, in fact, was expressed as early as Goethe and Mary Shelley in the West – and most recently by no less a figure than Jeff Garten, Dean of the Yale School of Management: “Maybe it’s not time for us to adapt or die [to the increasing ubiquity and convergence of computer-mediated communications], but for the technology to adapt or die.” In fact, in my own field of research – on how computer-mediated communication (manifest in the Internet and the Web, for example) interacts with diverse cultural traditions and communicative preferences – models of human – and culturally-controlled implementations of CMC technology are emerging in *praxis* that show that our choice is *not* between enslavement to such technologies or complete rejection of them. Rather, middle grounds are being established that allow for both global communication while simultaneously preserving and enhancing distinctive cultural values and communicative preferences.

I am hopeful that these emerging middle-ground approaches to technology will take their place in a larger pattern of global change. Again, as is well known, a central problem for the Western Enlightenment vision has been the recognition that what may have been a well-intended effort to spread the Gospel of rationality, democracy, and technology was in fact only an ideological guise for a bloody colonialism that robbed peoples and cultures of their identity and dignity. Western colonialism has been countered, of course, by “local” resistance, ranging from Gandhi’s non-violent campaigns of non-cooperation in South Africa and India to more violent political struggles for independence. These movements, coupled with the now many successful efforts in the former Soviet Union to move from more authoritarian to more democratic regimes, suggest a pattern of increasing individual and collective freedom for the peoples of the world. These movements may represent a “glocalization” – i.e., distinctive ways of diverse peoples developing their own understandings and practices of what “democracy” and “freedom” mean, and how technology will operate in their individual and collective lives, rather than the imperialist

imposition of a single model upon all peoples. As such glocalization spreads, in contrast with a single, monolithic model, I think we can be hopeful indeed for our future.

Of course, freedom and democracy are not terribly meaningful when one is enslaved to the hardships and tyranny of poverty. Here again, the signs are ambiguous. Economic development in some places appears to have led to better material lives for the many, not just for the few; in other places, however, economic development has issued only in an increased gap between the few very rich and the very many poor. And at the time of this writing, the gap between the rich and the poor globally is increasing (World Bank, 2000). But again, we should not expect our machines – whether the machinery of our computing technologies or of economic development – to “automatically” issue in goodness and justice. Morally preferable outcomes require morally informed and motivated human beings to guide development and technology in ways that will issue in greater equality and justice.

There are some signs that both individually and collectively, we are learning this lesson. As I write, at least two once popular national leaders, now exposed for corruption and scandal, have found themselves forced to flee their offices, if not their countries, by an outraged people. And here in the United States, where our unsurpassed wealth and privilege most tempts us to ignore problems of equality and justice – even here there is growing recognition of the importance of attending to the growing gap between rich and poor, both domestically and internationally.

In the face of all this ambiguity and uncertainty, then, I believe there are good *reasons* to be hopeful. That is, there are arguments and evidence that, despite terrible news of disaster both natural and human, we are moving, if in fits and starts, towards greater awareness, greater effort, and greater success in learning how to live globally as a free and just people. Again, given a philosophical commitment to the intrinsic ambiguity and uncertainty of things, such hope is always faced with counter-arguments and evidence. But hope is very much like faith: it is, in part, the willingness to believe that things can indeed be better, and the willingness to risk one’s resources – indeed, one’s life – on that possibility. As Kierkegaard taught so effectively, faith is not a certainty, but an objective uncertainty held fast in the radical passion of inwardness. So hope is likewise not a naïve insistence that things will get better when all the evidence shows otherwise. Hope is rather the faith that good can emerge from evil – perhaps in ways that as yet cannot be ascertained. And hope, like faith, requires that we bet our lives and energies on attempting to help birth the good from the evil.

Faith, Hope and Love

For Christians (and anyone else who may find wisdom in the Christian Scriptures and traditions) this coherence between hope and faith further points to love. In one of the most well-known texts in the Christian Scriptures, Paul says that “...faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love” (I Corinthians 13.13, NRSV). Christians learn in teaching and experience that love – love of neighbor, love of self – is fundamental. First of all, love is the foundation for any possibility of forgiveness when we are wronged, when relationships are broken, when wholeness is destroyed. Whether between individuals or peoples globally, our hope and faith that we can bring human good out of human evil turn on not only our technical prowess and political cleverness, but ultimately on our ability to love one another.

Nor is the insistence that we love one another by any means restricted to Christian tradition. First of all, Jesus grounds this teaching by citing the *Torah* (specifically, Leviticus 19.18), thereby making clear that love of neighbor is originally a Jewish *mitzvot* or commandment. Charity is one

of the five pillars of Islam, and selfless compassion is one of the primary moral virtues of Vedanta, the religio-philosophical tradition that emerges from the Vedas of India. In Buddhist terms, we are called to always act out of compassion towards one another. Indeed, as Christians are called to love one another *beyond* the usual distinctions and hierarchies that define ordinary society, affirming that in the love of Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female (Galatians 3.28) – so Buddhists seek an underlying and fundamental unity beyond such distinctions: the more Buddhists know that unity – not simply intellectually, but at the level of deeply felt intuition – the more we are able to act out of compassion for all other beings.

In our time, the indispensable centrality of love/compassion as the foundations of human relationships has been demonstrated in perhaps the most dramatic and powerful way since the first generation of Christians as Gandhi refracted the Christian message in his teachings and practice of *ahimsa*, of non-violence. Indeed, Gandhi makes clear that compassion is to be pursued not simply on a “local,” individual level, but precisely on a political, even global level. For me, one of the most remarkable facts of the 20th century is that Gandhi’s reading of the Christian Scriptures impacted not only the lives of millions in South Africa and India, in not only a “spiritual,” but also in a directly *political* and *material* fashion. Even more remarkably, this reading and practice returned to the West in the non-violent civil rights movements of the 1960’s – with equally dramatic results. The goals of these movements in both East and West remain only partially fulfilled. But it seems clear that in both East and West, the material and spiritual lives of millions have been improved *as a matter of political reality* on the basis of love/compassion, and the hope, faith, and courage that they bring in their train.

I have learned from experience the crucial importance of loving another in order to be able to forgive – perhaps one of the most difficult lessons we can learn. These experiences of anger and despair, followed by forgiveness and reconciliation with those I had thought lost to me, convince me of the essential wisdom of Jesus’ teachings on love and forgiveness of “the enemy” – and of the wisdom of Buddhist compassion and non-violence. I have further learned from experience that, in both East and West, God is the God of time. At the height of the Cold War, when global annihilation seemed possible – indeed, probable – at any second, it seemed there was not enough *time* to work in peaceful ways towards more peaceful ends. Yet, as time unfolded we eventually came to the day when Russian and American generals watched with one another as their missile silos were dynamited. Such a notion would have been rejected as lunatic ravings ten years earlier. But as the constant worry of immediate annihilation threatened to paralyze us into inaction, word spread through the religious communities dedicated to peacemaking of an apparent revelation to the effect that “I am the God of time. You will have the time you need to work effectively.” This message, attested to by not just one recipient but also several skeptical inquirers, gave us hope to move forward. While subsequent events – including the astonishing image of former enemies collaborating in the destruction of their most awesome weapons – do not confirm this vision, neither do they contradict it. More broadly, the prophetic tradition in Judaism and Christianity rests on the shared conviction that God acts in history on the side of those most in need. In light of experience and tradition, then, I am convinced: we can have faith and hope that humanity *will* have time – the time needed to make those changes required by the problems of population growth and environmental degradation, the problems of weapons proliferation and ethnic violence – the problems of moving towards a more just and humane existence as a global humanity.

Hope as Resurrection

Finally, Christians also embrace a concept of resurrection. Whether literal or metaphorical, resurrection tells us that something more powerful than us is with us, even in our darkest, most powerless moments. Not even Death – not even the most cunning and most gruesome of deaths we can devise in our inhumanity – can kill God. Rather, God and life will triumph over the greatest human cruelty, over the apparent finality of death. Several Eastern traditions embrace a concept of reincarnation – one that allows the individual to improve morally and spiritually, over the course of many lifetimes, if necessary – as is usually the case! Whether literal or metaphorical, reincarnation expresses the infinite patience of God with humanity. There is always a second (or third or fourth...) chance, when we determine that improvement in moral excellence is in order. Not even Death can kill God – nor repress the love of God for all of humanity, from the best to the worst.

Both philosophy and my own life experience teaches me that these beliefs – in the possibility of humanity moving from worse to better, of constraining our own technologies to their best possible uses in a process of “glocalization,” of learning how to overcome hatred and division with love and compassion, of recognizing and celebrating the presence of the Divine in both our joys and sorrows – are true. At least, they are true enough. From a rational perspective, it is certainly true that if we believe these things and act on them, our chances of realizing our best hopes improve dramatically. (It seems unquestionable that if we give up hope, if we fail to take the risks of acting on our best beliefs, the chances of our hopes being realized will be significantly reduced.) In religious terms: if we learn to love one another, our faith and best hopes for humanity – including for humanity’s reconciliation with the Divine – will be realized. Of these three, faith, hope, and love, the greatest of these is love.

Drury University, USA

6. A Source for Hope for the Future

Michael A. Corey

“What is a man, that the electron is mindful of him?” Carl Becker

Is there a cause for hope in today’s overly violent, pollution-filled world? There are many who would argue that the answer to this question is a self-evident “No.” And from a certain point of view they would seem to be correct: the human population is rapidly outgrowing the earth’s underlying capacity to support it, while at the same time we are aggressively destroying our precious eco-system with reckless abandon. Species are going extinct at a truly alarming rate, and the ecological damage that we’re doing to our planet will almost certainly persist for thousands of years. It will take centuries for the earth’s rapidly diminishing ozone layer to be adequately replenished, and the many nuclear poisons that we have concocted in the last few decades are known to remain unbelievably toxic for millions of years.

We are also using our rapidly increasing technological prowess to devise weapons of mass destruction that were inconceivable just a few short years ago. Unfortunately, the human race has never invented a weapon that it didn’t eventually use, so our immediate future looks very grim indeed, especially given the many areas of political unrest that can be found throughout the globe. And when we pause to consider what would happen if a terrorist organization ever got their hands on a functional nuclear device, fear rapidly gives way to outright panic, especially since it’s probably just a matter of time until this eventually happens.

Most frightening of all, though, is the realization that no matter what tragic event threatens the future of the human race, God will almost certainly *not* intervene to prevent it. He didn’t intervene to prevent World Wars I or II, and it seems unlikely in the extreme that He will ever openly intervene in human affairs until the very end.¹

Glimmer of Hope

With this in mind, is it possible to find a glimmer of hope in today’s increasingly hopeless world? I believe that the answer to this question is an unequivocal “Yes”! Moreover, I believe that this cause for hope is objectively rational because it is based upon the conclusions of modern empirical science.

This cause for hope, in a nutshell, is founded upon the extreme structural complexity of our entire Goldilocks universe. We didn’t create this complexity, nor do we know for an absolute certainty where it ultimately came from or how it came to possess its present biocentric configuration. All we know for sure is that this complexity does indeed exist, and that our lives are possible because of it.

This being the case, we can now go one step further and utilize this profound complexity as a logical springboard to bring us to a dramatic, far-reaching conclusion. For if the universe has indeed been designed by a Supreme Intelligence for a particular purpose (as we previously concluded), then this divinely-instituted purpose isn’t going to be thwarted by anything that the

¹ According to the Bible, though, God *will* intervene at the very end of the world to prevent the destruction of the entire human race (Matt. 24:22). [Editor’s note: This article was written before 11 September 2001.]

human race can possibly do. In fact, if this cosmic Power actually foresaw the destiny of humanity when He created the cosmos at the beginning of time, then it follows that He knew from the very outset how we were going to turn out, yet He chose to instantiate the human race anyway! This suggests that humankind's future trajectory somehow fits into God's overall cosmic plan, despite its overwhelmingly ominous appearance from an earthbound point of view.

Insofar as this is so, it means that nothing that ever transpires on this planet is capable of taking our Creator by surprise. This realization is eminently reassuring in itself, because it means that events are unfolding here largely according to plan, no matter what nightmarish cataclysms may end up transpiring in our society. This belief, of course, involves a significant element of faith, *but it isn't a form of faith that we are unfamiliar with*. To the contrary, we all routinely express a tremendous amount of faith in the natural order, whether we are conscious of it or not, because it is the natural order itself that has given us our very lives on this planet. After all, we don't really know how our bodies work or how our minds are able to consciously experience the world, but we don't let these questions stop us from trying to live our lives to the fullest anyway.

In short, we tend to take all of these fundamental ingredients of life for granted, but this is just another way of saying that we actually have a great deal of unspoken faith in the entire natural order, whether we are consciously aware of it or not. David Ray Griffin calls this sort of tacit belief a "hardcore commonsense notion," because it is something that we regularly affirm in practice, even if we happen to verbally deny it. This is significant, because it reveals a pervasive level of unconscious trust in the cosmic *status quo*.

Trust in the Future Trajectory

But if this is so, then it is just another step to express a similar degree of trust in the future trajectory of the entire natural order. This isn't as preposterous as it may initially seem, for if we can trust "Mother Nature" to give us a world that caters to our minds and bodies in thousands of different ways, why can't we also trust her to provide us with a future trajectory for our lives that is both positive and hopeful?

Think about this for a moment. We weren't responsible for designing the universe at the beginning of time, nor were we responsible for creating our minds, our bodies, or the food we have to regularly eat in order to remain alive. All of these vital ingredients, and hundreds more like them, have been mysteriously provided *for* us, and to a very large extent they tend to function very effectively in our day to day lives. We therefore feel compelled to accept the trustworthiness of these items on faith, even though we don't really know how they operate or where they ultimately came from.

Each time we eat something, then, we are expressing an unspoken degree of faith in the way things naturally are, for it is the natural order itself that originally gave us the ability to transform food into life-giving energy. This same principle also applies when we try to get a suntan at the beach. In this case, we are expressing faith in the sun's natural ability to tan us without exploding and annihilating us all. This is no small thing, because the sun is an unimaginably huge hydrogen bomb that is continuously detonating in precisely the right manner to provide us with a safe amount of heat and light.²

² Of course, we all know about the sun's ability to cause skin cancer, but the severity of this threat is a comparatively recent phenomenon that can be directly traced to the ongoing destruction of the earth's protective ozone layer. It is this ozone depletion that has made sunlight so much more carcinogenic in recent years than it used to be. But this fact only serves to highlight the central point that I am trying to make here, since the earth's ozone layer was initially provided for our protection by "Mother Nature" herself. It is only when the human race thoughtlessly began dumping millions of tons of ozone-depleting pollutants into the

This fact is all the more amazing because of the many intricate forces inside the sun that are perfectly counterbalanced with one another to encourage its structural stability over the long term. If even a single one of these fine-tuned parameters ever lost this perfect degree of balance, we'd all be incinerated in a moment's notice, yet no one gives serious thought to this issue, because of this very same faith in the natural order that I've been referring to here. This faith in Mother Nature is ubiquitous amongst human beings, yet for some reason we tend to forget it when we look out into the future. For instead of trusting the natural world to provide us with a safe and secure destination as we grow older, we tend to become afraid when we contemplate the future.³

There is, however, no logical reason to abandon our underlying faith in the natural order simply because we're looking out into the future. After all, the "future" transforms itself into the "present" each and every second, so it follows from this that the future must be fundamentally comprised of the same metaphysical "stuff" as the present. Therefore, if we find it expedient to have faith in the natural order in our present-day lives, then we should also find it equally expedient to express a similar type of faith when it comes to the future, since the future relentlessly becomes the present with every passing moment. This is why we can assert that the "future" must be comprised of the same fundamental building blocks as the "present."

This perspective makes a good deal of sense, for if we can express faith in Mother Nature when it comes to the present-day functioning of our world and universe, then we should also be able to express a similar degree of faith when it comes to these very same things in the future. The basic idea here is that if Mother Nature is going to go to *such* incredible lengths to provide us with a trustworthy world to live in today, then she's almost certainly *not* going to abandon us in the future.

Faith in the Future

Human beings, however, have always experienced a certain amount of foreboding when it comes to the future because of their instinctive fear of the unknown, particularly when it comes to the reality of death (Becker 1973: 26-27). Moreover, fear also naturally tends to negate our faith, so it is not surprising that our faith in the natural world should rapidly dissipate whenever we look out into the future. However, we must not allow this fear to deteriorate into irrationality, because it makes little sense to abandon our instinctive faith in Mother Nature simply because it involves the future instead of the present. For insofar as it is rational to have a certain amount of faith in the natural order in today's world, then it should also be rational to express a similar type of faith in the future as well, because the future will most assuredly become the present in due time.

This argument can be reduced to the following:

1) Most individuals implicitly express a substantial degree of faith in the natural order, because it is the natural order itself that has given us the ability to live and thrive in a remarkably complex world and universe. Without this implicit faith in the cosmic *status quo*, we would be unable to act with equanimity in the present, since we would be unable to trust the various aspects of our existence enough to act on them.

atmosphere that the carcinogenic power of sunlight started to become a serious issue. The "take home" point here is that Mother Nature is clearly *far* more trustworthy than most human beings ever thought to be, so if we continue to assault her with our mindless polluting we will almost certainly be forced to pay a proportionally higher price in the future.

³ Part of this fear may probably because we instinctively realize how hard we are making it for ourselves when deliberately institute immoral principles that are designed to rape and exploit both people and the environment for monetary advantage. For details see also Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: The Free Press, 1973).

- 2) This implicit faith in Mother Nature is essentially limited to the present.
- 3) The future, however, is not fundamentally distinct from the present, since the future seamlessly *becomes* the present with each passing moment.
- 4) Therefore, the present and the future are essentially comprised of the same overall character and nature.
- 5) Hence, anyone who expresses faith in Mother Nature in the present should logically express a similar degree of faith towards the future as well, since both are comprised of the same fundamental character and nature.
- 6) This is proven by the realization that any justifiable lack of faith in the future should simultaneously be applicable to the present as well, for if the future natural order cannot be trusted, then the present natural order cannot be trusted, either.
- 7) Nevertheless, we instinctively tend to trust the present natural order, since this trust is a necessary precondition for any type of constructive action in the world.
- 8) Therefore, we should put an equal amount of trust in the future natural order as well, since it is fundamentally comprised of the same general character as the present natural order.
- 9) It is therefore rational to express hope in the future, because it is similarly rational to express trust in the present-day *status quo*.
- 10) The extreme complexity that permeates the entire cosmos supports us in this contention, because if Mother Nature has gone to such radical lengths to give us a comfortable world to live in today, then she probably *would not* be abandoning us when it comes to the future.

Insofar as the above argument is valid, we can see that our instinctive sense of foreboding regarding the future is primarily a function of our own existential fears, and *not* a lack of faith in the future natural order *per se*. It is, however, very easy to confuse and conflate these two issues as though they were one and the same, when in fact they're not. We must, therefore, do our very best to protect and preserve our ongoing faith in the cosmic *status quo*, so that it isn't quietly supplanted by our many existential fears regarding the future. For only then will we feel secure enough to be able to fully experience the happiness and joy that Mother Nature is waiting to bestow upon us.

