

virtues & vocations

HIGHER EDUCATION FOR
HUMAN FLOURISHING SUMMER 2023

Hope

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Virtues & Vocations: Higher Education for Human Flourishing is an open invitation to a conversation, a community, and a set of contested aspirations for both how we ought to live together in this world and how higher education might serve those aspirations. It is a product of an initiative with the same name, Virtues & Vocations, sponsored by the Kern Family Foundation and hosted by the Center for Social Concerns at the University of Notre Dame. The initiative—comprised of a set of publications and convenings, both virtual and in person—seeks to foster a community of thought and practice to integrate questions of character, meaning, and purpose into the fabric of higher education. The telos of this community is human flourishing.

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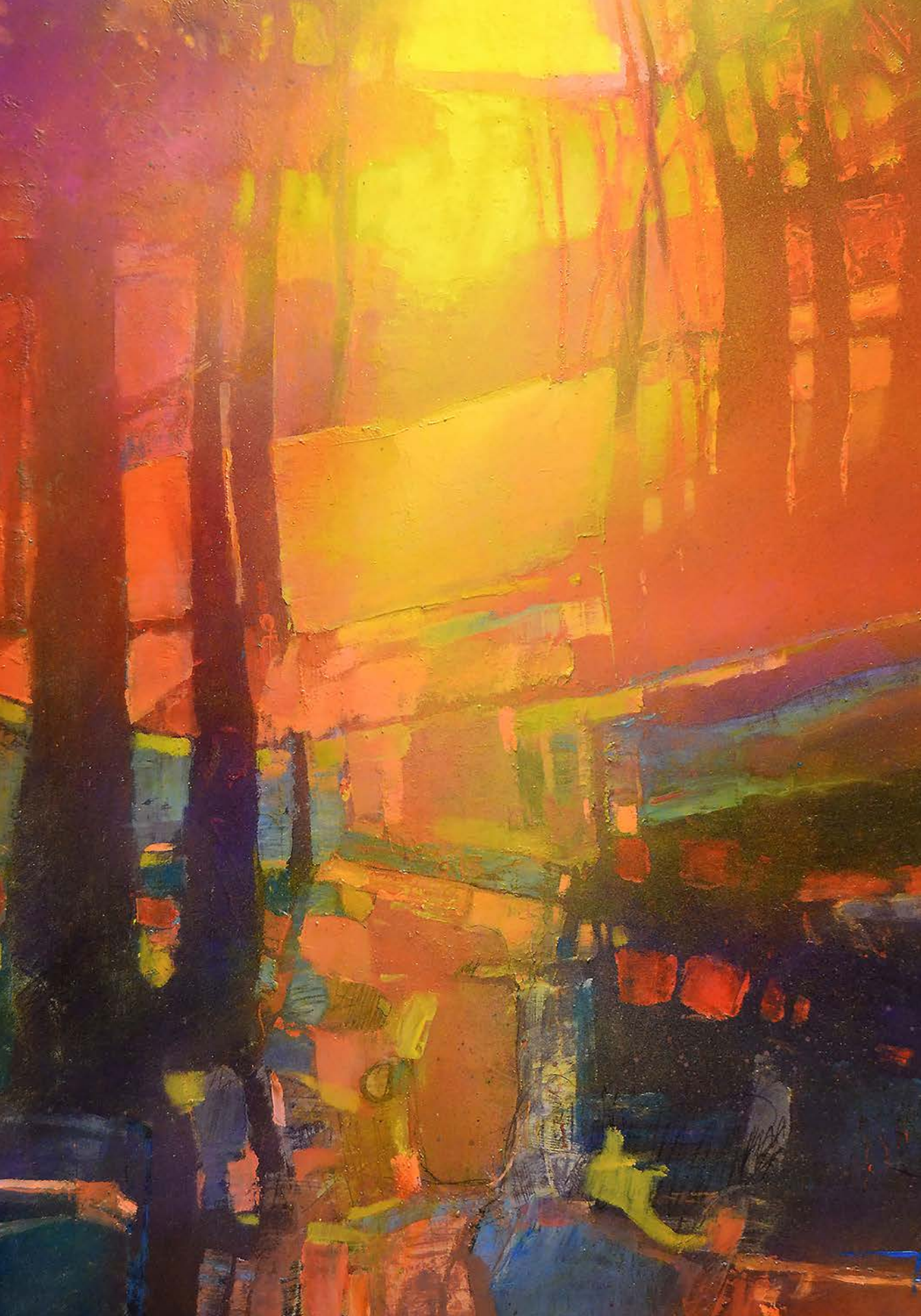
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THE CASE FOR HOPE

The Whole World Awaits Us,

Here and Now

by Linda Vanasupa



SUZANNE SHANAHAN, EDITOR

Welcome


The very least you can do in your life is figure out what you hope for. And the most you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance but live right in it, under its roof.