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(Credit: "A Source of Hope for the Future" is excerpted from *The God Hypothesis* [Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001].)

Hope as Irrational, Immanent and Transcendent

Peter Heszler

“Hope is a waking dream.” Aristotle

In this essay I first deal with the features of human hope. Then I study the hopeful future of Earth and human development and conclude by asserting that hope as a human phenomenon help us to realize ourselves.

Features of Hope

Hope is irrational: Therefore it is not an easy task to say something about it in our societies, especially in Western culture, where values are rather rational, well defined and thus measurable. The standard is the success. Importantly, success can usually be quantified, i.e., numbers can express it. (What time athletes run, what profit a businessman earns, how many music-records an artistic performance yields, etc.) It seems there is not much place for hope in a professional, competitive and standardized world. Many of us think this quality belongs to another, personal part of our lives that can frequently be related to the religious region of the human life.

Subject and root of hope: When we hope for something, then we hope that something will happen in the near or far future. Let us call this subject of hope. Furthermore although the outcome of the subject of hope is uncertain, the hope makes our expectations positive. This comes deeply from our inner core (soul or psyche). We cannot identify it; just call it the root of hope. It is important to realize that hope does not come alone from the circumstances, which allow fulfilling the subject of hope, however by the help of the hope we may get power to form our environment, both physically and mentally.

Let us classify the subject of hope into two main categories, immanent hope and transcendent hope.

Immanent hope: Looking at it carefully, it appears one can find traces of hope even in the materialistic, success-driven part of our lives. A sportsman, businessman, artist has to hope (believe) that “I can do it”: I can run faster, I can yield better profit, etc. In other words, these people have a hope for their individual capability. If we look further, we notice that they also have to hope that their neighbors accept their activities in one or another way. In addition, they must have a latent hope for the work they do is useful for the whole society, or at least the activities don’t make harm to other people/society. Moreover they also have to hope for not destroying the Earth due to their (our) actions. Since the subject of hope lies in the visible world in these cases, let us call this hope – immanent hope.

Transcendent hope: On the contrary, religious hope is much more visible and definite than what we can see in the professional area (immanent hope), we just refer the numerous publications on the theme of hope from theological point of view. Naturally, religious hope has many dimensions according to different religions, however at least one very deep and important feature is common. There is a hope for the divine and the human to be unified: when the “karma” is diminished (Hinduism), when one gets to the “nirvana” (Buddhism), when the Messiah comes (Judaism), when Christ rules at the end of times (Christianity), etc. For religious people this hope

(faith) is a basic, orientation point of life. Let us call this hope transcendent hope, since the subject of hope (the divine part) lies outside of this world.

The root is the same for immanent and transcendent hope: For the first glance one could say that in fact there aren't common elements among immanent and transcendent hope, since the subjects of these are different. But we think, it is important to point out that the root (our inner core) of the two kinds of hope are the same. Visualizing this, the transcendent hope and immanent hope, as arrows, the origins of the arrows are the same. The difference is, one could say, the length of the arrows. Moreover, due to the positive expectations of hope, those (i.e., immanent and transcendent hopes) are not divergent but rather convergent.

Hope for the Future

Hope for the future of Earth and human development: Both the immanent and transcendent kinds of hope have an important common subject; hope for surviving the humankind. In the following we touch some of the most important questions related to it.

We face many serious problems in our world; material wealth is unevenly distributed, a vast number of people are starving, many people die due to lack of basic medical aid, the fast (and therefore sometimes uncontrollable) development seriously threatens our environment, etc.

The question comes naturally, is there any realistic hope to overcome these problems? Or we may put the question more exactly, are the conditions given for the hope?

First of all we must see that every physical/material condition is given to solve these problems: the Earth is able to give enough food to everyone (even to maintain a modest growth of the present population), we can produce enough medicine, etc.

The speed of development: Everyone agrees that we need environment-friendly (green) technologies to work with. However, in most of the occasions, new technologies have undesirable side-effects. One of the deep inherent problems, apart from the human recklessness, is due to the really fast technological development. This does not leave enough time to judge whether a new technology is appropriate or not, concerning the long-time side-effects. Avoiding this trap we need to analyze the long-term effects of the novel technologies very carefully. This involves lowering the speed of introducing these new technologies, and, on the other hand assures sustainable development that saves a lot of costs the non-adequate technologies could cause. Note that lowering the speed of development does not necessarily yield depression by valuating the benefits we gain for the future.

The energy problem: One of the most disputed questions certainly is the energy problem related to the environment. As it is known, all types of energy, except nuclear, came or is coming from our Sun. Fossil energy (carbon, oil, natural gas) accumulated during millions of years in the past based on plants getting the necessary energy from the Sun. Power stations driven by water and wind utilize the indirect, while solar cells use the direct energy of Sun, respectively. It is also well known that the fossil energy is finite and will be depleted. Thus, we need to exploit the instant (direct and indirect) energy we get from our Sun, for the future. It is important to see that we face environmental problems when producing any type of energy on large scale. E.g. some water-based power stations had effects on the drinking-water supplies or huge dams brought changes in microclimate. If we deploy a vast number of e.g. wind-power stations, surely it will have an effect on the climate, the same is true if we lay a huge area of solar cells e.g. in the Sahara desert. Thus we have to have a really precise knowledge on the side-effects and consequences of introducing

these power stations. That demands careful, long-term research projects, following a cautious planning and implementation.

Whether the instant radiation energy from the Sun can give us enough energy in the future is an open problem. Therefore the question of utilizing nuclear energy will be a disputed one for a long time. There is a strong antipathy against nuclear power stations in many countries nowadays. Two main arguments can be mentioned, namely the risk of getting radioactive material into the air (explosions) and the safe storage of waste materials. It is known that the risk of explosions can really be minimized; this is a question of carefulness and certainly investments into safety equipments. It seems that the storage of nuclear waste material is a bigger problem. Here we have to say that the origin of the nuclear fuel-material is the Earth. We mine it, then clean and enrich it (and that takes energy). Since the nuclear fuel material comes from Nature, it can go back, too, but it also takes a lot of energy to process it. Whether it is worth or not, depends on how we value the environment, energy etc.

It also has to be mentioned that future electronic technologies promise devices with very low energy consumption. We are on the stage now that the active size of some electronic equipment is in the order of several nm (e.g. quantum-dot lasers, 1 nm = one millionth of a millimeter). Scientists expect realization of so-called one-electron devices, where the information is coded by the change of a one-electron state, as miniaturization progresses. These kind of instruments, e.g. as computers, could be driven by the energy a human body generates (in the form of heat that has to be transferred into electric energy). We can save a lot of energy by these equipments in the future.

Conclusion

We can see that there are ways to overcome the most serious problems we face, both physically and strategically, i.e., there is a room for hope for the future development and for a human life for the humankind. The key to this lies not in the circumstances, but in the human good will and responsibility. The hope, both the immanent and transcendent, helps us to realize that. And our descendants, hopefully, will see the result.

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8. Past and Future of Hope

Ignasi Boada

“There was a small town with few inhabitants, and a great king came to attack it; he besieged it and constructed great siege-works against it. There was in it a poor wise man, and he alone might have saved the town by his wisdom...” (Ecclesiastes 9, 14-15)

I agree with Richard Schaeffler when he stresses the enormous importance of the topic ‘hope’ for our time.¹ I think this is one of the very few issues that has enough force to attract very different people to a common dialogue. Not only people from different religions but also people that, for whatever reason, have lost the link with a particular form of religion or church. I think that the notion of ‘hope’ still has the strength to keep alive the sense for our awareness of something else than a mere pragmatic conception of life. The point is that hope entails not only a certain readiness to believe in something, but also fundamentally the existence of hope implies an ontological status for the human being.

In my opinion, hope can only exist if we renounce the belief that the core of human existence is either a tragedy or a pure biological phenomenon. In other words, hope is only possible if we accept that a human being is a *free* creature, not a toy constructed by metaphysical forces or a more or less complicated animal.

Apart from this anthropological assumption, I consider it important to emphasize that there cannot be a concrete or a particular object for hope, because hope is in reality deeply connected with the human longing for salvation, that is, longing for liberation or whatever you want to call it. According to this, hope implies not only the experience of the finite, but also a kind of conscience of something that we consider possible although not easily imaginable or thinkable. Not without reason hope has been a main aspect of religion? not only of the Christian religion, but also of every religion insofar as it wants to liberate human beings from the experience of the finite. For this reason also it is extremely important today to remember that human beings need not only to hope that their salvation is possible, but also that they can achieve their humanity only if they are able to keep hoping, that it is possible to escape from the tragic structures, like, for example, those generated by modern ideologies. If I may say it, I cannot conceive a man that accepts to live a life ignoring the dimensions contained in the experience of hope. In saying this it is not my purpose to assert that there is only one way of experiencing human hope, I just want to point out that I can scarcely understand human life that does not need or seek truth.²

Hope has always been deeply connected with having the experience of something (or having the personal experience of somebody) which had the power to liberate us from the death or from the disorder and violence of human history. From this point of view, we discover what we could call a positive dimension of human sorrow, i.e. that sorrow can be also understood as a condition that makes hope possible. In this sense I consider our century is very rich in possibilities.

Although it is not my goal to draft what we could call a history of the notion of hope in the western culture, I would like to mention some important ideas concerning three possible interpretations of this term:

¹ Schaeffler, R., *Was dürfen wir hoffen?* Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1979.

² Cf. Col I, 5.

- Hope in apocalyptic times.
- Hope in historical times.
- Hope in modern times.

It goes without saying that I will not comment exhaustively on each of these three possibilities, I just want to stress some aspects of them in order to try to understand our approach to the experience of modern-day hope in Europe. For that I will need not only to draft the notions of hope which were prevalent in the past, but may be above all to focus my attention on the most important social and cultural structures of Europe nowadays.

Hope in Apocalyptic Times

I) We should recall at this moment the enormous importance that has been given to the last of the Books of the Christian Bible, i.e. the book of *Revelation* for many centuries. In this book we find, among others, the description of the last day, that is, the day of the *Parousia* or the second-coming of Christ. For the Christian tradition this last day means also the end of history, i.e. the end of the world. History is human time; the world is human space: we cannot separate them. When one comes to the end the other must end also.

At least until the 12th century the word *hope* was related in Europe almost exclusively to the *Parousia*, to the last coming of Christ, when the celestial Jerusalem would descend on earth and would transform the historical reality into something completely new. Hope was related to the *expectation* of the coming of the Kingdom of God, that is, of the coming of a new reality in which we would live in harmony with divine love.

I am aware of the simplicity of my presentation; in reality every century generated a new and original interpretation of St. John's Book. However, the general structure of the interpretation of hope implied the expectation of a last day in which history would come to an end, the expectation of the day when *we shall see face to face* –? to quote Paul's terms.³

In order to grasp the meaning of this conception of hope we should try briefly to answer questions like 'What is history?' 'What has history to do with human salvation?' 'Why should human liberation require the end of history and the end of the world?'

First of all we should remember that history is not a mere recollection of more or less relevant events that took place in the past, but a very special way to understand the meaning of time. Besides this, the historical conception of time is systematically connected with a conception of humanity and a conception of God. For that reason we may not change one single part of this whole without altering the sense of the other parts.

Of course it is impossible to try to sum up in such a short commentary the deep meaning of history according to the Jewish and Christian tradition. I just want to mention that history begins as a result of the fact that Man refuses to live in harmony with God. For that reason to live in the stream of history means also to be rooted in an ontological situation in which negativity, sorrow, incomprehension between human beings, sin and death shall be necessarily parts of the human experience. To express it in a few words: there is no history without death and there is no death without a break between God and man. In saying this I am pointing out, that history was supposed to be the time during which the human being would be involved in a constant quarrel and sorrow

³ Cf. 1 Cor 13, 12.

of which he would never be rid of without God's grace. History is the time in which there is no place for 'perpetual peace.'

According to this, only in the framework of a particular conception of the i.e., Man conceived as a creature that freely renounced the place for which he was created, was it possible to understand hope in the apocalyptic terms. This hope was not hinting to a mere return to the paradise or to the *same* "spot" from which the human experience started immediately after the creation (otherwise that would mean to declare that history is not real) but to a new form of relation with God. St. Anselm among others distinguished between the happiness of the angels (*beatitudo*) and the scatological happiness, that is the happiness after the experience of life, death and resurrection.⁴

Hope in Historical Terms

In this context we should mention the figure of Joachim de Fiore (v. 1130-1202), because he was the first to speak about hope in another way which should have in the future an extraordinary influence on European philosophy and social thought. I am aware of the fact that here is not the place to explain at length Fiore's philosophy, however I would like to point out his revolutionary notion of the *Age of the Spirit* (that is: the age of *the Holy Spirit*). According to Fiore's vision, after the age of the Father and the age of the Son the *age of the spirit* would appear in history. This new conception of hope was very important because the object of hope was conceived for the first time as something that should be achieved inside human history. The Kingdom of God was not necessarily beyond human experience.

The Hope in the *Age of the spirit* started from a very particular and very new interpretation of Incarnation. According to this, Jesus Christ was not to be considered the definitive revelation of God to humanity, as it had always been considered at least since the philosophy of Augustinus, but one of the two revelations (of the Father contained in the Old Testament and of the Son contained in the New Testament) that would precede the third and definitive communication of God to humanity.

Hope in a new era of human history was based mostly on two texts. The first one of Saint John: *When he comes who is the Spirit of truth, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but will tell only what he hears* (John 16, 13). The second one of Saint Paul,⁵ especially when Saint Paul writes, "*Now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face.*" Joachim de Fiore interprets "now" as the age of Jesus Christ (that is the age in which Saint Paul is writing) and "then" as the age of the Spirit. As I said, I will not attempt here to describe the details of such an interpretation, I just want to point out that, according to the theology of Joachim de Fiore, a new age had to come in which the human being would reach its fulfillment and would overcome the time in which peace had not been possible. The so-called "Age of the Son," that is, the Age inaugurated by the New Testament, the Age in which the Church of Christ had an historical mission, was destined to disappear.

To us this may sound far removed from modern day thought and therefore we may be tempted to think that it has little or even nothing to do with our world and our culture. However I would dare to point out that Joachim de Fiore is the source of many modern doctrines that have had an enormous influence on the way human hope has been conceived in the last centuries. I am saying

⁴ Cf. Anselmus of Canterbury, *Cur Deus homo*, chapter 19.

⁵ Cf. 1 Cor 13,12.

this because Joachim di Fiore asserted for the first time a transposition of contents usually located beyond historical time into human history.⁶

According to this second interpretation of hope, hope is considered in its relation to a time of liberation that we can help already now to prepare. In the framework of this vision, history was the realization of a progressive divine plan whose last phase would bring about the liberation of human ignorance and negativity, as well as a definitive peace.

If I had to mention one of the most prominent philosophers who was under the influence of Fiore's conception of history I would name G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831). It is unnecessary to point out the enormous importance exerted by Hegel's thought, for example to the Marxist philosophy.

Both Hegel's and Marx's philosophies were strongly optimistic conceptions of humanity. They started from the assumption that there was no such thing as an invariable essence of human being, but that this was able to move toward an ontological perfection. Egoism was not, for example, to be understood as something rooted in human nature, but an historical feature that had to be overcome when the definitive age of liberation would arrive.

Hope in Modern Times

There is at least one thing that we can say concerning the experience of hope in Europe today: the two main interpretations I drafted just now are not any more prevalent in the conscience of our time. Something happened in the last century or in the last centuries that precipitated the end of a hope based on theological-metaphysical systems. It seems to be that there is no more place for an optimistic *Weltanschauung*.

I think that, on the one hand, it would be wrong to aspire to restoration of ancient beliefs or to want to reintroduce what once was regarded as the right way to express human hope. If we look at history, almost every attempt to restore an old system of beliefs brought still more frustration and more violence than those motivated by the crisis of the system that was supposed to be restored. We shall accept that we are in a new cultural and spiritual situation and therefore we need to develop a new language, not just in order to say the *same* in another *form*, but to say something new. We need to be *originals*, therefore we must not forget our *origins*, that is: we must not forget *who* we in reality are.

On the other hand, I consider that we cannot afford to fall into pure relativism. In other words, I do not think that the right way is to believe that each conception of reality has the same worth as others just because it is the prevalent one in a given time and space. Falling into relativism would lead us to the impossibility of having a critical approach to human problems.

From this I conclude to neither a restoration of a "Golden Past" nor to a relativism, but would like to draft the consequences of the fall of theological-metaphysical conceptions of hope in Europe and secondly I would like to add some critical considerations.

Especially after the Second World War (although the First World War was probably more lethal from the point of view of the moral crisis in Europe) Europe had to face a new situation in which there was no more place for optimism and self-confidence. The foundations of modern European civilization were so shaken that almost nothing could escape from the feeling of moral ruin, from the certainty that one was at the end of a world.

What I will try to draft here is in which sense we understand *hope* in the framework of a nihilistic culture, i.e., in the context of a world in which for most people the eschatological or historical interpretation of hope no longer exists.

⁶ Cf. Lubac, Henri de, *La posterité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore*, Le Sycomore, Paris, 1978, pp. 66ff.

Revitalization of Hope

The fall of Communism in Eastern Europe meant the end of an historical and political project based on theoretical materialism (which in a certain sense, as I have already pointed out, was a project that can be regarded as a part of the reception of Joachim de Fiore's philosophy). Nevertheless the decline of the Communist empire and its materialistic philosophy encouraged still more another much subtler kind of materialism, that is, not the theoretical one but the one we could call practical materialism.

Although it cannot be denied that at the beginning of the XXI century many people in Europe already realize that the more we insist on developing liberal postulates the more we become slaves of the technocratic system, we should ask why the liberal-capitalistic system has had (and obviously still has) such an outstanding success among us. To what extent is this due to the fact that this system was able to facilitate a materialistic version of happiness and freedom?

In Europe we are still very much conditioned by the historical triumph of democracy over totalitarian regimes as a result of World War II. Among other things, this fact means that we do not yet know how to formulate an open critique towards democracy and the liberal system without having a bad conscience, because it was in the name of democracy that barbaric systems such as Fascism and Nazism were fought and (fortunately) defeated. The moral prestige of democracy and liberalism hinders very often the possibility to articulate a critical approach towards the anthropology and the general *Weltanschauung* underlying such a political and economic conception of life.

It goes without saying that I strongly condemn Fascism, Nazism, Stalinism, racism and every kind of political or social structures despising human dignity. I would like to stress also that I assume the noblest values of democracy, but at the same time I feel that we need to learn the way to speak openly about established democracy and liberalism in a critical form in order to understand the problems that we have to face.

If I mention this here, it is just simply because, in my opinion, we may not disentangle the prevalent liberal culture and its corresponding technocratic system from the way in which we articulate the modern conception of human hope.

Liberalism has made possible the introduction of some very worthy values in European culture that have become deeply rooted in our way of thinking and living. I want to mention here just three of these values: the idea of individual freedom, equality and the conviction according to which every human being has the right to achieve personal happiness.

Needless to say that these three ideas had an extraordinary influence on European societies all through the last century. In addition, all of them were crucial to articulate the gap created after the crisis of theological-metaphysical conception of hope.

That every human being is equal and free means, among other things, that all the privileges due to social, religious, political, linguistic or racial origin etc. ... must be abolished. It means also that we will tend to consider *individual* freedom as the highest value and therefore we will not be open to accept an authority acting in the name of traditional or religious principles. Nevertheless that means also, that everybody will have the right to decide for themselves how to build his *own* future, what to do with his *own* existence.

I do not need to insist on the social consequences of such values. Let me just mention the enormous importance that all this had in the field of education. The general access to schools, to universities etc., has permitted many people to develop, no matter what they profess, regardless of

social or cultural origin. Contrary to traditional societies in which the *role* of every person was almost always determined from the very beginning, modern societies opened a wide range of possibilities for almost everybody. The only crucial thing was the individual's own will and own readiness to work hard (which very often meant, the capacity to be successful to the detriment of other people). Everything seemed to be open, to be possible and indeterminate, each one was responsible for his own decisions and his own happiness. The combination of personal freedom and the assumption that everyone was called to be happy encouraged strongly the conscience that human ambition was a very positive and indispensable social value. Besides this the emergence of an incredible number of technological possibilities paved the way to new forms of "freedom," like choosing the place to live, to study, to work, etc.

Needless to say that ideas like human equality, abolishment of social privileges, general social education etc. are aspirations which should never be given up. But in spite of that, nothing impedes us to be aware of a certain ambiguity contained in those brilliant ideas, once they become implemented into modern society. Otherwise we run the risk of making absolute what in reality is ambivalent. In my opinion there are many reasons to think that many central values of democracy have been incorporated in a nihilistic conception of life and in so doing have taken on a new significance: tolerance becomes very often not more than indifference; respect for plurality means in reality relativism; social equality becomes incapacity to find a foundation for human difference.

Tocqueville saw already in the XIX century some of these ambiguities:

Men believe in good faith that they are destined for great achievements. But that is an erroneous view that is corrected every day through experience, this same equality which permits every citizen to hold vast expectations renders all citizens weak individually. It limits their strengths from all sides, while at the same time allows their desires to be extended. This constant opposition between their instincts as a result of equality and the means provided by equality to satisfy them torments and wearies the souls.⁷

Tocqueville connects in a very intelligent way equality (*égalité*) and hope (*espérances*). The object of hope is here not so much to be redeemed by an ontological transformation of the reality operated by God, as strictly speaking, the pure accomplishment of the individual ambitions. As a result of this, the whole sense of our existence depends on the degree of our success.

Our economical and cultural system can only work if individuals are ready and prompted to fight for their personal ambition, which means (at least in the framework of the so called "highly developed" industrial societies) to be successful. In so doing we tend to understand accomplishment of our own ambition, satisfaction of our vanity as personal fulfillment and happiness. In my opinion it is imperative to emphasize the banality contained in this social mechanism. One of the most important aspects of education in the future should probably be focused on the attempt to prevent young people from the seduction of this banality. Undoubtedly, a minority of the people will achieve the goals that are supposed to be essential for the accomplishment of human happiness, but at the same time it cannot be denied that most people are simply condemned to frustration. This social frustration is deeply connected with what the liberal system requires in order to work i.e., personal ambition, vanity and the confidence that

⁷ "[Les hommes] se figurent volontiers qu'ils sont appelés à des grandes destinées. Mais c'est là une vue erronée que l'expérience corrige tous les jours, cette même égalité qui permet à chaque citoyen de concevoir de vastes *espérances* rend tous les citoyens individuellement faibles. Elle limite de tous côtés leurs forces, en même temps qu'elle permet à leurs désirs de s'étendre (...) Cette opposition constante qui règne entre les instincts que fait naître l'égalité et les moyens qu'elle fournit pour les satisfaire tourmente et fatigue les âmes...." Text quoted by René Girard, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*, Grasset, Paris, 1961, p. 142.

personal success will be able to justify the individual's own existence. The more this system generates hope, the more frustration it produces; the more this system of life promises happiness, the less we achieve true satisfaction and spiritual balance. I think that more than ever our nihilistic culture is deeply involved in what Nietzsche described as *Will to power*. Our system certainly works, but, as Heidegger said, it is precisely when everything works that we have reasons to be worried, because the price we have to pay for the fact that everything works is probably more than what we can realize. We have forgotten the sense for essential things because we have focused almost all our energies on making sure that our system works. And certainly it works quite well.

In my opinion we can revitalize hope if we are able to put aside the underlying anthropological conception that we have in modern times. I am referring to the conception of the human being as an individual. As Tocqueville mentions in the text I just quoted, the social dimension of the human being becomes impoverished when human being is conceived as an individual being having an *ego* that increasingly requires to be satisfied, an *ego* that necessarily considers other human beings as potential competitors. We have to abandon this conception of man that leads us to competition, violence, incommunication and frustration. I think it is extremely urgent to turn our attention toward those people who witness to another way of living than the mere pragmatic life. It is time to listen to those who understand that we have forgotten what is essential to every human being.

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9. Hope: An Indian Invitation

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The Semitic religions speak about salvation while the Hindu group of religious persons speaks about liberation. Both the groups have hope for something better to come or to achieve something better to make this life meaningful. If religion is to regain its force in the secular age, it must turn to an unconventional and common to all, means for salvation. Such an unconventional, common to all road to salvation was cut open in the beginning of time and it continues to be authoritative and royal road to salvation for all, which gives unending hope for all. Manu has described such a religion explicitly when he spoke of “Non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, cleanliness and control of the senses as the common religion for all the four castes.”¹ Nobody’s salvation is entrusted in the hands of any organized group of religious men, because they themselves are in need of it. God is not a fool to entrust the protection of one fish to another when all are in the muddy water seeking salvation. Hence, the following questions

- 1) What is the source of goodness?
- 2) What is the source of truth?
- 3) What is the source of human right? Goodness, truth and human rights proceed from the same source but we analyze them here to understand them better.

What Is the Source of Goodness?

The source of truth and goodness is apauruseya revelation. But people generally think that all goodness comes from the scriptures, laws of religion and even from dogmas and rituals. The dogmatic and cultic faces of religions are more visible to people and they consider this opaque and repulsive package of religion as real religion. Religion is a protuberance on the natural revelation. The minimum function of a religion is to uphold the truth and goodness contained in the primordial revelation. But people wrongly think that religion itself is the upholder of goodness and morality. The question is, if you are good why are you good? Is it because you have learned the scriptures? There are many people who are learned in the scriptures but all of them need not be good.² Most of the people are not learned in scriptures but they can be good. Only in some prophetic religions there are scriptures. Most of the religions do not have scriptures and therefore, their followers do not have any chance even to learn them. Then, is someone good because he follows the laws of religion? Ordinary people are straightforward. Before the law was made, the people were already good. Only a good man can write the scriptures. Their goodness does not depend on the goodness of the scripture, which is their product.

Is God the source of goodness? It cannot be. In all the religions we see goodness. But there are many religions without God, e. g., Buddhism, Jainism, Samkhya, and Carvaka. Most of the

¹ *Ahimsa satyam asteyam shaucam indriyanigraha /
Etam samasikam dharma caturvarnye abravim manuh*

// Manu Smriti, 10 : 63 See also Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, 1.3.13. In this article we are leaving out the diacritical marks, which were part of the author’s original, since the article is not meant for scholarly Indologists.

² *Idam punyam idam papam ityetasmin padadvaye /A candalam manusgyanam alpam shastraprayojanam //*
Bhartrihari’s *Vakyapadiya*, 1. 40.

tribal religions which do not understand God as we do. Moreover, the primary subject of religion is not God but morality. Morality enters religion through the front door and God comes into religion through the back door. God is a compulsive agent of morality. The most important doctrine in religion is the awareness of the weakness of man, as the most important vice in religion is pride. Because man is weak he has fear and because he is afraid he wants refuge and God comes in as the final refuge. Once God is inside, He is like the camel in the story, which got space to keep the head inside and finally pulled down the hut. Even in Christianity salvation is not confined to God. It is based on our actions, e.g., I was hungry you gave me to eat, etc.; not those who call me Lord, Lord, but who do the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of God. The will of the Father is that we should do good things to bring Him Glory. The subject of action is morality – good or bad. Even if God is not there we have to be moral.

It is interesting to note that Kautilya, when he mentions in his Arthashastra, anikshi or mokshashastra, the science of liberation, which at present we call philosophy (1.2.10), mentions Samkhya, Yoga and Lokayata. Samkhya has transcendence but no God, Yoga has transcendence and God, and Lokayata has neither transcendence nor God. But all these are sciences of liberation. Really man can hope for liberation without God and established religions.

Then what is the source of goodness? The source of goodness is family life and childhood training in love. The family is the basic means to foster the natural revelation and it is the tradition, which maintains the truth regarding human life and the ecology of human existence. We know that, in case of doubt, we go to the people who are known to be good. Shankara says in his Bhajagovindam:³

The company of the good gives rise to non-attachment.
 Non-attachment gives rise to non-delusion.
 Non-delusion awakens immutable Reality in us (and)
 Through immutable Reality we attain liberation in this life.

The company of the good is the means for liberation. If the father dies, the son looks after the field. He himself will do it, if he knows, or if he does not know he will ask another farmer who knows. He will not run immediately to a bookshop to buy a book on agriculture.

Love in the family gives freedom and freedom gives responsibility and responsibility makes a man mature. Love gives freedom and from freedom flows efficiency. Efficiency means, maximum at a stretch within the shortest time. Religion as an institution restricts spontaneity and efficiency. In fact, religions gained from the individuals who acquired efficiency by effort not vice versa. The primary human unit is the family. It is the basic religion in life.

Goodness depends on the tradition.⁴ The eligibility of a person for something, which needs a commitment firstly, depends on his family tradition and the company he keeps. To elect a president we look into the family and the deeds of the candidate to make sure that, if we give him the keys of power, he won't abuse it. There are laws to punish the president but they are effective only after

³ In order to decide what is good and what is bad, all men, including the lowest, have very little use of scriptures.

Satsaa gatve nissaa gatvam

Nissaa gatve nirmohatvam

Nirmohatve nishcala tatvam

Niscalatave jivanmuktih(Bhajagovindam, 9)

Andagamad rite dharmas tarkena vyavatisthate /

Risshinam api yajnanam tad apyagamapurvakam // VP. 1. 30.

⁴ Dharma cannot be determined by reason alone, without the help of tradition. Even the knowledge of the seers is due to their previous observance of the tradition.

the damage has been done. What is the guarantee that he would not do any damage? It is his personal life, not his religion. There is no surety that if the president is a Christian or a Hindu or a Muslim he would not misbehave.

Apauruseya Revelation: Ultimate Source of Truth

Nature shows the possibilities of existence and truth. This truth is also called natural revelation or general revelation. All the other truths must be consistent with it. Nature itself reveals truth regarding human life. The main concern of revelation is to teach man morality or dharma. St Paul says that God has revealed *truth* to man in such a way that he cannot give an excuse saying that he did not know (Rom.1.18). From the natural revelation man knows what is to be done to maintain harmony and peace in the world and sustain humanity intact. This revelation is not authored by anybody. So it is called apauruseya – non-authored or unwritten.

Someone wrote all what is written.⁵ It means that it is authored. All the books published or unpublished have authors. For all the discoveries there are authors. But, for the truth regarding life and morality, there are no authors, e.g., truth must be practiced; killing is a sin. And so on. It is the nature of the truth that makes it apauruseya, not the authorship. Then what is apauruseya? It means that for the truth revealed therein, we are not indebted to a particular author. Even if someone were not to write it, it would have been written by someone else and even if that someone else were not to write it, it would have been in the use of humanity. It also means that even if all the written scriptures are destroyed, humans will continue to live religiously and morally and new scriptures would be written.⁶ It suggests that the truth of the natural revelation can be re-enacted in life by some one and this is the way to prove the apauruseya truth. All the avatars, incarnations and prophets are doing the same. In fact the avatars come to re-enact the natural revelation.

There are two kinds of seers: Those who see the truth as revealed to them where they see everything as it is. They are in a state of vision as it is in a dream. When they evolve out of the vision as coming out of a dream, they have the residue of knowledge with them. There is the other group of seers who see the indication in nature and scriptures and understand what is good and what is not for man and teach accordingly. The first one is the apauruseya revelation of which I have given an explanation already and the second one belongs to the written scriptures. The written scriptures, all of them in all religions are but mere traditions. The written Vedas, though people ordinarily call it apauruseya, are smritis, (tradition) only.

This natural revelation is the basis for religion and morality.⁷ Some of those who follow the natural revelation and lead a moral life may write down the scriptures. Natural revelation together

⁵ Najatv akartrikam kascid agamam pratipadyate / Bijam sarvagamapaye trayy evato vyavasthita// (VP. 1.132). There is no *agama* which is produced without an author. When all *agamas* are lost the three Vedas are existant as the seed. But if the *agama* is produced it is destructible. If so what happens to the thought that *dharm*a is sanatana, or eternal? Whenever all the *agamas* are destroyed the Vedas continue as seed. The authorship is not what makes the *agamas* valid, it is the seed form that makes the *agamas* valid. So now is given the account of how the seed form – the Unwritten tradition – is related to the written tradition.

⁶ Astam jateshu vedeshu kartrishv anyev asatsvapi \ Shrutismrity uditam karma loko na vyativartate \ VP. 1. 133. When the doctrines have disappeared and when there are no other authors, the people do not transgress the kind of action laid down by *shruti* and *smriti*.

⁷ *Ja ane svabhavike narthah shastraih kashcana vidyate /Dharmo jnanasya hetushcet tasyammayo nibandhanam // VP. 1 134.* If it is so, knowledge is spontaneous. If knowledge is spontaneous, why should there be the *agama*? The purpose of knowledge is *dharm*a and *dharm*a is in the framework of the Vedas. It is not from the unwritten tradition that the written tradition comes. From the unwritten tradition comes conduct, from conduct and the unwritten tradition comes the written tradition. If *dharm*a is the cause of knowledge, *shruti* is the cause of *dharm*a. *Shruti* is the unwritten tradition,*dharm*a is the practice of that tradition even when the scriptures are destroyed. And therefore, the *shatras* are in accordance with the *sruti*, which is present in the practice of the cultured.

with moral life is the cause for the written scriptures. Moral life is kept up because the Vedas remain in the seed form even when they are destroyed. Only the written Vedas can be destroyed, not the unwritten Vedas from which the written Vedas come. If so, the framework of the sacred text is not subjective. It is the seed, from which age after age the true understanding is generated. Natural revelation is the perennial source of morality. All the religious founders are paradigms of the main line of natural revelation.

What does Paul mean when he says, “Ever since God created the world his everlasting power and deity, however invisible, have been there for the mind to see in things he has made.” Here he is speaking about the natural law, the source of our primary moral life. At first, we have to distinguish between natural law and the law of nature. Natural law is connected with moral life and human dignity. It is concerned with the relationship between humans, between humans and God, and humans and nature. It is the same as dharma in the Hindu tradition – disciplining of oneself and the disciplining of oneself in relation to others in acquiring wealth, power and pleasure (artha and kama) in such a way that everyone gets his right and the social and cosmic order is kept intact. We cannot dispense with the natural law, saying that we have the revealed scriptures. The revealed scriptures do not touch all the aspects of moral life and even where the scriptures speak about moral life, it is often ambiguous. And similarly, we cannot do away with natural law by saying that our country has a big constitution. The constitution does not speak about all the possibilities of human right violations and even when it speaks, we may have to interpret them. To interpret a scripture or a constitution, we have to have recourse to the natural law. Here natural law means the natural moral law.

The law of nature means, the laws regarding the working of the non-rational nature, it is the object of natural sciences. They are the physical laws, and therefore, necessary laws. These laws do not concern man’s moral life and freedom directly, but in their application they can. The laws of nature enables man to control nature, the universe. Natural law controls man’s activities and restrains him from encroaching upon the rights of others. Freedom without restraints, is no real freedom. This natural law is concerned with the minimum standard of moral behavior and it is enforceable by law. Social life is primarily structured on natural law with concern over human rights and dignity.

Those who accept the theory of creation by God hold that natural laws are the reflection of God’s image in the creation. Then the moral demands stem from the very nature or essence of God and therefore, they are more than by juridical. Those who do not accept the theory of creation by God have to accept that human nature appears to be such that we have a social necessity to be moral up to a particular standard of behavior. Being moral is related to being truthful, not being created by God as such, and even an atheist can’t forgo truth, and so he has no option to be immoral. Humans can know the moral law and, therefore, he is held responsible for its violation. As St Paul has put it (we have seen above), every man knows the moral law in such a way that he cannot say that he did not know it and thus excuse himself. The religiosity of a person begins with the awareness of his weakness to lead a perfect moral life, because the forces of good and evil are pulling him in all his actions. Man is social and historical and he has different perspectives and relationships. Therefore, the understanding of natural law also evolves with man. The basis may not change but the attributes can evolve and change. Ethics and cultural history show that all the nations have attained a certain moral standard and the content is everywhere similar. Therefore, natural law has attained a universal validity and it is the primary criterion of legislation and revelation.

Is it the Veda that defines morality? If it is so, how can that be? The Veda itself is the outcome of the moral life. The primary revelation is the cause of moral life and moral life together with the primary revelation is the cause of the Veda. The writing of the scripture presupposes moral life on the part of the writer. Therefore, the question is how the scripture writers defined morality. They defined the dharma through the agama. Agama is that through which something comes to us. The primary revelation has come to us through the agama or unwritten tradition. What has been there before the scriptures and what will be there after the scriptures, if there is a post-scriptural period? The answer is that the same agama will be available to humanity. Scriptures are mainly historical and the reference to the future is based on the past history of experience. The pre-scriptural period and the post-scriptural periods will be identical in the sense that the human race would be having access to the primary revelation. What is this primary revelation? A simple answer is that it is the natural law. However, what is the natural law? It is the law of being and acting in accordance with the nature in such a way that the cosmos must be sustained and human goals must be made attainable. It is the law by which we exist and act in such a way, that, not only the humanity is sustained but also every creature in the universe. It is the means to give happiness to every being. Humanity alone without the other beings in the cosmos cannot be sustained. If it survives everything will survive and if it perishes everything will perish. Our survival is a survival only as part of the cosmos.