—BARBARA KINGSOLVER, *ANIMAL DREAMS*



Until quite recently, discussions of hope in higher education have been scant. This is especially true outside faith-based institutions. In the wake of the global pandemic and related racial reckoning and financial crisis, conversations about hope are suddenly in vogue both in public and academic discourse. It seems hope talk is now everywhere.

For me, hope has been a recurrent subject of analytic curiosity and scholarly focus for almost 15 years. This fascination was sparked by reading Jonathan Lear's 2006 *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* and shaped by Nancy Snow's framing of hope as both an intellectual and a civic virtue. Hope is not a thing one had but something one did. It requires both courage and analytic rigor. It is both a way of seeing and a way of being. It is an epistemology.



In this edition of *Virtues & Vocations*, we share perspectives on how higher education ought to pursue human flourishing by grappling with the question of hope. In 12 essays written by scholars from around the country, an interview with philosopher Jonathan Lear, an art essay, and select poetry, hope is engaged as a virtue and as a vocation.

These often deeply personal and moving reflections provide both analytic insight and an invitation to a different way of being in the world that hope affords. But they each also make clear that hoping is hard and hope itself is often elusive. The different essays challenge us to understand how hope makes beauty, justice, grace, and compassion possible. They demonstrate how hope is integral to the good life. For Anika Prather, hope as a theological virtue is inextricable from faith and love. Reflecting on Thomas Aquinas and Iris Murdoch, Lydia Dugdale considers the way the virtue of hope is widely accessible. She writes, “People who seek to live and die well must become people of hope, moving toward the good and not withdrawing from it.” The essays also highlight how hope is enacted across professions such as business, education, engineering, law, and medicine. Of the care revolution in medicine, Victor Montori concludes: “In a bleak world riddled with invitations for indifference, hope emerges from the work of generous contrarians, who against all odds, reject the comforts of foolish optimism, and choose to care.”


In this way, several essays entreat a more profoundly hopeful world, a world reminiscent of Junot Diaz’s 2016 essay on radical hope: “This is the joyous destiny of our people to bury the arc of the moral universe so deep in justice that it will never be undone. Only radical hope could have imagined people like us into existence. And I believe that it will help us create a better, more loving future.” This kind of hope exercises both honesty and courage. As Rabbi Sacks reminds us in *To Heal a Fractured World*, this future world is one that requires more than simple optimism but the mettle and the shared struggle that hope demands.

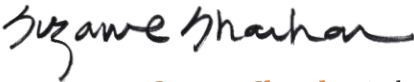
The art accompanying each essay plays with light in some way, framing hope as a way of seeing and understanding while exploring its complexity. Light, like hope, is intangible yet essential. It reveals what is true but can also bend and blind and redefine landscapes. Are the shapes and shadows an epiphany or distortion? Is the light producing illumination or imagination? As Michael Lamb reminds us, it is not just despair that opposes hope, but presumption. Norman Wirzba writes, “There is a fundamental blindness, even dishonesty, in the cheery optimist’s outlook because it does not properly name or adequately

account for the injustices of the past or the present that are causing people to despair in the first place.”

Heeding this warning, this issue does not shy away from the existential issues confronting our students, our society, ourselves. Nooshin Javadi writes about the Woman, Life, Freedom movement in Iran and Margaret Hu outlines the existential threats posed by advances in Artificial Intelligence. We also feature a set of watercolors painted by inmates at the Westville Correctional Facility in Indiana, whose artistic practice illuminates the indomitability of human dignity.



In 2019, I designed a research study to understand how hope affected the subjective well-being of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi displaced in Rwanda. In some ways, these two groups have experienced the kind of dislocation and devastation that Lear details. I conceptualized hope as author and journalist Krista Tippett does, “Hope, like every virtue, is a choice that becomes a practice that becomes spiritual muscle memory. It’s a renewable resource for moving through life as it is, not as we wish it to be. . . . Hope is an orientation, an insistence on wresting wisdom and joy from the endlessly fickle fabric of space and time.” I asked how hope could both mitigate against despair and offer an understanding with which to move forward in the face of profound displacement. This study was only one of many efforts derailed by the COVID-19 pandemic, left aside for another time. But understanding the role of hope in everyday life is a question that continues to animate my own scholarship, teaching, and being, thus making this edition of *Virtues & Vocations* particularly instructive and inspiring. We hope it provides readers a similar opportunity for reflection. 