Is the primary revelation the ultimate source of the definition of morality or dharma? The answer is 'yes' and 'no.' Yes, because it is the first source for us to know the truth regarding human existence; No, because the primary revelation itself is the imitation (anukara –not imitation in the English sense) of God's (Brahman's) nature; i.e., natural revelation is the manifestation of God's nature. It means that morality is already determined and defined by the nature of God but our understanding of it is evolving and this evolution of understanding will continue. Therefore, for all practical purposes, for human morality is always evolving. The bigot will not think, the timid is afraid to think and the fool is unable to think. Where of all think alike (as in the Church) there of no one thinks. For a thinking society, morality is ever evolving.

The Source of Human Rights

There is a discussion in the Brihadaraa yaka Upanishad (1.4.11–1. 4. 14) on the origin of the four castes and their interrelationship. Brahman created the four castes with mutual dependence. But It (Brahman) was not satisfied. If the castes were to fail to do their duties what can be done? Brahman then created the king. It is the duty of the king to see that all the four castes do their duties and the harmony is fostered. But Brahman was not satisfied. If the king were to fail to do his duty what could be done? Therefore Brahman created dharma – righteousness, over the king. There is nothing greater than righteousness. So, even the weak person can defeat a stronger person like the king with the help of righteousness. Righteousness is the final authority. Righteousness and truth are the two sides of the same coin. Righteousness in knowledge is truth and truth in practice is righteousness. Righteousness kills one who kills it and it protects one who protects it.

The weak man's right for righteousness, when it is denied by the powerful, is the human right. This right cannot be denied by anybody. It is through dharma, the weak man tries to control the strong man as one does through the king. It is on account of the reign of law that the strong man has to yield to the weaker man. Dharma is the basis for law and human rights. These laws and rights are achieved not by violence but by non-violence. Therefore, non-violence is the highest dharma (ahimsa paramo dharmah. Nobody can violate it, whether weak or strong. Human right is

the right of every human being and it is beyond all the human distinctions. When there was no term for human right the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad used the term dharma. When there was no submarine, Nostradamus (1503-66) used the word iron fish. He predicted that from the iron fish rockets would be sent. Perhaps the first reference to human right is that which we see in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad as the first reference to the submarine is found in Nostradamus' predictions. The above discussion in the upanishad is not on castes and their interrelationships as it is usually made out to be, but on human right, perhaps the first of its kind in the world.

Who is strong and who is weak? Apparently those who have wealth or power or pleasure are strong and peasants, laborers, ignorant, women, etc. are weak. Jesus was weak and the Roman rulers and the high priests were strong. Jesus fought for the weaker sections of the people, but his weapon was righteousness. He did not possess any wealth or power or pleasure as a means to achieve human right. He himself was denied the human right. Jesus died as a weak person, a marginalized Jew, but showed the strength of dharma – righteousness.

Around 10,000 years ago man started settled life. He occupied the land and cultivated it. Population increased with settled life. He became powerful. Later, feudal powers and imperial powers became established. With the industrial revolution the European powers became colonial powers. Now they have become global powers based on their powerful economy. This global power has rendered 70% of the population weak. Now this 70% of the population must fight for their human right against the mighty global power with the help of dharma – righteousness.

Religions are basically open to all people. All have the hope of a good vision. Especially, prophetic religions close the door of hope for others. Really hope includes in it the widest form of faith and love. The sectarian faiths are blocks on the royal road of salvation. Goodness, truth and human rights are contained in the seed form in the apauruseya (primary) revelation. The ongoing human experience makes them clearer giving greater hope for a better future.

Pune, India

The World of Human Experience as the World of Hope: Philosophical Reflection on Education

Zlatica Plašienková

“To educate means, “to help the spirit of man to enter into the fullness of reality.”

Introduction

There are many nations on earth, but all of them are created from one humanity. In spite of the fact that humankind does not have a common language, it might strive for mutual communication and understanding. At present we realize that, despite our differences of culture, education, erudition and living conditions, humankind represents a stronger and more uniform world civilization than previously thought.

What connects humankind? What allows us to overcome the range of cultural variables that separate people? What removes the various barriers among nations and enables us to speak about a common future? These questions force us to consider the common perspectives of humankind: our common aims and visions; and the sense of human being in the context of the organic unity of humanity and the universe.

In my contribution I shall try to show the importance of philosophical reflection on the process of education. From my own experience as a university teacher I know that people are very interested in this issue in relation to an analysis of the present world situation, its new developments and horizons. These questions are inseparable from the analysis of human experience and the different significance attributed to our life and to being at all.

At the present time Western Philosophy is in a state of new, creative re-visioning. Many philosophical and religious-ethical concepts and trends exist. Some of them are skeptical, pessimistic or apocalyptic, while others are rather optimistic. Only a few of them try to give real starting points for changes in the sphere of the moral and spiritual dimensions of our attitudes toward the world, that is, toward the whole planetary and cosmic reality in an evolutionary framework.

The World of Human Experience

The human experience witnesses that we are in the world, in reality, among nature, things and people, and that we enter into different relations with them. Our being is conditioned by many possibilities and restrictions. We live in a dynamic reality in which we must adjust to all that which is within as well as outside ourselves. Thus, the basic element of our world is experience: *“the human world is the world of human experience.”* Our experience does not represent merely an empirical experience or sense perception. It is also a spiritual penetration into this perception. The following sentence might be accepted: “Human experience in its entirety is realized only in conscious experience, in the understanding of meaning and value, in the rational evaluation of given reality” (Coreth 1986: 54).

Moreover, human experience is layered: its accumulation enables one to “return” to the past, and also to project oneself into the future. Experience is the field for understanding the continuity

of our life, its connection with other beings and with demands made by the whole of life itself. To understand the world in which we live means to build a bridge between the past and the future.

Experience is for us a key philosophical concept, meaning by no means only past events upon which we reflect after they are gone. Experience is neither a passive receptivity nor only the process of knowing, but it can be the true process of *acting* and living itself: so it is the human mode of being in the world (Cf. J. Dewey).

The philosophical-critical reflection upon the experience of human life, its analysis, evaluation and re-evaluation, are often connected with the self-reflection of human beings, with one's ability to define her or his place in the world, or in everyday reality, and to delineate the dimensions of our human activities.

From this it follows that philosophical reflection upon the different forms of human experience and problems of life has relevance for the process of education, and raises related questions such as those concerning the meaning of life and questions about values.

The Meaning of Life and the Question of Human Values

It might be said that the question of the meaning of our life and existence is the result of the character of our being and of human nature. Therefore, it is most important to show that asking the question of the meaning of life simultaneously deepens our humanity. If one does not ask this question, one loses his or her humanity. Therefore, this question cannot be excluded from our consciousness at all. The question need not be answered: it might be ignored or considered unanswerable. In spite of that, every person has her or his own image of love, happiness and the realization of his or her life. Every person suffers when she or he cannot find the sense and meaning of what she or he does, believes, and hopes. It is extremely relevant to emphasize that the sense of life can be witnessed in small as well as in great things, and that values and life need not lose their meaning in extremely difficult situations.

Just from this point of view two levels of the meaning of life might be pointed out: the general, theoretical level and the level of individual, living experience. I propose that the interlinking of these two levels should be respected in the process of education: generally, however, thinking about life does not replace an individual's experience of the meaning of life.

In spite of the fact that such an individual experience is a specific and unique one, it is only in the field of experience that we can also find that which links all people together. The significance of our experience resides in the fact that it forces us to rethink our situation – including our relations and our dependence again and anew. Experience influences our view of the future perspective: maybe it leads and stimulates us to a new understanding of the meaning of pain and joy.

It is true that not every experience is a certain form of understanding about the state of being or about things or of finding their meaning. The meaning of something, however, reveals itself in its connection to values. Thus, in the educational process, philosophical reflection upon the questions of values obtains its relevance.

Sensitivity to values and the existential importance of values are connected first of all with the conception of the meaning of human life. From the philosophical point of view it is possible to consider as determinative of meaning (in the sense of A. Schweitzer's and V.E. Frankl's conception) the value of a person's attitude to life itself, by which human being is shown in its essence as a being looking for meaning (*logos*). Reflections on values and the meaning of life make it also possible, e.g., to distinguish the value "*to have*" (to possess various things) from the

value "to be" (a good, wise and just person) in the different concepts of E. Fromm, E. Mounier, G. Marcel, etc.

In this context we can recall Frankl's classification of values, which are inseparable from the meaning of human life. V.E. Frankl articulates three areas of values which are primary in our life: values of our acts, creative activities; values of our emotional and aesthetic experience; and values of our attitude toward life (Frankl 1982: 61-62).

The most important is the value of a positive attitude toward life. According to V. E. Frankl, the positive relation to life, and, above all, the cultivation of "the will to meaning" help us overcome the situation of the "existential vacuum;" a certain emptiness of life, the feeling of helplessness and loss of meaning that may appear as a consequence of complicated and critical life situations.

Within educational activity an important role is played in this context by the philosophical analysis of such critical or crisis situations and their eventual typology, as well as by pointing to the necessity of the mobilization of such resources of inner power as courage, hope, and wisdom.

These competencies can be developed and actualized by education and training, even though the extent of that development might be limited. Let us not forget, however, that it is our responsibility as educators to care for the development of personal creative potential.

Dimensions of Human Hope

Critical or crisis situations are characterized by parameters of fatalism and contain a strong impulse toward thinking or meditation. We can detail three basic types of critical situations (Poláková 1994: 19-24), which frequently test and verify our values or lead to a reevaluation, creating a new hierarchy of values. Therefore, these situations can be resources for new power, new possibility, and a new "taste for life" (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin).

The first type of critical situation is connected with a threat to important values. The second-stage situation has to do with the loss of values. The final critical situation is one that involves the extinction of the validity of values.

We stand before the question of how we can solve these types of situation?

In the first case, it is important to understand that the aim is to safeguard the values. Have we the means to do this? The solution is to mobilize our inner power, which is courage.

In the second situation, the task is to endure the loss of values. In this case, we must also mobilize internal power: the power of hope which will enable us to endure. There exists a dynamic relationship between courage and hope in which one stimulates the other. Hope has a further dimension beyond that of courage: it is hope that gives us wings. Hope is not an empty illusion, however, it is a basic attitude toward life.

In the third situation, in which values are extinct, we must understand the situation in which we find ourselves. In order to do this, we must mobilize our inner wisdom. This wisdom is more than simply knowing, but it does not exclude knowing.

Here I would like to reflect further upon the dimension and meaning of hope in our life.

The Polish thinker, J. Tischner, observes that every hope is defined by its dimension: hope is shallower or deeper; hope "sees" less or more. The dimension of hope is given by the experience of value. "The knowledge of the axiological (evaluative) aspects of experience develops in the context of hope" (Tischner 1992: 296). The experience of value is knowing the truth about reality combined with hope; and for this we must live. One has a reason to live as far as one has hope.

Hope evokes expectation (waiting). This is often full of uncertainty and hesitation, but, in spite of these, hope exists. It grows from the experience of change. There are specific changes concerning the areas of values which are realized in the human world of experience. The values need not always be realized, but hope is the answer to something that lies deeper, that is constitutive of the basic situation of human being. This situation is critical, and often has the parameters of tragedy.

The world of human experience is also the world of human hope. Hope is the main dimension of human being. At the present time, the question of hope is everywhere: in the fields of religion, science, technology – especially in the field of genetics – but also in the area of politics, etc. We hope that humankind will resolve many problems such as human health, the ecological crisis, world order and peace. But very often we mature through the conflicts and critical situations into hope, and so we examine its boundaries. The philosophical-ethical attitude permits reflection on these dimensions of hope.

What is important to remember is that hope opens before us the meaning of being. It is the spiritual force (G. Marcel), which allows us to overcome the situation of despair and of loss of dignity. From the philosophical point of view the model of hope is the mode of human being and the celebration of life. The human experience convinces us that all our happiness and our whole future are dependent upon the position that we give to hope.

In our time, the restoration of hope is particularly important. Hope as a mode of being is the pre-condition of our mental health. “Hope is a reassertion of our belief in the meaning of human life, and in the sense of the universe. Most importantly, hope is a pre-condition of all meaning, of all striving, of feeling at home in this confused and complex world of ours. Thus endorsing hope is not a form of foolishness but a form of wisdom” (Skolimowski 1993: 101-102). The hope is the mother of wisdom. Therefore hope is not isolated from human courage and wisdom.

Hope, courage and wisdom are all attributes of our humanness and characteristics of human being. The question concerning the nature of courage, wisdom, and hope and the question concerning the nature of human being are intimately woven together. This means that the philosophical-ethical and ontological-anthropological dimensions are inseparable.

The understanding of these dimensions presupposes an understanding of the human person; his or her world; its structures and values. The ontological-anthropological questions can be asked as ethical questions.

But these questions are by no means only theoretical-philosophical or theological ones. They are strongly practical questions. When we understand courage, wisdom and hope as unique and practical features of our humanness in us, then we can observe their evolutionary dimension: that is, how they lead us to overcome and to leave the situation at which we have arrived. They open the space for our future. The understanding of these evolutionary dimensions gives us a unique perspective on the nature of humans and their values.

Contemporary Western Philosophy as an intellectual, cognitive and spiritual force strives to show hope as a resource for the future of humankind. Within the context of the ecological crisis, e.g., H. Skolimowski outlines the basis of a new world-view; a new intellectual understanding: turning to the holistic and organic paradigm and to alternative lifestyles. These “signify not only changes in our technology, economics and patterns of living, but changes in our morality, rationality and conceptual thinking” (Skolimowski 1992: 2).

We need to remind ourselves that to live as human beings is to live in a state of responsibility. To live in a state of responsibility is the first condition of living in grace. “Responsibility as a

peculiar power of human will and spirit, is a crucial vehicle in maintaining our moral autonomy and in repossessing the Earth” (Skolimowski 1993: 93).

Philosophy which reflects ecological problems is a response to the challenge of the future. It takes responsibility for future generations. In spite of the fact that philosophy does not rescue the world, it can be the field for all who seek the meaning of life and the sense of the whole universe.

Hence, Skolimowski’s eco-philosophy insists that human being – human project and humanity itself – is a rediscovery of human meaning related to the meaning of the universe. In this sense, eco-philosophy is a philosophy of life because it requires translating the abstract philosophical categories into forms of life. It is also a rational restatement of the unitary world-view in which the cosmos and the human race belong to the same structure.

Conclusion

I suppose that the purpose of philosophical reflection upon the questions we have discussed on the process of education is to interpret what we call the “human answer” to the challenge of being, to the challenge of life, particularly in critical situations. The word “challenge” we can understand most generally and most concretely at the same time. I can be challenged by my body and its needs, by my health, and also by my spiritual needs – or by my friend or by the face of my neighbor. I am challenged by Others/others (E. Levinas) – all others – who call me because they need me, because they wait for my answer in the form of my help, of my word, or simply of my presence. So it is very important for us to hear these challenges and to reflect upon them, and – if we want to share life with others – to live in dialogue and in communication with all the world.

The process of education is also the answer to the challenges of today. To educate may mean, put metaphorically, “to help the spirit of man to enter into the fullness of reality” (Giussani 1995: 91) and to respond positively its challenges. Such education leads us to the world of human experience as the world of hope.

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11. Cultural Resources for Coping with Technology

Gernot Böhme

Values or Cultures

It is generally accepted that the relationship between technology and human values presents a problem – or, more precisely, that technological development could endanger human values. There is, therefore, a critical intention latent in our topic. At the same time, it should not be assumed that technology and human values represent two different spheres, like those of the natural and human sciences, for example. Technology, too, is a human value, and was developed in the pursuit of human values, such as freedom, emancipation from nature, mastery of nature, prosperity and happiness. We thus have to do with a dialectic, in the sense that the consequence of the attempt to realize human values by means of technology could be to endanger precisely those values. This could also mean that an explicit attachment to certain human values must lead to a restriction of technological progress.

In my opening statement I should like to address the critical intention of our topic explicitly. I shall ask how far human values are endangered by technological development and, conversely, how far certain restrictions placed on technology by these human values can be justified. It seems to me, however, that to specify such values and to legitimize certain restrictions on technological progress would be a very abstract undertaking. We philosophers are often satisfied if we can present conclusive arguments in our papers and books. Technological development, by contrast, is a very concrete and powerful movement which impinges on and changes the living conditions of human beings throughout the world. I should like to call this process the *globalization of technical civilization*. It serves little purpose to agree in an abstract and universalistic way on certain values which might possibly be endangered by this process. In my view we ought rather to ask about the resources which are available in the various regional cultures of humanity to enable those regions to come to terms with technological development. I am not, therefore, asking about human values in general, but about values which are realized in cultural praxis, that is, in modes of living, in customary behavior, in institutions and, more generally, in forms of communal life. I am not asking in general terms about the cultural resources for assimilating the effects of technology. Instead, I pass this question on to the representatives of other cultures, while limiting myself to the experiences I am able to speak about as a representative of European culture.

If in what follows I speak from a European perspective, therefore, it is not done in a spirit of Eurocentrism, but in the awareness that I can present only one perspective among others in my contribution, and must keep myself open to experiences and responses from other cultural backgrounds. It seems to me that we share a problem in the advance of technical development, but that we experience this problem differently – depending on our own cultures – and therefore handle it in different ways. There might, of course, be a historical difference between Europe and other cultures, in that in Europe the development of modern technology was accompanied from the first by a critical debate, because modern technology itself originated within European culture. Other cultures have frequently been confronted by modern technology as a kind of invasion. In what follows I shall therefore be concerned with defining more precisely the traditional resources which have been involved in the critical debate with technology. This will lead on to the critical thesis

that we are now in a situation in which these resources themselves are being consumed by the development of technology.

Before embarking on the general section of my statement, I should like to give a brief illustration of what I have just said by an example which I have investigated in some depth myself. My purpose here is both to make clear the difference between human values and cultural praxis, and also to begin to clarify my thesis concerning the technological exhaustion of cultural resources.

My example is the process of human birth.¹ In the 1970s there was in Europe and North America a very powerful tendency towards what was called “programmed birth.” That is, the birth of a human being was carried out according to scientifically calculated data and under technically optimized conditions. This means that as a rule births were induced by medication, and were monitored technically and guided pharmacologically while in progress. Birth under narcosis, that is, without the consciousness and collaboration of the woman giving birth, became the rule, and birth by caesarean section became, at the least, very frequent. Now, one might say in abstract terms, of course, that the birth of a human being is a *natural* process, and indeed, in touching on the theme of “nature” one is invoking one of the most important cultural resources by which the European opposition to the development of technical civilization has been nourished. But in the context of birth in the 1970s “nature” had already been reduced to a pale, abstract value. Nature was already largely exhausted as a cultural resource in this area. By this I mean that although it was possible to argue against programmed birth on the grounds that birth *in itself* is a natural process, it could also be said that, in a situation in which 95 per cent of births already took place in clinics, nature as a cultural resource, that is, as a living praxis, no longer had any reality. Birth in the clinic amounted to a process carried out under laboratory conditions and according to the norms of doctors and midwives as scientific and technical personnel. Resistance to programmed birth would therefore have remained on the level of ideology had not nature as a cultural resource been revitalized by suggestions made by a medical practitioner, Grantly Dick-Read. The method of *natural birth* as proposed by Dick-Read involves training in a praxis which deliberately gives scope to nature. Apart from instruction, it involves certain gymnastic and breathing exercises and the learning of an attitude by which the mother allows herself to go with nature, to go with what is happening of its own accord.

Dr. Dick-Read’s method achieved considerable success; that is, it gave rise to a widespread movement among women, introducing not just a marginal practice, like the re-introduction of home births, for example, but one which influenced the mainstream, birth in the clinic. In clinics, too, programmed birth is no longer an ideal.

Interesting and encouraging as this case is, I do not wish to analyze it further here, but to enquire more generally into the cultural resources which have provided the basis for the debate over technology in Europe up to now.

Observations on the Critical Debate over Technical Development in Europe

In his book *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*,² Jürgen Habermas has shown that the project of the modern age in Europe does not present a picture of the straightforward achievement of intentions. It is a much more varied picture, in which certain basic ideas of the Enlightenment

¹ G. Böhme, ‘Wie natürlich ist die natürliche Geburt?’ in G. Böhme, *Natürliche Natur. Über Natur im Zeitalter ihrer technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, 3rd edn, Frankfurt/Main 1997.

² Translated by Frederick Lawrence, Cambridge 1987. German edition: *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*, Frankfurt/Main, 1985.

achieve changeable success against constant opposition from waves of counter-Enlightenment and Romanticism. Although this book points in the direction in which I wish to proceed, it offers nothing further in terms of specific contents, since it moves primarily on the level of the superstructure, that is, the level of discourse, and does not take account of matters such as the development of technology or cultural praxis. To that extent Habermas can count on a reconciliation of modernity with itself, in the sense that discourse itself becomes philosophy. But what were the cultural forces with which the project of modernity had to contend, insofar as it was a project of the technological mastery of nature – of external nature and also of the nature which we ourselves are? I believe that we can identify four major cultural resources which have fed the critical side of the debate over technological development: nature, creation, subjectivity and history. These are headings which, as soon as they are stated, may refer to nothing more than values. This makes it all the more important to investigate how far they have been, or still are, an integral part of cultural practices.

Let us begin with the theme of nature. This concept has been one of the most important characteristics of European culture as a whole. Since Greek Sophism, nature has represented one side of a dichotomy, or a pair of opposites, by which practically all the moments of the European culture and world-view have been structured. For example: nature versus law; nature versus technology; nature versus mind; nature versus civilization. These pairs of opposites have the peculiarity that they place the human being and human forms of existence at the center, but at the same time tear them apart. For nature is that which exists of itself, while its antithesis is that which has been created by human beings. The human being is itself the criterion by which the opposites are split apart, since it is always to be found on both sides. What is decisive for the project of modernity, however, is that it places itself unambiguously on one side, positing the mastery of nature as the true goal of humanity's development. The project of freedom is understood as emancipation from dependence on nature. It is no wonder that whenever this project has taken concrete form, that is, when it was to be realized through technical development, it has aroused opposition. The counter-movements are found in practically all areas of culture, in pedagogy, in agriculture, in medicine and even in art. If Enlightenment philosophy advocated the disciplining and control of inner nature as an educational ideal, that is, mastery of the body and the suppression of bodily impulses, this gave rise to a counter-movement seeking to give scope to the spontaneous development of the child, and aiming to promote the expression of human sensuality through what was called the education of nature. Through its "discovery of childhood" as an autonomous, self-contained phase of human development which is not merely a precursor to adulthood, this kind of pedagogy did also influence the educational mainstream. The pedagogical systems of Montessori and Waldorf and the school of Summerhill should be mentioned here as separate movements.

In the field of agriculture the technological appropriation of nature has been carried forward primarily through the industrialization of agriculture, by its mechanization and "chemicising." From the first this process has met with opposition from the rural economy, and in Germany has prevented the complete industrialization of agriculture up to now. Nevertheless, the methods of industrial agriculture, mechanization and the widespread use of chemicals, have also penetrated rural farming operations. However, in our century "organic" or biological-dynamic forms of farming have been developed, and have become firmly established both legally and economically through the introduction of special brands, quality criteria and marketing systems.

In the field of medicine, the opposition to modern technical-pharmacological medicine has led to the development of natural healing methods, homeopathy, anthroposophical medicine and similar "alternative" healing procedures. What is important here is that these tendencies do not

consist merely of counter-concepts and alternative theories, but are establishing an alternative praxis and specific healing professions. For example, a special case in Germany which should be mentioned here is the profession of the *Heilpraktiker*, or non-medical practitioner, which has become a social institution through the recognition of a specific training course and a diploma, but especially through recognition by the insurance system.

Finally, art should be mentioned as the last specific area of cultural praxis in which nature has been cultivated in opposition to the mainstream of the Enlightenment project. Here, the classic example is the antithesis between the French and the English landscape gardens. While the French park expresses the human will to subordinate nature by exact, geometrical planning, the objective of the English landscape garden is to make visible the autonomous activity of nature, and to create, by means of conscious arrangement, natural scenes of the kind which might have been produced by nature itself. By contrast, the mainstream of European art, like the project of modernity as a whole, is dominated by the emancipation from nature, and especially by a rejection of the classical maxim that art should be an imitation of nature (*mimesis*). In the art of 20th century, however, we find tendencies in which artists work within and with nature. I'm thinking of a genre such as land art, which articulates and makes visible nature as such, and of artists who deliberately allow nature to collaborate in their works, exposing them to weathering, for example, and integrating an element of decay and evanescence into the artistic process. There are also artists who see it as their task to enable people to rediscover their own natural, bodily level of existence, and to develop their sensuality, through the experience of art.

I have now said enough about nature for the present, especially as it repeatedly overlaps with the other three themes I wish to discuss. One might think, for example, of the widespread development of the nature-protection movement since the late 19th century. Through the activities of associations, this has become a reality to the point where it has affected legislation.

I shall now turn to the theme of creation. This is related to the theme of nature, but is distinguished from it by an entirely different form of cultural integration: creation is a fundamental conception of Christian-Judaic religion. The whole cosmos, and especially nature, is regarded as a divine product. In the beginning God arranged the world in a certain way, and at the end of the process of creation He Himself observed that this arrangement was good. This means, however, that by virtue of the idea of creation the state of the world is God-given, and is to be regarded as a divinely sanctioned order. Now, there is no doubt that the position of man within creation is highly ambivalent. On one hand, he is himself a creature among creatures, and is obliged to respect the divine order of creation. On the other, he is elevated above the mass of creatures in that he is held to be made "in the image of God," and has been entrusted with the task of "having dominion over the earth."³ This task arising from creation was certainly used at the beginning of modernity's project to legitimize the radical domination over and technical appropriation of nature. Yet, on the other hand, a different attitude developed out of the respect for nature, and gave rise in Europe to very significant cultural praxis and to opposition to the unfettered technicising of nature – of both external and human nature – an opposition which was supported by the churches. Implicit in the idea of man's creaturely nature is an acknowledgement of animals as fellow-creatures, and this idea has been adopted as a principle of animal protection legislation in Germany. According to this law, animals must be respected as fellow-creatures. Furthermore, there is significant resistance from the Catholic Church to the manipulation by medical technology of the entire reproductive sector, that is, the process extending from conception to the birth of human beings.

³ Bible, *Genesis* 1,28.

I shall now turn to the third of the themes I mentioned, *subjectivity*. Unlike *nature* and *creation*, subjectivity is a value which does not go back to antiquity, but is itself a product of modern thought and modern modes of living. All the same, there is a background to subjectivity within Christian-Judaic religion: it stems from God's concern for the individual human being, in that God both addresses the individual person and calls that person to account: "I have called thee by thy name."⁴ However, subjectivity in the sense of a view of the world focused on the individual human subject and governed by the notion of the non-fungible responsibility of the individual person, is a product of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, that is, of the French Revolution on one hand and Romanticism on the other. Here, too, it must be said that subjectivity is not merely an idea, but is integrated into forms of living and is secured by social institutions. Thus, since the French Revolution there have been individual human rights, and since Romanticism the custom of the individual choice of the marriage partner.

Subjectivity as a way of life and as a social institution is at present developing into an important resource for resistance to the unrestricted manipulation of human beings. Subjectivity is one of the most important moments in the concept of human dignity. The inviolability of personal dignity requires that people's subjectivity be respected in one's dealings with them. This self-perception by human beings, or this interpretation of human dignity, underpins, for example, the ban on cloning in Europe today. To clone a human being would be to endanger him in his uniqueness and non-fungibility, and, I would like to add, in his entitlement to regard himself as a new, original subjective entity. On a world-wide scale, that is, at the level of UNESCO, the understanding of human beings as subjectivities is underpinned by the ban on reducing them to their genetic equipment. The UNESCO declaration on gene technology contains a passage according to which a person's identity cannot be equated with his or her genetic code.

Finally, I come to my last theme, that of history. To have a history, to be embedded in a history, was not discovered as a value until the period of Romanticism. Only in a period which, through social revolutions, industrialization and technicisation, confronted human beings with an incessant annihilation of the past, and imposed on them constant partings, did connectedness to the past become an autonomous value. This, too, it must be said, was by no means an abstract value; to live historically became a way of life and gave rise to social institutions. A multitude of tradition-orientated associations came into being, devoted, for example, to cultivating traditional dialects and traditional music, to preserving regional costumes and, lastly and most important, to protecting and fostering regional values. The movement to protect regional homelands is the real source of the nature conservation movement in Europe.⁵ The latter was never concerned with the conservation of nature as it may have been in itself, as a wilderness, but with landscape as it had been shaped by history. Historicity as a cultural resource therefore means resistance to the arbitrary remodeling of the given environment by technology. It demands that innovations should respect tradition and incorporate the new *harmoniously* in the old. This means respecting not only built monuments but also natural monuments. In Germany, both of these are anchored in different forms in the Basic Laws of the federal states. Nature conservation has been declared a state responsibility, and encompasses not only the protection of nature as such, but of nature as a human living-space.

Important social movements have drawn their strength from the resource of historicity, and are still active today in the form of associations and interest groups. Unlike my other three themes, that of historicity contains a moment which makes it especially capable of assimilating

⁴ Bible, Isaiah 45,4.

⁵ P. Siefenrle, *Fortschrittsfeinde? Opposition gegen Technik und Industrie von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart*, Munich 1984, esp. Ch. 13.

technological developments. If a mode of life is determined by historicity, that certainly does not mean that it only generates resistance to innovations. Rather, that which is to be preserved is understood as a human product – nature as a landscape cultivated by man, for example – so that the aim is not to reject any change, but to foster the preservation of continuity.

When I review these four resources for coping with technical progress, it seems doubtful to me whether they can be universalized. At any rate, I am aware that these themes are embedded in certain constellations of European cultural history. And I wonder whether functional equivalents, with similar potential for coming to terms with technology, could exist in other cultures. *Nature* was originally conceived in contradistinction to the consciousness of free self-development in the Greek *polis*. The concept enjoyed a renaissance in the period of Rousseau, when civilization was experienced for the first time as oppressive and restrictive. The understanding of the world as a whole as the *creation* of a God is an expression of Judeo-Christian religion. *Subjectivity* came into being in conjunction with the bourgeois revolutions in Europe in the 18th century. *Historicity* is a concept which evolved in opposition to the Industrial Revolution about 1800. These four, nature, creation, subjectivity and historicity, have formed the resistant framework within which technological development has been channeled and retarded, but also, in part, constructively shaped. This means that scientific and technical progress up to now has had to conform to legislation regarding nature conservation and animal protection, that industrial innovations have to pass official tests of their environmental and social compatibility, that progress in medical technology is bound by respect for human dignity and is governed by laws and approval procedures. All this works more or less well. The question raised by the globalization of technical civilization, however, concerns not only the possible universalisation of these resources for coping with technical progress, or the presence of functional equivalents in other cultures; it is also the question how far and for how long we can continue to rely on these resources.

The Erosion of the Resources for Coping with Technology

The skeptical thesis I should like to put forward now is that the advance of technology is itself progressively destroying the resources which have enabled it to be constructively assimilated in Europe up to now. This is bound up with reasons which oblige us to say that we now live in a *technical civilization*. In our century technology has itself taken on the status of a civilizing factor and has thus marginalised traditional cultures, even in Europe. We are no longer dealing with civilizations or cultures which only *make use of* certain technologies; rather, the technologies have themselves acquired a function which shapes human and social life. This process can best be described as a *technicising* of all spheres of life. Although this concept encompasses current developments, it is also clear that some of them extend far back and may just be the final working out of what has always been latent in modern technology. I shall apply this supposition to the four themes that I have mentioned, in order, also, to illustrate my thesis that technological development is gradually eroding the critical potential of the resources in question.

This process is seen perhaps most strikingly in the case of nature. Even today, people are still apt to invoke nature when advocating alternatives to technicised modes of life or attempting to curb technical developments. But what is nature? Has not nature been investigated and understood in an experimental, technical context since Galileo? Did not Descartes equate the knowledge of nature with its technical reproduction? Have we not long included in nature not only what is already given, but what we produce technically, for example, super-heavy elements or polymeric fibers? The more we succeed in reproducing nature technically – and this includes the areas of

medical and genetic technology – the less easy it is to understand how one could draw a boundary between the natural and the artificial which would command respect. If this boundary shifts or becomes completely blurred one wonders what basis is left for resistance to the genetic manipulation of species, including man, to transplant technologies and the arbitrary modification of ecotopes. If nature is not simply that which manifests itself and is therefore given, but is that which is producible in accordance with natural laws, then the concept of nature loses its normative significance as a sphere which must be respected and cared for, and which sets limits to technical development.

The situation is very similar with the concept of creation. Since the trial of the physicist Galileo, the role of the churches in shaping our view of the world has been in retreat. Since the church has been obliged to leave it more and more to natural science to say what nature is, the concept of creation has been progressively devalued. It was essential to the concept of creation and to the order predicated on it that creation was completed on the *seventh day*, in accordance with the Bible. The pressure of natural science on the Christian churches has obliged them to reinterpret the concept of creation in a form compatible with the theory of evolution. This has given scope to theological ideas which were originally regarded as heretical – pantheistic ideas that God is nature, and ideas of a permanent creation. Today, such ideas have become acceptable to at least the Protestant sector of Christianity under the heading of Process Theology, which is strongly influenced by the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead. It is clear from this, however, that the concept of creation, the idea of a fixed entity which must be respected, has been abandoned: nature as permanent creation continues to develop further, and can therefore also be developed further by *human beings*.

If the erosion of the religious resources has been primarily a result of the adaptation of theology to science, technology itself is penetrating the cultural area I referred to by the concept of subjectivity. This is happening in various ways. Psycho-pharmaceuticals are making it possible to manipulate the sphere of the emotions – precisely the sphere which is essential to subjectivity as a realm of responsibility. The identity of a human being, which was founded culturally on his or her responsibility for biographical continuity, might be reduced to a pure fact by the method of the genetic fingerprint. On the other hand, the technical production of a diversity of realities constructed of images and data opens the possibility for individuals to multiply their own identities. For many people life on the Internet is becoming a part of their real life, but in it they split themselves into a multitude of identities on which they cannot and need not confer any unity. There are cultural practices – in this case the use of psycho-pharmaceuticals for non-therapeutic purposes, the criminological technique of the genetic fingerprint and storage of such fingerprints in databases, and virtual play on the Internet – which are dissolving away the possibilities of resistance based on invoking an individual subjectivity which should be respected.

Finally, we come to the theme of history. Here, there is a famous example – admittedly, an example in a novel – of how history can be destroyed. Orwell's novel *1984* envisages a situation in which the past is re-written by manipulating existing data in order to adapt it to current policies. That is a fiction, and no doubt an exaggerated one, but it does show the possibilities open in principle to technology. On a concrete level, we have today the problem that a photograph can no longer be used as an historical document because of the possibility of technical manipulation. However, technology can make the past disappear not only in this negative way, by erasing and re-writing it, but by the precise opposite, by keeping it present without any loss. History as cultural praxis requires forgetting and remembering, it requires tradition. But electronic data carriers have the tendency to keep everything present without distinction or loss. Whether positively or

negatively, the technical possibilities in the management of data, texts and images are depriving the past of its weight, of what might be called its inertia, and thus of its potential to resist innovative developments in the present.

Conclusion

This brings me to my conclusion. What I wished to show you is that European culture, which can be regarded with some justice as the mother of modern technological development, once contained the resources to cope with this development. Modern technology has the potential not only to expand the modes of human existence to an unprecedented degree, but also to destroy humanity actually, or to destroy qualitatively what we have regarded up to now as human values. From the experience of European culture I have tried to show which resources have been available up to now to determine and secure the content of human values by cultural praxis. I am far from wishing to recommend these possibilities, developed within the context of European culture, to the family of humanity as a whole, especially as I am extremely skeptical, as you have seen, whether these resources will be sufficient in the long run to withstand the divergent tendencies of technological development.

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12.

The Human Person: Avoiding Distortion

Margaret Yee

“A common concern to preserve and sustain human life in the midst of such heartbreak has united the people of the world.”

In an article such as this, written from the combined viewpoint of personal experience and scholarly enquiry, one's own emphases with regard to how one perceives human life and the human person are bound to be more predominant. Nevertheless, there are factors that are shared in common which are worthy of reflective thought.

For instance, most could identify times in which one is hopeful. On the other hand, and especially in our contemporary world, there are times when supposedly hopeful circumstances, such as immense advance and progress, can prove most daunting of one's spirit.

In a new millennium, we would like to think that despite such moments, in the end of the day hope will prevail. Is such a stance, however, justifiable? Could it not be argued that our world which, to all intents and purposes seeks to achieve unity and freedom, is instead highly fragmented?

Some twenty-five years ago, there was a best-selling book on Christian community entitled “Living together in a world falling apart.” I recall a medical practitioner, who at the time had been treating many stressed patients, remarking to me in her exhaustion that what she needed was a book on “Falling apart in a world living together.” Perhaps, at heart, there is a common hope in both these titles, namely a desire to be in harmony with those around us, and free to enjoy all that life may offer.

The popular caption for our new millennium of “globalization” would seem to express just such a goal, the sense that the different people of our world might become united in a goodly way, bonding in some kind of oneness and freedom, socio-politically, economically and religiously. Whilst some may well be skeptical whether such a hope can ever be achieved, I shall endeavor to indicate why such a wish need not be beyond reckoning. In the discussion, I shall also briefly comment on the factors which have mitigated against previous attempts to establish global unity and freedom, and suggest possible ways in which such setbacks may be overcome in our contemporary setting.