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PART I

Hope as a Virtue

“But what if hope isn’t really,
or at least not fundamentally,
a thing to possess?”

What if hope is, instead,
a self-involving way of being
that is inspired and animated
by an affirmation of the
goodness of this life, or
a practiced way of life rooted
in the conviction that this
life is worth cherishing,
defending, and celebrating?”

NORMAN WIRZBA



NORMAN WIRZBA

Considering Hope

I am often in conversation with people about some of the most weighty and challenging issues of our time— issues like anthropogenic climate change, environmental degradation, species extinctions, ongoing racism and income inequality, disease pandemics, the tearing of social fabrics, political polarization, and widely reported increases in personal stress, anxiety, depression, and despair. It is easy to become paralyzed by sorrow and fear in the face of the many forms of eco-socio-systems collapse. I suppose this is why these conversations almost always make their way to the question, “What gives you hope?” A compelling answer, presumably, will help us all feel better.

But assurances of hope can be seductive, and it is important not to assume that people want hope. Admonitions to “Be hopeful!” though earnestly and sincerely meant, can be distracting and anesthetizing because, like a soporific, they lull people into an acceptance of the status quo. Suitably pacified, the task of hoping is reduced to waiting for the miracle that will

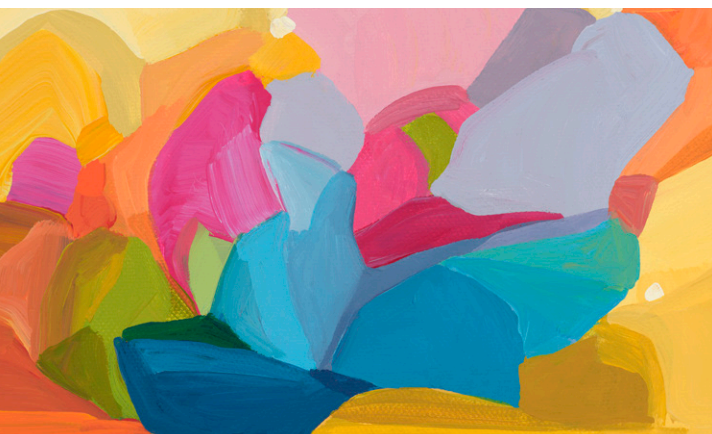
There is a fundamental blindness, even dishonesty, in the cheery optimist’s outlook because it does not properly name or adequately account for the injustices of the past or the present that are causing people to despair in the first place.

in some hypothetical, perpetually deferred future make everything alright. Whether it is religious leaders who have told their followers to accept their suffering and endure every hardship because God will, in the end, somehow, make everything right, or business tycoons and technology gurus who tell their followers that there will always be a technological fix that will get people (at least those who can afford it) out of whatever troubles they find

themselves in, people have not been well served by these expressions of “faith” that often mollify and render them spectators of their own lives. This is why the indigenous philosopher Kyle Whyte instructs us to be cautious around the (often comfortable and well-satisfied) purveyors of hope. Their calls to hopefulness can generate what he calls the “ultimate bystander effect” that excuses people from the hard work of correcting the injustices that create hopelessness in the first place.

It is also important to be clear that hope and optimism are not the same thing. One can even say that optimism works *against* hope because it does not sufficiently acknowledge or protest against the injustices that currently degrade and destroy life. As the literary and cultural critic Terry Eagleton has persuasively argued, optimists tend to be rather conservative in their outlook and all too accepting of the status quo. They put their trust in “the essential soundness of the present,” and do not have the creativity or energy to work for a more praiseworthy future.¹ There is a fundamental blindness, even dishonesty, in the cheery optimist’s outlook because it does not properly name or adequately account for the injustices of the past or the present that are causing people to despair in the first place.²





Hope and love are inseparable because a hopeful way of being depends on the experience of mutual nurture and the feeling that one's life matters and is worthy of protecting and celebrating. Hope withers in contexts of anonymity, abandonment, and abuse.

And yet even for those of us who endorse a clear-eyed embrace of hope, I am no longer sure that "What gives you hope?" is the right question to be asking. The framing can make hope seem like a *thing* we can pick up along life's way. Some people have it. Some people don't. The key is to find it, hold onto it tightly, and (ideally) pass

it along to those who are without hope. The temptation, then, is to think that hope works like a shield or, less combatively, a security blanket that protects people from the many troubles of this world. I understand the temptation. I too want assurances that everything, somehow, no matter what, is going to be alright. My concern with this framing, however, is that it casts hope as something that people simply acquire, like a vaccine that renders people immune to this world's troubles.

But what if hope isn't really, or at least not fundamentally, a *thing to possess*? What if hope is, instead, a *self-involving way of being* that is inspired and animated by an affirmation of the goodness of this life, or a *practiced way of life* rooted in the conviction that this life is worth cherishing, defending, and celebrating? I have found that creative and energizing ways of thinking open up when people think of hope less as a noun and more as a verb.

I recognize that this is an uncommon way of speaking, which is why I now shift the question from "What gives you hope?" to "What do you love?" I make the shift to love because conversation and reading


have taught me that people who live in hope do not seek to shield themselves from the pains and problems of this life. They engage the trouble, and thereby demonstrate that *hope grows, and its meaning is more fully discovered, in the action of working for a better world.* The most important matter is not that people have a fully worked out picture of what a better world looks like, or have a clear sense of the exact form their action should take. It is, with humility, to act on the conviction that your world needs you and is calling you to contribute in some way. To ask people about what they love also has the merit of opening a space for two further important questions that bear directly on living a hopeful life: “What inspires or activates your love?” and “What are the social and economic conditions that optimize a loving way of being?” Apart from having someone to love and places and things to cherish, and apart from feeling the love of others, it is hard to see how hope has a future.

The most succinct way I know to express my core convictions is to say that hope germinates wherever and whenever love goes to work. It grows as love takes root in one’s world and in one’s life. It flowers and fruits when people feel the power of love nurturing and healing the communities through which they live. Hope and love are inseparable because a hopeful way of being depends on the experience of mutual nurture and the feeling that one’s



life matters and is worthy of protecting and celebrating. Hope withers in contexts of anonymity, abandonment, and abuse.

The stories of the people who inspire hope in others teach us that hope and action are inseparable, and that they are held together by a yearning for a more beautiful and just world. Greta Thunberg is instructive in this regard. Thunberg says that it was at age 8 that she first heard about climate change and what it meant for the life of this planet. It put her into a deep depression. She stopped talking. She didn’t eat. She couldn’t understand why politicians, educators, and business leaders were not doing everything they could to address what, in her mind, was the most important crisis humanity has ever faced. One day, years later, she followed the



advice she now regularly gives to others: “Act. Do something!” On August 20, 2018 she went to the Swedish parliament buildings, sat down with a sign, and initiated the first “school strike for climate.” Before she knew it, and in ways that she still does not fully understand, her action went viral on social media. Others sat down with her. Journalists came to interview her. School strikes began in other Swedish cities and then in other countries. Two months later, tens of thousands of students from around the world were joining her by striking and marching down their city streets. A little over one year later, an estimated 4 million students and adults in 170 countries participated in a Global Climate Strike.

Will these actions change the world? No one knows. There are no guarantees that the world hopeful people desire will come about, because they know that existing troubles will likely persist and new ones emerge. They cannot be certain that the world they desire is even the best one, since human knowing is always mixed with fallibility and ignorance. This is why it is important to remember that hopeful action is an inherently risky endeavor that is subject to frustration, correction, and disappointment. Our loves can be malformed and misdirected. The crucial thing, as Rebecca Solnit has argued in her insightful book *Hope in the Dark*, is that people not think hope is like a lottery ticket. Hope is a power that propels people

off the couch and out the door. “Hope calls for action; action is impossible without hope . . . To hope is to give yourself to the future, and that commitment to the future makes the present inhabitable.”³ Hope, we can say, is born in spaces of vulnerability as people *open* themselves to, and allow themselves to be *moved* by, whatever trouble and whatever goodness and beauty are happening around them. It grows as they *commit* themselves to sharing and extending this goodness and beauty with others, and by learning how best to care for each other while in the midst of the trouble.

“Hope lives in the means, not the ends,” says Wendell Berry.⁴ His point is important to emphasize for two reasons: first, we don’t know enough to comprehend all that is happening in the present, let alone the future, which is why we should not put too much confidence in making predictions about outcomes; and second, undue focus on outcomes can distract us from discerning and doing the good we need to do in response to current damage and loss. The cardinal mistake of both pessimists and optimists is that they assume too much certainty. Hope moves within the spaces of uncertainty, and searches for the goodness that is believed to be reality’s heart. To love and to hope is to trust that it is worthwhile to seek and nurture the good despite the damage and ruination we see. It is to assume that change for the better is

rarely straightforward and quick, but often slow and unexpected. Hopeful people do not expect to solve it all. Their aim is more modest, because they understand that this world and its life are more complex and mysterious than anyone can comprehend. At the most fundamental level, what moves them is a love for this life.