Hope and Understanding of the Person

There is, I believe, one strong pragmatic reason for assuming that people of different nations, cultures, backgrounds and religions can be united. This factor has been demonstrated particularly at times of national disaster, when famine, floods or earthquake have devastated human life. In these circumstances, a common concern to preserve and sustain human life in the midst of such heartbreak has united the people of the world. The concern is a human one, intrinsic to life itself. A sense of solidarity transcends all differences.

Without question, human life is precious. In the midst of heartbreak, loss, suffering and death, human support and relief requires no justification. The horrors of the floods in Mozambique, and

more recently the devastating earthquake in Gujarat, India tell their own story. In such situations, all socio-political barriers are swept aside. A higher principle overrules altogether.

It is this common principle that unites us, whether publicly acknowledged or not. Increasingly, it is recognized that the violation of human life can no longer be tolerated. At base, the human person *is* precious, a belief that can be said to be indisputable and universal.

However, it is at this point that a rather poignant issue needs to be raised. So far, it has been argued that the desire for unity and freedom is a hope that belongs to human nature, even though achievement of such has proved elusive. As suggested above, there are reasons which have mitigated against such being fulfilled. One of the main frustrations preventing such achievements, I believe, arises from distorted understandings of the human person *per se*.

Though *prima facie* this may appear to be a facile claim that we make, viz. that the cause of the problem rests in the simple presumption that the human person is well-understood, once one enters into discussion and decision-making which affects human life, considerable disagreements become obvious.

The source of these disparities can, in fact, be traced to a diversity of ways of looking at human life. A closer examination of these conflicts can disclose that they arise from different assumptions about the human person. Whenever one's outlook is fairly limited or restrictive in breadth, the effect of such will be apparent. This is true in everyday life as much as in more formal, professional or academic settings.

One of the most prevalent examples of how restrictive or exclusive assumptions give rise to such differences may be found in present day conflicts over issues relating to science and religion. Currently, a large number of scientists regard human life as primarily physical. Richard Dawkins, a biologist in Oxford, is one who opts for a physicalist explanation of the human person. However, more recently other scientists with or without an interest in religion, such as Susan Greenfield, would at least concede that a physically-based explanation of the human person, which is open to the admission of psychological and social aspects, suggests a more holistic account.

Beliefs held about the human person are in fact fundamental too much of our decision-making in the world with respect to public issues affecting medicine, health, education, social welfare, policing, community and religion. For this reason, basic thoughts about the human person need to be made explicit. Otherwise, unconscious, exclusive or limited assumptions about the human person often lurk unrecognized, continually infesting the search for agreement. For instance, a physicalist view of the world is very different from either a physically-based view or some other alternative. As a consequence, these inevitably have a bearing on research findings, particularly with respect to human life issues.

From a Multi-Disciplinary Standpoint

At this point, it becomes necessary to “put my own cards on the table” and make clear that I speak as a philosopher of science and a theologian with a keen interest in experimental psychology. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore if I further disclose that my stance is somewhat different from both the physicalist and the physically-based positions expressed above. My own position can be identified as multi-disciplinary in form.

There are very good reasons as to why a multi-disciplinary standpoint is the one adopted and considered most adequate. Current progressive studies into human consciousness¹ have alerted researchers to the manifold aspects of human life. At the same time, it is necessary to cite recent

¹ *Vide The Journal of Consciousness Studies.*

publications such as that by Rom Harre who, in his book *The Singular Self* has accentuated the multi-faceted, identifiable aspects of human life. Human life is manifold, but holism need not be lost as a consequence. In fact, since persons are one, yet diverse, a form of reflection capable of encompassing such comprehensivity is paramount.

An important codicil, however, is the need to stress that in working from a multi-disciplinary standpoint, one is NOT commending some form of “cafeteria” viewpoint. In no way is it suggested that methodologically the lowest point of consensus is what is being sought. The position which I hold and evaluate as multi-disciplinary is of a different order, which I shall endeavor to explain.

It would surely be agreed that serious theologians and scientists all work critically within their own specified regions: the theologian is concerned with the human order and its relation to divine being as well as its relation to the world around us; the scientist works from a physical standpoint, whether in physics, chemistry, biogenetics or medicine, from which implications may often be drawn about ourselves and our world, all of which may either be in conflict or conversation with the thought-world of theologians. However though we are committed to our different subject matters, it would indeed be arrogant, if not ignorant, for any serious academician to generalize from their own area of research, whether this be in the sciences or theology, and make statements about the world around us, whilst isolating themselves from critical research which is being undertaken in other fields of study.

Hence, in commending a multi-disciplinary stance, I am suggesting that open, two-way exchange between disciplines is essential. Further, it is my position that the point of convergence of these independent areas of study, which emerges from open, respectful exchange, is what best confirms to us where “reality” lies. My unhappiness with mere consensus between disciplines emanates from the realization that the majority can often be wrong. Hence the point of convergence from multi-disciplinary exchange between critical disciplines is, by far, a more reliable gauge.

Towards a Viable Account of the Human Person

This brings me then to the central issue with which this paper is concerned. From a multi-disciplinary, inclusive and open stance, the contribution of each discipline, including theology, may be taken into serious account. In considering a concept such as “the human person,” a multi-disciplinary approach would ensure critical credence would be given to the contribution of the physical aspects of human life, as to its social and spiritual aspects. The convergence of ongoing research in each of these areas would ensure that a realistically viable account of the human person would, as a consequence, be offered.

However, I can well imagine that a considerable number of questions, if not objections, could still be made in respect of the claims proposed so far. In anticipation, I would like to deal with some of these.

An objection could be made that in opting for a multi-disciplinary stance, though I may well have avoided the restrictive, exclusivism, which is intrinsic to physicalist explanations of the human person which are ultimately devoid of the personalism integral to being human, I have said little about “the human person” *per se*. For instance, even if I should offer a substantial justification of the physical and psychological aspects of human life, can I truly substantiate the spiritual aspect referred to? And even if a spiritual defense could be offered, what of the interrelation of these three factors: the physical, the social/psychological and the spiritual? Could it not be shown that a physically-based account of the human person, as offered by Professor Susan Greenfield, is equally defensible, if not more convincing and empirically substantive?

Let me deal with each of these issues in sequence. Firstly, “the human person”: In discussing the human person, some inchoate but profound concepts were offered some time ago by the noted Oxford theologian/philosopher, Austin Marsden Farrer, in his Gifford lectures, published in his book, *The Freedom of the Will*. In this volume, Farrer, extraordinarily for a philosopher and theologian, does *not* address the theological aspects of the human person. Instead he emphasizes what he considers is a *prior* issue. Generally, from whichever viewpoint one may work, one simply assumes an understanding of the human person without much reflection. As a result, the breadth and depth of human life itself and human consciousness are rarely realized. Findings in one area, such as research into physiological aspects may then be easily generalized to a view of the whole, resulting in a form of physicalism which this essay has criticized.

In his *Freedom of the Will*, Austin Farrer deals directly with restrictive understandings, such as the physicalist approach, indicating the limitations of such assumptions. Through human living, human thought and human behavior, he traces the rational reasons why an ongoing search can indicate clearly that much more is functional in human existence. The characteristics of mental life and thought can be identified, as well as a sense of will and hope. From these aspects he delineates an understanding of the human person which is holistic in form, and comprehensive in character, and in which physical, mental and spiritual distinctions are integral.

By contrast, contemporary research, undertaken by Professor Susan Greenfield in psychopharmacology, in which she has examined the physical base of human consciousness via chemical analyses or neuronal activities, has provided important development in this area of enquiry. Professor Greenfield has identified what she describes as the correlates or indices of human consciousness. In no way does she claim that neuronal assemblies are identical with human consciousness. She, therefore, cannot be accorded the status of being a physicalist. Rather, she has endeavored to give a physically-based account of human consciousness, which she holds is “generated” by the conjunction of stimulation and chemical action in brain-cell activity.

In summary, Susan Greenfield has, to date, confirmed a recognizable distinction between the physical and mental capacities of human life, whilst also maintaining the very close, correlative function of these two aspects. She sees both the physical and mental/psychological aspects of human life as integral to the whole person. Scientific enquiry has made it possible to pinpoint more precisely the relation which exists between these aspects of human consciousness, which are designated as correlative and physically-based.

What is important to note here is that contemporary scientific research in biogenetics, biochemical studies, neurological sciences and brain-imaging has been able to provide substantive knowledge of the nature and form of human consciousness not previously accessible. From a multi-disciplinary standpoint, a physically-based account of human consciousness is able to contribute a substantial advance in knowledge of both physical and psychological aspects of human consciousness.

Of considerable pertinence, however, is her concession, in her book *Journey to the Centers of the Mind*, that despite such advances, scientists cannot *create* human consciousness any more than they can create life. Such acknowledgements are perhaps another indication that the often-sought ultimate wish of a number of scientists to achieve a unity of knowledge is foolhardy.

In addition, even though Susan Greenfield considers spiritual aspects as private and inaccessible to scientific enquiry, other research in the philosophy of religion would suggest otherwise. The work of Caroline Franks Davis in her book *The Evidential Force of Religious Experience*, presents a rationally defensible account of the principles and criteria of judgment by which assessments of religious experience may be evaluated as intrinsically spiritual and distinct

from psychological reports. A recent publication by Eugene d'Aquili and Andrew Newberg also offers supportive research findings from a neurological direction.

Human hope, human will and spiritual well-being, often classified as “residuals” by the social scientists, are capable of critical assessment. Whilst, therefore, a more advanced appreciation of the characteristics of human consciousness may be provided by empirical research, the less accessible aspects of spirituality are none-the-less accessible. It is the *convergence* of such findings which can expose more fully a comprehensive understanding of human existence.

Theological Contribution

This now brings me to a final issue for consideration, viz. theology's contribution. Can it be said that an intrinsically significant spiritual and distinctive aspect of human life is identifiable and integral to the fullness of human hope and survival?

In arguing for the wholeness of human life, its physical, psychological and spiritual aspects, I have endeavored to maintain that physically-based studies provide invaluable confirmation of previously ungrounded concepts of human consciousness. In addition, from an increasing body of research by scientists with a clear interest in theology, amongst whom we could name Ian Barbour, Arthur Peacocke and John Polkinghorne, the compatibility of the sciences with theology makes clear the resolution of former conflicts between these disciplines. However, what is still lacking to a considerable degree is an enunciation of theology's particular contribution to this multi-disciplinary quest. The task, I believe, is a primary one, now facing contemporary theologians. The need for theologians to recognize and address this lack is becoming inescapably obvious as knowledge in the sciences progresses.

Though some thinkers, such as the sociobiologist, E.O. Wilson, in his book *Consilience*, would maintain that theological claims concerning transcendence may easily be subsumed under an account of human life within finite categories, which renders the theological dispensable thereafter, the position is contestable. The one thing which he fails to address and, in consequence, omits from his analyses, is the particular character of the relation of spiritual experience and understanding, for which the critical underpinning as proposed by Caroline Franks Davis, has been demarcated.

On the contrary, the breadth and richness of human life, and its exposition in schools of thought such as that offered in the Christian tradition under the Doctrine of Creation, and very often supported by other religious traditions, provide a comprehensive understanding of relatively unexplored regions of human capacities and possibilities. A more informed and fuller account of what it means to be human may thereby, in ongoing research, be articulated. This understanding of what it means to be human *inclusive* of spiritual factors, would clearly be more encompassing than one which either omits or by definition excludes the contribution of theology.

It is indisputable that as the search continues, cognizance of insights from other religions need careful consideration also. As noted above, and indeed discussed with understanding in Keith Ward's book *Religion and Creation*, thoughts of God as creator in monotheistic religions in many respects provide complementary and illuminative reflections on human life from quite different religious traditions which cannot arbitrarily be excluded without becoming susceptible to oversight.

Conclusion

In conclusion it must be said that an inclusive position is open to expressing the “truly human” as that in which divine operation is intrinsic. Methodologically, hope is in no way restricted. On the other hand, an exclusivist stance would, by implication, be left with a diminished understanding of what it means to be human, which to all intents and purposes could hardly be justified as undistorted, let alone offering the highest hope for human living and survival.

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13.

Hope, Faith and Love: Reflections on Vinoba Bhave

Vasanthi Srinivasan

“I am a man who belongs to another world than this, one that may seem very strange. For I claim that I am moved by love, that I feel it all the time. I do not deal in opinions, but only in thought, in which there is give and take. Thought is not walled in or tied down, it can be shared with people of goodwill; we can take their ideas and offer them ours, and in this way thought grows and spreads.”¹

There can be no better introduction to the life and mission of Vinoba than his opening words in *The Memoirs of Vinoba Bhave* as given above.

In recognizing love as the moving force, in portraying thought as bypassing or surpassing opinions and in emphasizing the dialogic nature of thought, Vinoba captures the spirit underlying his diverse initiatives such as *bhoodan* and *sampattidan*. Being a saint and scholar, Vinoba conceived of love and thought of as the only sources of power. The activities of giving, receiving and reciprocating that he cherished about the process of thinking may have led him to emphasize gift-giving in the social and political spheres since gift-giving also involves the above mentioned activities.² While Vinoba launched *bhoodan* following a dramatic encounter with a generous landlord, his commitment to social reform through non-violence stemmed from his profound hope and faith in the human capacity for the good life. In this article, I focus upon Vinoba’s thought and practice in order to illuminate the experiential structure of hope and faith. Beginning with the origins of *bhoodan* movement, I examine the intimate link between hope and faith in his speeches. For Vinoba, faith implied an attunement to the mysterious ground of being articulated in some Hindu myths and symbols. At the same time, Vinoba eschewed mysticism and nostalgia; he appreciated the possibilities inherent in modern science and technology. By attending to different facets of his thought, I argue that hope is not merely a subjective feeling but a vital aspect of the process by which our consciousness relates to Being and time.

In The Footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi

The immediate aftermath of Indian independence marked by partition riots and Gandhi’s assassination triggered a profound crisis in Vinoba. As he puts it, “my mind was in a whirl, churning over questions of how the country should go forward and which road we ought to take.”³ This heart-churning was intensified during his numerous train journeys when he traveled over more than half of India. He felt that such speedy means of travel tended to excite the mind rather than inspire deep reflection and thus may not be appropriate for an advocate of non-violence. His efforts to procure land for landless Harijan refugees from West Pakistan failed and further disheartened him. Furthermore, Sardar Vallabhabhai Patel’s reference to setting up industries with

¹ 1. Vinoba Bhave (1994):17.

² Marcel Mauss (1990): 13.

³ Vinoba Bhave (1994): 123.

a ‘war-potential’ challenged Vinoba’s faith in non-violent reform. He recognized that the ‘times confronted him with a call and a challenge.’⁴

Vinoba’s anguish presents a good example of the experience of trial that accompanies all hope. Analyzing this experience, Gabriel Marcel writes as follows:

Hope is really a matter of coming out of a darkness in which I am at present plunged, and which may be the darkness of illness, of separation, exile or slavery.... Hope is situated within the framework of the trial, not only corresponding to it, but also constituting our being’s veritable response.⁵

It is crucial to note that hope presupposes a self who is ‘plunged’ into darkness and experiences the trial in her innermost being. Gandhi’s last days and his death at the hands of a Hindu fanatic posed a serious challenge to the philosophy of nonviolence to which Vinoba had dedicated most of his adult life. As Gandhi’s spiritual heir, he faced a profound test of strength and had to plumb the depths of his soul to respond creatively.

In April 1951, Vinoba set out on a *pediatric* or walking-tour of the Telangana region after attending the Sarvodaya conference in Shivarampalli near Hyderabad. In his memoirs, he writes that he was concerned about the ‘communist question’ and the violence and bloodshed which had occurred in the region between the landed and landless. He claims that he was not shocked by the violence for he had realized that the process of development and the rise of a new culture always brought about friction and bloodshed.⁶ Recognizing that militant communist activity was motivated by ideas and principles, he points out that state repression cannot restore peace. He meets the imprisoned leaders and attempts to persuade them that violence should be the last resort and not the first.

On his walking tour of Telangana, Vinoba met some Harijans who asked for land in order to earn a living. He appeals to those present at the meeting and is astounded when a landlord donated a hundred acres of land upon request. Vinoba describes this experience as a ‘revelation’ and a sign from God.⁷ While he calculated that fifty million acres would be required to fulfill the needs of the landless, he was not certain that so much land could simply be had for the asking.⁸ Echoing Gandhi, Vinoba writes that he had a ‘direct talk’ with God and He said, “if you hesitate, if you fear this task, you must give up your faith in non-violence and stop claiming to be non-violent. Have faith; ask and ask again.”⁹ Thus, the spontaneous offer of one landlord stimulated Vinoba’s mind and heart and led him to launch the *Bhoodan yajna* or land-gift sacrifice.

Like his spiritual mentor, Vinoba draws his strength from the wellspring of faith rather than sheer optimism. For optimism, when it is articulated philosophically and not merely as a vague sentiment, involves an objective analysis of specific historical or socio-economic conditions. As Marcel puts it:

When we come down to a final analysis, the optimist, as such, always relies on an experience which is not drawn from the most intimate and living part of himself, but on the contrary, is *considered from a sufficient distance* to allow certain contradictions to become alternated or fused into general harmony. The optimist does not hesitate to extrapolate the conclusions which

⁴ Vinoba (1994):134.

⁵ Gabriel Marcel (1962):30.

⁶ Vinoba (1994):127.

⁷ Vinoba (1994):129.

⁸ Vinoba (1994):228.

⁹ Vinoba (1994):228.

we are led to if only we are willing to “consider things” thoroughly from a sufficient distance and over a wide enough stretch.¹⁰

For Vinoba, the land problem was not an issue to be addressed solely through a scientific analysis of capitalism or the strategy and tactics of class struggle. Nor did he wish to rely upon the force of legislation for he regarded laws not so much as the expression of free self-legislating subjects but as external regulators. Instead, he avowed that the land question could be resolved only through the power of non-violence. This hope stemmed from Vinoba’s faith, an experience that he considered ‘the most intimate part of himself.’

Bhoodan Movement

Like Gandhi, Vinoba also approaches faith more in terms of a direct experience rather than dogma. If faith is understood as an experience of openness toward the divine creative power immanent in the universe and in the hearts of human beings, then Vinoba’s experiment in *bhoodan* becomes intelligible. Being attuned to the mysterious ground of Being, he is able to see the spontaneous offer of one landlord as something more than a fluke, as a ‘sign from God’. Vinoba’s claim might appear presumptuous if we overlook the sophisticated concept of devotion that underlies his faith. Elaborating on *bhakti*, Vinoba often recalled a childhood incident when he questioned his mother about whether a healthy-looking beggar deserved alms. His mother had replied that “he who has come to beg is none else than the Lord. Now you may decide whether he is fit to receive alms. Or would you say that the Lord is not fit? What right have you and I to judge of fitness?”¹¹ This anecdote reveals faith as the ability to ‘see’ everyone and everything as present in and moved by the divine and thereby sanctify one’s actions. Far from placing the divine in some remote realm or reducing the Lord to a beggar or stone-image, this devotional path tunes into the ‘grace’ of the Lord who in the guise of a beggar lets the devotee provide for Him or in the guise of an *arca avatara* or image-incarnation lets the devotee enjoy His glory with all her senses. For Vinoba, such a *bhavana* or attitude is not about making false suppositions but about experiencing the transforming power of love.¹²

While highlighting the lived experience of faith as openness towards the divine, Vinoba does not undermine reason. He reiterates that faith is not opposed to reason but relies upon reason. Direct vision or experience arises only after the intellect is convinced about something. For example, if one does not recognize that the world is full of compassion and that compassion is central to the world plan, then one cannot have direct experience of compassion.¹³ Hence Vinoba attempts to persuade the people of the rationale underlying his land-gifts mission by way of both Hindu myths and metaphysics.