The biblical sage Quoheloth once remarked that “whoever is joined with all the living has hope” (Ecclesiastes 9:4). Learning to *join* with others in a shared, mutually nurturing life isn’t easy. This is why our most crucial task may yet be to help each other live attentively and sympathetically with each other and in ways that affirm, heal, and reconcile life. This doesn’t mean that the future doesn’t matter, or that we should dismiss scientific forecasts about matters such as sea level rise and cataclysmic weather events. Hope’s focus, instead, is on inspiring the commitment and developing the practices that position people to live now in ways that nurture and heal life. We do not owe people of the future an accurate prediction of what their life will be. What we owe them is a

commitment to do *now* the good work that will lessen the prospect of a future nightmare. Doing good work, we also cultivate the conditions in which a decent life can grow, and our lives themselves are signs of hope. **W&V**

NOTES

1. In *Hope Without Optimism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015), Terry Eagleton says “Optimists are conservatives because their faith in a benign future is rooted in their trust in the essential soundness of the present. Indeed, optimism is a typical component of ruling-class ideologies . . . Only if you view your situation as critical do you recognize the need to transform it. Dissatisfaction can be a goad to reform. . . . True hope is needed most when the situation is at its starkest, a state of extremity that optimism is generally loath to acknowledge” (4–5).
2. In a conversation with Britt Wray, Kyle Whyte contrasts the hope that is committed to action and the hope that waits for a miracle. The latter is often disingenuous and dangerous because the political and economic structures that perpetuate current forms of privilege also make a miracle even more improbable. See “How Can You Hope When You Are Coming Out Of A Dystopia?” (gendread.substack.com/p/how-can-you-hope-when-youre-coming).
3. Rebecca Solnit. *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 4.
4. Wendell Berry. “Discipline and Hope,” in *A Continuous Harmony: Essays Cultural and Agricultural* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), 131.




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BRANDON VAIDYANATHAN

How Beauty Fuels Hope

 In the spring of 1912, Tokyo's mayor gifted Washington, D.C., with 3,000 cherry trees, an act of friendship that continues to transform the capital each year into a dreamy spectacle of pink and white. Every spring, these cherry blossoms breathe new life into the austere Washington, D.C., architecture. They put the city under a spell. I find myself enchanted as I walk past them on my university campus, grateful for their beauty and for being spared from the parking skirmish endured by the one-and-a-half million tourists who flock to see them every year. But the beauty of these blossoms is fleeting. Brief as a sunrise, ephemeral as a rainbow, they bloom for only a couple of weeks. Still, they're more than just Instagram fodder. To the Japanese, as to many D.C. residents and even tourists, the fragile beauty of the cherry blossom is a sign of hope.



Hope is not merely an optimistic outlook on the future. Rather, it is a virtue. As philosopher Josef Pieper puts it, hope is the disposition of the human being in reaching “with confidence and patient expectation, toward the *bonum arduum futurum*, toward the arduous ‘not yet’ of fulfillment, whether natural or supernatural.”¹ To hope is to trust in the promise of a good yet to come, even in the midst of uncertainty or adversity.

Beauty is a foretaste of the promised good, and a sign that hope is not in vain. Beauty, as the attractive power of being, draws us in, inviting us to gaze upon it and delight in it. It also wounds us, stirring within us a longing for the Infinite. In this light, we see that beauty is not a fleeting distraction but rather a signal that points beyond our self-enclosed worlds to something beyond. Beauty, like hope, is oriented towards the future. It can delight us through joy, pierce us through sorrow, and impel us to justice.

HOPE IN JOY

Even seemingly trivial encounters with beauty have the potential to evoke such hope. When I was a child of around eight, struggling at school to avoid punishments doled out by capricious teachers, and struggling at home to make sense of my mother’s episodes of schizophrenia, it was beauty that gave me hope. And the beauty

I encountered was in unassumingly simple foods: the spicy *samosas* at my school canteen and the intensely sweet *lados* given out at the local Hindu temple. These moments were explosions of flavor that seemed to whisper a promise that reality, in spite of its bleakness, contained something worth living for.

Such unassuming encounters with beauty can transform not just individuals but cities.