In his speeches during Bhoodan, Vinoba often invokes mythic archetypes, the most prominent one being that of Visnu’s *avatar* or descent as Vamana or dwarf.¹⁴ One of the main motifs of the Vamana story is the humility of the Lord who asks for as much land as can be covered in three steps and ends up measuring the whole universe. Alongside Vamana, he also refers to the horse sacrifice in which a consecrated horse roamed about the land for a year to describe his travels through India asking for land.¹⁵ He claims that he was trying to establish the ‘sovereignty of the

¹⁰ Marcel (1962):34.

¹¹ Vinoba (1997):94.

¹² Vinoba (1997):99.

¹³ Vinoba (1994):225.

¹⁴ Vinoba (1994):130.

¹⁵ Vinoba (1994):135.

people' and reunite 'Mother Earth with her sons'. Another mythic archetype he invokes is that of the Buddha turning the wheel of the Law.¹⁶

On the surface, Vinoba's appeal to the above mentioned myths and rituals might be interpreted as oriented toward preserving the hegemony of the upper caste elites. After all, he identifies himself as a Brahmin like Vamana. Vamana restores *dharma* or cosmic order by tricking the 'demon-devotee', namely Bali. Moreover, given that Vinoba was seeking land for the landless Harijans in many places, his reference to 'reuniting Mother Earth with her sons' harks back to the *Purusha Sukta* wherein the servant class, along with the earth comes from the feet of Purusha. However, it is worth recalling that Vinoba worked tirelessly to root out the rigid 'steel-frame' view of *varna* in his experiments. Furthermore, Visnu's cunning, highlighted in the story, provides an ambivalent role model for Vinoba if his goal was only to reassure the landlords. In this context, it is useful to practice a hermeneutics that balances suspicion with trust.

Vinoba's appeal to mythic parallels restores faith as a creative recollection and imitation of divine deeds. Vinoba's simplicity, his acute intellect and relentless walking from one village to another can be traced to the wandering saints within many Indian religious traditions. Here, it is useful to recall some features of the Vamana myth. This myth narrates the story of a demon king named Bali who, having conquered the three worlds and ousted Indra, initiates a sacrifice and excels in gift giving thereby accruing spiritual merit. Visnu who has already taken a dwarf-form as Vamana appears at the threshold of the sacrificial arena, begins reciting from the Vedas and charms Bali with his radiance. Bali's teacher, Sukra realizes the true identity of Vamana and warns his patron but Bali does not budge from his generous nature.¹⁷ In his conversation with the teacher, Bali argues that he cannot refuse even an ordinary beggar, let alone a divine one. He claims it is an honor to be approached by Visnu himself. Once Bali welcomes Vamana, the latter asks for three strides of land for a fire sanctuary.¹⁸ Bali protests that this is too small a gift and offers gold, villages, jewels and so on. When he realizes that Vamana only wants his three strides, he relents and pours water saying 'I Give' whereupon Vamana expands to cover the three worlds with his two strides. Having witnessed this theophany, as Visnu inquires about the third step, Bali rises to the occasion and offers his own head! The Vamana myth illustrates not so much Visnu's greatness but Bali's nobility; fully cognizant of the challenge and the trap, he grants Visnu's request. Impressed with his magnanimity, Visnu pushes him to the netherworld where he would rule for several epochs after which he will succeed Indra as king of heaven. In some versions, it is claimed that Visnu is permanently indebted to Bali and thus becomes his guard in the netherworld.

Vamana as Prototype

To what extent does Vinoba's initiative constitute a creative re-enactment of the Vamana prototype? Vinoba's quest for *bhoodan* or land gifts was certainly triggered by the spontaneous generosity of one landlord; however, Vinoba's target audience, the landlords, did not initiate the movement of *bhoodan-yajna* or land-gifts sacrifice. As such, Vinoba clarifies that he is not 'begging for alms' for the landless but is "initiating people in a new way of life."¹⁹ Imitating Visnu's apparent humility, he also asks for merely one-sixth of the land. However, Visnu ends up measuring the three worlds of heaven, earth and underworld. While asking for merely one-sixth of

¹⁶ Vinoba (1994):135.

¹⁷ Vamana Purana (1968):156.

¹⁸ Vamana Purana (1968):158.

¹⁹ Vinoba (1994):135.

land, Vinoba also tries to trick them into accepting trusteeship over ownership. However, while Visnu affirms royalty first by his expansive three steps and then by pushing Bali to the infernal regions where he rules as king, Vinoba appears to regard kingship or any type of regime as inimical to freedom. He contends that he wishes to enthrone the *praja* or the people through his non-violent movement. The most salient departure pertains to the uncertain and agonizing aspects of sacrifice that feature in the Vamana story; after all, having covered the heaven and earth with his two steps, Visnu claims Bali's head for his third step thereby pushing him to the netherworld. As Hesperian has noted:

Sacrifice goes far beyond the bounds of gift and reciprocity, of solidarity and participation. ... Sacrifice always involves the destruction, through fire or otherwise, of part of the sacrificial offering, be it ever so minimal a part. In this respect, sacrifice is decisively different from the gift which remains at man's disposal and will return by way of reciprocity.²⁰

While noting this difference between the order of sacrifice and that of the gift, we should remember that sacrifices involved gifts both to the Invisible powers and the Brahmin priest; the sacrificial gift of the latter included both the 'accursed share' of Rudra and 'holy wage' or *dakshina*.²¹ In the phrase *bhoodan yajna*, the difference between sacrifice and gift seems to have been elided. Vinoba appears to ignore the heady and violent aspect of sacrifice in calling the land gift movement a *yajna*. However, Vinoba receives and accepts many analogues of the 'accursed share' in the form of uncultivable lands. Perhaps, he did not emphasize the terrifying nature of sacrifice because such a sacrifice belongs more to *dvapara yuga* whereas in the *kali yuga* gift giving is more meritorious.²²

Trust Towards Traditions

While interpreting myths and symbols as a social activist rather than an orthodox Hindu pundit or an Indologist, Vinoba displays an attitude of trust toward the inherited tradition. In this connection, a brief contrast with some modern western thinkers may not be out of place. Ever since Voltaire, it has been customary for western thinkers to deride mythic reason and ritual actions as products of a childish imagination. The past is seen as a period of ignorance and 'false consciousness' from which humans have to be liberated. The relentless demythologisation inaugurated by Voltaire culminates in Nietzsche's obituary that 'God is dead'. Since Nietzsche, efforts have also been afoot to rediscover the truths about the human condition articulated in mythic reason. In this regard, philosophers such as Mircea Eliade have urged a revalorization of myth as articulating the human quest for trans-temporal realities; the experience underlying such myths and symbols can only be grasped through a meditative reenactment.²³ In this light, Vinoba's appeal to Vamana is an excellent example of a mindful re-collection of timeless paradigms.

It is crucial to note that Vinoba is not inspired by mere nostalgia for the past. He is self-conscious of the new interpretations which he puts forth. He reiterates that he was attempting a 'revolution' through *bhoodan-yajna*. This openness to new interpretations was not restricted to mythic paradigms; Vinoba argues that the Vedas and Vedanta also need to be interpreted in the

²⁰ Heesterman (1985):85.

²¹ Calasso, Roberto (1994):176.

²² Heesterman (1985):87.

²³ Mircea Eliade (1964):139-140.

light of contemporary challenges posed by science and technology. In the course of shaping novel interpretations, Vinoba shows that the experience of hope, while being intimately tied up with faith, reveals time not simply as an 'eternal recurrence of the same' or an empty 'passing away' but as inspiring new possibilities. To quote Gabriel Marcel:

(In hope) everything happens as though time, instead of hedging consciousness round, allowed something to pass through it. It was from this point of view that I previously drew attention to the prophetic character of hope. Of course one cannot say that hope sees what is going to happen; but it affirms *as if* it saw. One might say that it draws its authority from a hidden vision of which it is allowed to take account without enjoying it.²⁴

Vinoba's enthusiasm towards modern science provides a good example of this openness to time and history. In contrast to Gandhi who characterized modernity as 'satanic', Vinoba approaches modern science and democracy as posing new challenges to Hindu spiritual traditions. Writing about the achievements of modern science, Vinoba focuses on the possibilities opened up by atomic power frequently. He claims that atomic power may enable the creation of decentralized industries thereby making it possible for villages to become self-sufficient.²⁵

However, this positive assessment of the march of scientific progress does not obscure his vision of the supreme danger posed by science in the form of destructive armaments. Like Heidegger, Vinoba realizes that mere moral responses to the challenges posed by science and technology are necessary, yet inadequate. After all, scientific and technological progress, be it in the shape of genetic engineering or nuclear warfare transcends the metaphysics and morals of Cartesian subjectivity. In Vinoba's words, "the atom bomb dropping from above does not consider whether men below are innocent or guilty; the distinction between good and evil is obliterated."²⁶ Science, which has made it possible for a few to destroy the world without moving from their own corners, needs to be countered by a spiritual power that can influence the whole universe while being manifested in an individual soul.²⁷ Hence, Vinoba regards the Gandhian *satyagraha*, directed towards a change of heart as somewhat outmoded when the opponent is either impersonal or invisible.²⁸

At the same time, he recognises a 'saving power' in that modern science forces us to rise above the 'mental' level of reflection. For Vinoba, the mental level refers to the desires and fears, hatred and jealousy stemming from the sense of 'I' and 'mine'. Science, by harnessing dangerous powers, compels humans to rise above narrow identities. But science does not have the power to change the human mind directly. For Vinoba, this challenge of science can only be met by probing the human potential for *vijnana* or a 'supra-mental' level of reflection.²⁹ This level of reflection is awakened by appealing to the heart, which according to Vedanta, is the seat of *atman* or the true Self. Atman-self does not refer to a faculty or attribute within the individual; it is the site and sensorium of '*sat-chit-ananda*' or 'being, consciousness, bliss' wherefrom the individual experiences both identity and difference with the cosmos and 'That' which is beyond the cosmos. Like Gandhi, Vinoba often refers to this atman-experience as a subtle or 'refined' state of awareness.

²⁴ Gabriel Marcel (1962):53.

²⁵ Vinoba (1959):18.

²⁶ Vinoba (1959):51.

²⁷ Vinoba (1959): 47.

²⁸ Vinoba (1977):118.

²⁹ Vinoba (1959):53.

Vinoba hastens to add that this subtle awareness is not oriented toward mysticism. For the ‘realization experienced by mystics or the devotee through meditation is not the ultimate thing; it amounts to a consolation.’³⁰ He explores the well-known paths of knowledge (*jnana*), action (*karma*) and devotion (*bhakti*) and emphasizes the centrality of knowledge in the pursuit of self-realization. This meant a rigorous and discerning analysis of nature, both external and internal. In this context, Vinoba resists dogmatic accounts of human nature as intrinsically nasty, brutish and short. Nature in general and human nature in particular are multi-layered and while man’s lower nature may not altogether disappear, man’s higher nature can be awakened to the virtues of wisdom and liberality.³¹ Following the *Gita*, Vinoba distinguishes three modes of nature, namely *sattva* or luminosity, *rajas* or passion and *tamas* or dark inertia. These modes are conceived dynamically and are transformed through right knowledge and action. The mode of luminosity or *sattva* is not simply the highest but the ‘most subtle’ of the three modes of existence. While the dominance of *tamas* manifests itself in the form of laziness, excessive sleep and error, *rajas* manifests itself as excessive activity for mundane goods, *sattva* manifests itself in terms of clarity, compassion and other virtues.³² But a cognitive discrimination of three modes is not sufficient to transform human consciousness. Vinoba clarified that right action and devotion are also central. In all this, Vinoba insisted that he was aspiring toward ‘collective *samadhi*.’³³

In pursuit of such supra-mental transformation, Vinoba launched a whole range of gift-giving activities alongside *bhoo-dan* including *gram-dan* or village-gifts, *sampatti-dan* or wealth-giving and so forth. As mentioned before, Vinoba does not rely upon legislation or a discourse of guilt; for generosity was not to be awakened through mere force or intimidation. Instead, he points to the intrinsic joy of giving in his speeches.³⁴ In his view, this joy is superior to sense pleasures and ego-based satisfaction. In this joy, the agent has a glimpse of the true self, a sovereign self that simply gives without expecting a return.

In actual experience, Vinoba accepted many donors who sought concrete rewards for their gifts. While his rhetoric is filled with the demand for ‘pure gifts’ untainted by the ego, in practice, he recognized that gift-giving was often rooted in the desire for fame or recognition. Citing Gandhi, Vinoba suggests that just as one accepts two inches as a mile while reading a map, so also one may magnify a person’s good points to get the right scale.³⁵ Whatever the ulterior motives may be of a gift, the very act of giving reveals an element of virtue that cannot be overlooked. Like a small door which allows one to enter a house, Vinoba argues that there is a little goodness in everyone’s heart, however hard the outer shell of egotism may be.³⁶ In turn, a hopeful reformer must be ‘prepared’ to find the small door by rising above her own egotism. Thus, an integral part of hope is patience with oneself and others. As Marcel puts it, “this patience most certainly consists in never hustling or being rough with another person, more exactly, never substituting our own rhythm for his by violence.”³⁷

At the same time, patience and humility need not mean accepting humiliation. When he was offered one acre of land by a landlord with three hundred acres, he refused the gift. He argued that he may have accepted the same if the land were for a temple or *math* but not when he was claiming

³⁰ Vinoba (1959): 45.

³¹ Vinoba (1996): 74.

³² Vinoba (1997):160-174.

³³ Vinoba (1997):216.

³⁴ Vinoba (1997):14.

³⁵ Vinoba (1994):153.

³⁶ Vinoba (1994):214.

³⁷ Marcel(1962): 39.

land for the poor. Would the *donee* not feel humiliated though by accepting gifts of land? Vinoba argues that accepting cooked food may be humiliating but not receiving land. For mere land will not give him crops; he needs to labor on the land for a good harvest.³⁸ Moreover he regarded not only the landlords or ‘haves’ but all human beings as potential gift givers on the ground that moral duties cannot be restricted to specific classes.³⁹

It has been observed by many scholars that the *bhoodan* movement did not lead to a successful resolution of the land problem; often, lands which were uncultivable were given away as gifts. The asymmetrical power equations of the countryside may have been reinforced by this kind of reformism which relied upon the goodwill of the landed class. Was Vinoba’s hope in non-violent reform an illusion? In the face of *established* experience, could we not say that Vinoba’s hope was unwarranted? Gabriel Marcel responds thus to this objection:

The notion of experience itself is ambiguous. On the one hand there is an established and catalogued experience in the name of which judgments are pronounced by the pronoun “one”. On the other hand there is an experience in the making which is only possible precisely when all the other kind of experience has been set on one side, even if finally and after having been duly desiccated, it is given a place in the herbarium of universal wisdom.... (But) postulated at the very basis of hope is ... the truth that the more the real is real, the less does it lend itself to a calculation of possibilities on the basis of accepted experience.⁴⁰

Hope reveals the human condition as one of attunement to a creative power in the world; it discloses reality as a ‘process in the making’ rather than solely as a realm of unchangeable laws. At the same time, true hope does not presume to know the exact means by which certain creative powers usher in the new. Vinoba seldom expressed disappointment possibly because he was aware that true hope does not impose conditions on the mysterious sources of Being. He claimed that “the powers of the indwelling Spirit are immeasurable and unlimited.”⁴¹ In the same vein, he did not dismiss the potential of the addressees to respond to his appeals; he relied upon their grace and love.

Here, it may be appropriate to delve into Vinoba’s opening words cited at the beginning regarding the moving force of love. In his view, hope and faith are vivified by love; like the other two, love is not a subjective feeling but an openness toward the order and beauty embodied in the cosmos. Instead of seeking the beautiful in an unchanging Form or Essence, Vinoba sees beauty in the transience manifested in the world. He argues that “it is its mutability that makes creation immortal.”⁴² Through continuous metamorphosis, creation is renewed every moment. Unlike some philosophers who shun the ephemeral nature of the world, Vinoba appreciates the beautiful and sublime aspects of nature displayed in the form of changing seasons, diverse flora and fauna, the rivers and the oceans, the mountains and the caves. More importantly, nature is the site of a hierophany or manifestation of the sacred; he sees the glory of God in natural phenomena. While urging us to love the cosmos and “That One” (*Tad Ekam*) which lies beyond the cosmos, he does not negate the particular and familiar experience of loving one’s own. In fact, he argues that the mother who feels boundless affection for her child knows not the source of this passion; she is the

³⁸ Vinoba (1953):53.

³⁹ Vinoba (1994):153.

⁴⁰ Marcel (1962):51.

⁴¹ Vinoba (1953):49.

⁴² Vinoba (1997):181.

occasion and symbol of the Lord's love.⁴³ In other words, the particular and the universal are not opposed to one another; the particular, in some instances, exemplifies the universal. The primordial experience of maternal love is a crucial step in the ladder of love that culminates in the love of God. Whether it is the love of the mother, father, teacher or the saints, Vinoba emphasizes the fact that we are recipients before we are givers; he presents himself as someone who has received so much that he can never repay the debt of love.⁴⁴ Towards the evening of his life, he would recall the names of various friends and followers and describe that exercise as his Visnu *Sahasranama*.

Vinoba's notion of love is tilted in favor of the compassionate and caring aspects; he underplays the immoderate and agonizing aspects of love which characterise both sexual love and divine love. But this does not take away from the admirable manner in which Vinoba reconciles his love for particular persons be they his mother or friends with love of humankind through the mediation of the divine essence immanent (but not exhausted) in all beings. By the same token, he expresses self-love, claiming that one's own goodness is also worthy of praise.⁴⁵ Far from negating the self, Vinoba pays attention to the virtues in oneself for they alone are real. The defects and vices in oneself and others have no independent reality of their own for they stem from exclusive identification with the body-ego complex.

Conclusion

To conclude, Vinoba's thought discloses the intimate connection between hope, faith and love. Hope is forged in the course of a trial which the individual experiences in his or her innermost being. Gandhi's death in the hands of a Hindu fanatic, the communal riots, the rising militancy in the countryside partly inspired by the communists and the strident rhetoric of the ruling elites presented a serious challenge to Vinoba's trust in non-violent transformation. Vinoba's *bhoodan* initiative, inspired by the spontaneous gift of land by a landlord, crystallized into a sustained movement mainly because of his faith in God. However, he did not approach faith in dogmatic terms; we may recall that in his 'direct talk' with God, Vinoba is told, "have faith; ask and ask again". Hope and faith were thus enacted through relentless walking tours during which Vinoba reminded his audience of the joy of giving and receiving gifts. On the one hand, he sanctified the *bhoodan* movement by invoking mythic archetypes; thus the humility of Visnu-Vamana who asks for a land-gift and the nobility of Bali, the demon-king who gives without reservation are exemplary acts to be imitated. On the other hand, he also pointed to the compulsions of scientific age, especially nuclear war, which challenge us to go beyond narrow self-interest. While Vinoba asked for land-gifts, his own hope was a gift of love for humankind. He showed that hope is oriented to the small door in the cave of one's heart, a door that reveals our participation in a cosmic order that is beautiful and good. By opening that door, we may catch sight of the veiled, mysterious and playful source of our being. Like Gandhi, Vinoba's genius consists in showing that faith, love and hope move us to change this world in the light of our participation in 'that' which transcends the cosmos. In the final analysis, only a reflective re-enactment of disinterested service is capable of fully illuminating the dwelling place of hope, faith and love.

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⁴³ Vinoba (1997):109.

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⁴⁵ Vinoba (1994):215.

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14,
Hope as Being on the Way

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“The way to the promised land leads through the desert.”

If it is true that love hopes for everything, as the apostle Paul maintains (1 Cor 13, 7), then loving humans are of their own nature people of hope. Lovers and believers do live in hope. In our day to day discussions, we often refer to hope directly or indirectly. We hope for good weather, a good job, a pleasant family, a happy future. In challenging and tough times, we never give up the hope that things will turn out better. Hopefully, we wish we have a brighter future. All little and great goals and desires we express in hope and in expectation. However, hope, with its vision of their fulfilment in the future, never lets us perceive a complete picture of the things hoped for. However, it invites us to experience the reality of the present in a provisionally better way. Hope lets us transcend our fears, our limitedness, our doubts, our concerns and finally ourselves, thereby keeping the longing awake for the totally other (the ‘ganze andere’ of Walter Benjamin). The issue of the nature of this longing is discussed below.

The Hope of Love

Paul does not merely assert that love hopes, he also designates the object of this hope. In the ultimate analysis the concerns of hope go beyond beautiful weather or a home of one’s own, to EVERYTHING, that is, the whole of reality. Walter Benjamin formulates it in a similar vein: “Our deepest longing is content not merely with the existing, nor with the possible, but with a totally different.” Whoever gives in to this hope, takes the risk that the object of his hope – the everything or the totally other – is not to be found in our limited plans, or imaginations. It requires courage to leave behind the known and the expected and to be on the way or to dare for the unknown.

To hope means to depart, to walk on insecure terrain, to dare for the unknown, guided by the still voice within urging us forward. Consequentially, this necessarily implies the readiness to pass through the desert. The best example of this is the exodus event, when the people of Israel wandered from Egypt for forty years through the desert, inspired by the promise of liberation and expectation of the promised country, which was not seen by any of the Israelites earlier, and which when realised exceeded all their expectations. The reality of Egypt can be contrasted with the promised Canaan. It was a move from slavery (of body and spirit) to liberty (both political and religious); from misery to abundance (where milk and honey flow); from security (of the meat pots which they were assured of) to the uncertainty (the travails of the desert to the daily collection of the manna from the sky). The risk of the uncertain way lies between the known reality and the promised other. The way to the promised land leads through the desert.

Hope thus is the strength which takes humans out of the security of the known and makes them walk on the unknown way towards the promised future. Like Abram we are challenged to follow the demand of God: ‘Leave your country and your relatives and go to the land that I will show you.’ (Acts 7:3) Why should Abram give up everything, why should he set his whole family in danger, when everything is in order and when he is assured of his daily bread? Because the challenge is bound to a promise:

I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD (Ex 6:4-8).

Hope does not give up things in vain. It is ready to give up because it seeks the Other, the totally different. The risk of hope leads to its inner goal in the promised land, the fullness of life. This promised land is at least partially revealed to us and shines now and then on the way.

The Ultimate Goal of Our Hope

Like the star which the wise men from the East believed in and followed from far, the hope that leads human beings, is an age-old promise: “A great king is to be born.” They prepare for the way to seek him and to worship him. And the star actually brings them, after a long and tedious journey, to a new born child, to a completely different king. Surely this infant Jesus, the child of a poor couple, unsettled the dreams of the wise men. Which king will ever appear in the powerless and simple form of a child, in a manger, in a poor village? Still the very presence of Jesus seems to have changed their expectations and filled them with a deep sense of fulfilment.

When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Mat 2:10-12).

The last and greatest goal of all hope, the deepest human longing has been fulfilled by this child, because it is God’s love made flesh, which we can touch, see and taste. The child is the unbelievably crazy love that makes itself small and delivers itself to the world to provide humans with everything they need.

It is a love that goes beyond the normal habits and criteria of the world, revealing the absurd logic of itself. It challenges the economic and social considerations of a world bent on profit motives. It reveals love in a world of naked injustice and horrendous crimes, of inhuman poverty and the unjust cries of the poor. It is a love that cares for such a wicked world, that wants to transform this world and make it a “home of love.” It is a love that hopes for peace, justice, unity and vibrates with the symphony of life. It is a love that dares to hope for all people – the weak, the powerless, the mighty and the rich. It is a love that risks everything so that the comfortable security and habits of people give way to a joy and openness which only the “poor in spirit” can relish.

We may hope to meet God exactly where humans live in poverty, in despair, in illness. Again and again He is there, where the rich and powerful cannot imagine, although they have heard the story of the manger in Bethlehem. Such a God with His hope is present among the Israelites, who were persecuted by the Egyptians, among the Palestinians, who are oppressed by the Israelites, among the immigrants and the poor who are exploited by the rich. Such a hope is alive among the refugees who are rendered homeless by wars that are not caused by them, by the ordinary mothers and fathers who lose their children by terrorist or military strikes. The God of love and hope is present among the people who suffer ill treatment of all types. But that God of love comes to them in totally unexpected ways, as the totally other. Only those who dare to walk away from the security of the known towards the darkness of the desert can experience Him. Only such pilgrims

of faith can perceive the light shining from the morning star and remain true to their heart, even when things seem to go wrong. Hope is alive in the really hopeless situation. Love is active in truly unloved situations. That is the promise given to humanity by a God who is totally different and who is fully involved in the human history.

Conclusion

So the human hope, which is so crucial for believers and lovers, is being on the way, open to the totally other. It is to have our eyes on the promised land, and our feet on the ground that is not always steady and hard. It is to have hands that reach out to others and specially the unfortunate ones. It is to have a glimpse of the promised land, but never to have a full grasp of it. So we are on the way, guided by our vision of the future, without neglecting the present.

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15.
The Death of *Humanitas*?

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“When the power of good increases, the power of evil also increases.” Paul Tillich

Besides the possible nuclear, ecological, and now genetic disasters another sword of Damocles hangs over the world which has perhaps been overlooked: the death of *humanitas* in humankind. The signs are more and more apparent. Definitions of the concept of *humanitas* sometimes differ, making some researchers reluctant to use the term. Yet we all have a basic understanding of what the thesis about the death of *humanitas* seeks to tell us. So now we must face the question: Is *humanitas* really dying out?

Anxiety about the Dehumanization of Humankind in Modern Writings

Of course, anxiety about the dehumanization of mankind is not new. Seneca thought that the youth of his time were worse than the youth of previous ages. The biblical prophet Isaiah held a similar view: “Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall” (Is. 40:30, NIV).

Today, however, we face not only a few deficiencies in the education of youth, but a pervasive structural dehumanization of society. To what extent are the existing social structures leading to the disintegration and dehumanization of humankind? Can we be optimists about the future of the world, or do we have to be pessimists? Is the good going to win in the world, or the evil? What can we expect in the next millennium?

Modern literature and philosophy have tended to be pessimistic. Ernest Hemingway, in his work *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, shows how people become the victims of historical powers beyond their control and how these powers oppress humanity. Albert Camus sounds a similar note, especially in his work *The Stranger*, and Jean Paul Sartre’s metaphysical pessimism takes up the same theme. These writers hark back to what Oswald Spengler had proclaimed as early as 1918 in his work *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, in which he predicted catastrophe for western civilization. Similar ideas in a somewhat more moderate form appear in the works of Sorokin, Toynbee and Freud.

Konrad Lorenz, in his pessimistic “*Der Abbau des Menschlichen*,” one of the more recent works on this theme, brings us to the heart of the matter. Lorenz denies that a providential hand is guiding history, that there is, finally, a reason behind the world (p.12). Science and technology, considered in the past to be unalloyed goods, in reality lead only to destruction (p.13). If we want to avoid a world-wide apocalypse, we need to restore a sense of beauty and of the good, virtues that scientism and technological thinking suppress (p.14). Scientism leads to the blind faith that every development necessarily brings with it new values, but such hopes are false (p.19-20). Absurdity prevails throughout history (p.21). Attempts to find meaning in historical events lead nowhere (p.25). Humanity is in extreme danger (p.18). Lorenz’s gloomy view of the world’s future makes for depressing reading. Nevertheless, Lorenz draws some positive conclusions about our responsibility to search for countermeasures to rescue civilization and avoid the worst (p.11).

The Resonance of Secular Cultural Pessimism in Theology

Something of this cultural pessimism resonates in theology as well. The theologies of certain fundamentalist groups exhibit a pervasive cultural pessimism. This attitude is by no means confined to such groups as the Jehovah's Witnesses, for whom the present state and social structures are of Satan and are to be condemned and rejected out of hand. Many conservative Christian circles of a fundamentalist cast paint humanity's future in dark colors indeed. As a consequence of original sin and humanity's rebellion against God, the world has fallen into evil. Everything has been corrupted by sin. Immorality, greed, lust, divorce, individualism, egoism, crime, ruthlessness, and cynicism rule the world. Those who hold this view believe that the only solution is to flee from this fallen world and escape into the community of the truly saved and committed Christians, who together constitute a new humankind and a new *humanitas*. These groups agree that humankind is being dehumanized. They see the root of this dehumanization in humanity's rebellion against God, in its fallen nature as a consequence of original sin. Social evil remains unpredictable and it is also incurable because it is rooted deeply in humankind. Consequently, such groups teach an anthropological pessimism that undervalues human nature.

The majority of contemporary Protestant and Catholic theologians do not hold to a similar anthropological pessimism. This is not because they reject the doctrine of original sin. They acknowledge the tendency to sin in humankind, but they also see some inclination toward the good in humankind. A human being as an individual is not merely hopelessly spoiled. A certain divine spark remains in each human being. Theology calls this synthesis or primeval conscience, a kind of Christian analogy to Freud's superego. This inclination to good resonates in a person's conscience, calling each person to responsible action. A religious conversion or education serves to amplify it. It was because of this that John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) had so much hope that education would lead to the improvement of humankind. It was on this basis, too, that Comenius developed his theological conceptions about the restoration of the world. Comenius knew about humanity's potential for evil, but he also did not reject humanity's inclination to the good. Both are present in every human being at the same time. Human beings are simultaneously wolves and angels. With the education of the conscience it is possible to develop the potential for good in human beings and bring about an inclination toward *humanitas*.

History shows that Comenius' hopes in the beneficial effects of education were at least somewhat exaggerated. As a child of his time, he was not able to take into account the structural evil that opposes the struggle for the humanization of humanity. He didn't yet realize what a large role dehumanized social structures play in the dehumanization of humanity. On the one hand, excessive totalitarianism dehumanizes humanity: Nazism and Stalinism concluded in concentration camps and gulags. On the other hand, excessive democracy perverts freedom into mere willfulness accompanied by the oppression of those who are marginalized, ending finally in rule by the Mafia. In the 1930s the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote a book, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, whose title makes this point. According to Niebuhr, individual human beings could be relatively good, but the immoral structures of society make them inhuman. But Niebuhr concludes that social structures are changeable and so in the end he doesn't come down on the side of pessimism. On the contrary, Niebuhr, along with Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse, is a severe critic of pessimism, especially Freudian pessimism. The French Protestant theologian Jacques Ellul offers a similar critical evaluation of the dehumanized structures of society. He especially stresses the dehumanizing influence of technology on society. According to Ellul, technology destroys human freedom, corrupts the social process, and degrades the environment.

Humanization can take place only by removing the negative influence of technology on society. Ellul, from his theological perspective, arrives at views very similar to those of Konrad Lorenz.

Other Protestant theologians have also taken up the idea that the humanization of social structures is a condition for the humanization of humanity. Leonard Ragaz, Hermann Kutter, both the Blumhardts and Paul Tillich pointed out the anti-social effects of certain societal structures. More recently, Jürgen Moltmann with his theology of hope, as well as Dorothea Sölle and Ernst Käsemann, have taken up the same theme. Catholic theologians, too, have sounded this theme, including the Frenchman Chenu, Karl Rahner, Pope John Paul II with his social encyclicals, and especially Johann Baptist Metz, who elevated it to the center of his so-called political theology. To this list we must also add the Latin American liberation theologians, such as Gutiérrez, Jon Sobrino, Bonino, Leonardo Boff, etc. These theologians differ, sometimes profoundly, about the cause of the structural dehumanization of society, but they all agree that evil and dehumanization is not in the individual human alone (although it is there too, and here they disagree with Marx). Rather, individual evil constantly begets structural evil.

The Problem of the Death of *Humanitas* in Teilhard de Chardin, and Paul Tillich

What, then, do theologians say? Is *humanitas* dying out? Theologians differ significantly on the answer to this question.

Theologians of a fundamentalist orientation tend to say that humankind is being dehumanized. And the closer we come to the end of the world and Christ's parousia (the second coming of Christ to judge the earth), the worse the dehumanization and moral degeneration of humankind become. The evidences of dehumanization are the signs of the coming end. For this reason Jehovah's Witnesses and Adventists and similar groups eagerly publicize evidences of the world's dehumanization and moral degeneracy in their sermons and magazines.

The Catholic theologian and philosopher Teilhard de Chardin takes the opposite position. According to Teilhard de Chardin the "hominization" of humanity is not yet finished. According to Chardin, there is a continuously progressing *hominization* of humankind, a becoming *human*, which at the same time is a process of *humanization*, becoming *humane*. This process of hominization, or humanization, is still in progress. This process also involves the realization of a certain "christogenesis" in humanity. *Humanitas* is advancing in history. For Teilhard de Chardin, this is an automatic process, connected with the evolution of the earth and of humanity. Humankind is converging toward harmony, to the point that he calls the "omega point," and this process is irreversible. So Teilhard de Chardin takes an optimistic view of history.

Paul Tillich stands somewhere between the pessimism of the fundamentalists and the optimism of Teilhard de Chardin. Tillich began with an optimistic view of history. He was persuaded that *humanitas* is continually growing and expanding in the world. "History is in its essence history of salvation." (Paul Tillich, GW VI, 120). When he wrote this, Tillich was still a follower of the religious socialists. But after the disillusionments of Nazism and Stalinism Tillich made an interesting change in his view of history. He declared that evil is not retreating from the world. "When the power of good increases, the power of evil also increases." (Paul Tillich, ST III, 423). What is of God in history never wins without also losing. According to Tillich, this battle remains a stalemate until the end of the world. He disagrees with the idea of a process of convergence in history, as can be found in Teilhard de Chardin (in: *Werk und Wirken Paul Tillichs*, Stuttgart 1967, 193-199) and his view of history takes on distinctly pessimistic features. History does not move toward *humanitas*; rather good and evil are in conflict and tension throughout

history. Good and evil are evenly matched and neither will come out a winner until the end of history.

An Attempted Solution

The solution must lie somewhere between de Chardin and Tillich. Teilhard de Chardin's idea of automatic development toward *humanitas* through the hominization of humanity seems to deny the need for human effort and responsibility. One wonders why the Christian church has bothered to preach about love for nearly two thousand years. Karl Rahner is right, however, to say that there is a grain of truth in the thesis about hominization (*Orientierung* 1979, N°19, 207). I tend to believe in a gradual, but not automatic, humanization of the world, in accord with Jesus' parable about the yeast of God's kingdom that is finally worked all through the dough. (Mt 13:33). I agree with Teilhard de Chardin that a certain Christogenesis of the world is taking place. This happens not only where the world becomes explicitly Christian, but more generally where the world becomes more human. The humanization of the secular laws on the basis of the *Human Rights Charter* and the humanization of international politics on the basis of the *Helsinki Final Act* provide good examples of the gradual humanization of the world. Slavery has been abolished, inequality of men and women is being addressed, and in many places torture and physical abuse of prisoners and the death penalty are no more. But the cosmic consequences of the church's activity in history that Rahner brings out are missing in de Chardin.

By contrast Tillich's position appears to be quite static. Tillich doesn't notice the movement toward humanization in history. Certainly this movement is not a straight line; it meanders and suffers reverses. Sometimes, indeed, we experience massive demonstrations of dehumanization. Here, two different kinds of dehumanization may be traced: one lies deep within humankind, the other is structural. Totalitarianism, for instance, can lead to dehumanization as much as laissez-faire democracy. A dehumanized individual always strives to create equally dehumanized social structures, which further enable dehumanized individuals to dominate. In spite of this, however, the overall tendency is toward humanization. Certainly we can expect more deviations in the future, but the trend is in the right direction. Contrary to Lorenz and in spite of Hiroshima and the holocaust, there is a purpose in history and real progress toward humanization. Truth and morality have the ability to win in history. Yet one must note that in human history a new striving for humanization always arises from the deepest dehumanization. Moral values always tend toward success. According to Masaryk, truth is victorious. Thus we may enter the third millennium with the hope that with it, a thousand years of humanization begins. If this is to occur, spiritual and Christian values must be renewed. As a theologian, I may harbor this hope because I see in human history not only human activity, but the action of God. The history of humankind is also the history of salvation. For there is someone who leads history toward its goal, the realization of *humanitas*. But because it doesn't happen automatically, as Teilhard de Chardin would have it, our activity, cooperation, and responsibility are required.

Humanitas can win in history only if we apply ourselves towards that end. With God's help, humankind is strong enough to overcome the obstacles to humanization. The next millennium will become the era of humanization. We human beings need hope in the victory of *humanitas*, truth, and moral values as much as we need oxygen. To be sure, we must reject a cheap optimism, but we must not give up optimism altogether. We must be realistic without being pessimistic. In history people do both good and evil, but God also acts in history. And he will guide this world's history to its right end, because he is the Lord of the history. As theologians we cannot remain only with

futurology, human predictions about how things will turn out. We must also reckon with God's plan for the world, with eschatology.

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