When Edi Rama, the artist-turned-mayor of Tirana, Albania, took office in 2000, the city was bleak, grey, and filled with despair—a legacy of the communist regime. His bold solution was to paint the buildings of the city in bright, vivid colors. He started by painting a building bright orange. It caused a traffic jam. Then he started introducing other bright colors. Not everyone liked it, but even those who didn’t like it didn’t want it to stop.

Once, as he was walking along one of these streets, Rama saw a shopkeeper and his wife taking off the shutters to their shop and replacing them with a glass facade. He asked them why, and they replied, “There are colors, streetlights, new pavement with no potholes, trees. So it’s beautiful, it’s safe.” Rama realized that “it was beauty that was giving people this feeling of being protected.”² The transformation was not merely aesthetic. Crime plummeted. People

started paying their taxes. Encountering beauty stirred a renewed sense of hope among Tirana's citizens.

Yet beauty doesn't just influence hope through delightful sights and tastes; it also calls to us through expressions of sorrow.

HOPE IN SORROW

In 1992, in the midst of a brutal siege during the Bosnian war, the cellist Vedran Smailović did something extraordinary. He sat in the remains of the city's shell-battered National Library and played Albinoni's Adagio in G Minor. Each day for twenty-two days, matching the number of people killed in a bread line by a mortar shell, he played his cello, offering his music as an act of solidarity and gift to the city that was being turned to ruins around him. His act was a beacon of beauty amidst unspeakable ugliness, a sign of hope in the midst of despair.

Smailović's music didn't bring an end to the siege or the war, but its beauty suggested a promise: the possibility of a different future. His music was a proclamation that even in the face of destruction and devastation, beauty persisted. His sorrow, funneled through exquisite music, became a bridge to shared understanding and connection. It reminded the city's inhabitants that their present

circumstances were not the end, that there existed a reality beyond the violence, that hope was not a futile dream.

Smailović's example illustrates the transformative power of melancholy that Susan Cain examines in her book *Bittersweet*. Drawing on religious literature across diverse traditions, as well as the work of psychologists, scientists, and artists, she unpacks the deep sense of longing that we carry within us, the yearning for something unattainable—for "the place where all the beauty comes from," as one of C.S. Lewis's characters puts it.³ The bittersweet, Cain argues, "is about the desire for communion, the wish to go home."⁴

Beauty wounds us. As Pope Benedict XVI puts it, "beauty prevents [the human being] from being content with just daily





life. It causes him to suffer. In a Platonic sense, we could say that the arrow of nostalgia pierces man, wounds him, and in this way gives him wings, lifts him upwards towards the transcendent.”⁵

Not only does beauty wound us, but our woundedness can also generate beauty. The beauty of African American spirituals that evolved during the period of American slavery lie not merely in their harmonies, but also in their expressions of longing and faith, rooted in their experiences of profound pain and injustice. Though the slaves’ circumstances were dire, their music

allowed them to voice and transform their pain. Songs like “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” and “Wade in the Water” transformed the grim reality of their lives into melodies of hope. Encoded in these songs were dreams of liberation, both physical and spiritual, communicating and sustaining a belief in a better future against all apparent odds.

Our sorrows and longings can thus be transformed—into art, music, healing, and innovation. Pain, if it goes untransformed, can fester into something we inflict on others through violence, abuse, and domination. But it can also turn us towards each

other. It can prompt us to act out of solidarity and for justice, out of hope rather than despair.

HOPE AND JUSTICE

Philosopher Elaine Scarry argues that the object of beauty incites “an urge to protect it, or act on its behalf,” and that “it is the very symmetry of beauty which leads us to, or somehow assists us in discovering, the symmetry that eventually comes into place in the realm of justice.”⁶ Beauty can thus serve as a call toward harmony, order, fairness, and peace. Beauty, because of its properties such as symmetry and harmony, she argues, “acts as a lever in the direction of justice;” aesthetic fairness “becomes pressing, active, insistent, calling out for, directing our attention toward” ethical fairness.⁷ Beauty fuels not only our hope for justice, but can galvanize our dedication to it.

We see this relationship expressed clearly in Martin Luther King Jr.’s “The Birth of a New Nation” sermon, delivered in 1957.⁸ In it, he recounts his experience of visiting Westminster Cathedral, whose “great architecture” provokes a sense of “awe . . . about the greatness of God and man’s feeble attempt to reach up for God.” At the same time, the same beauty of the cathedral and the palace evoked other thoughts: the power that the dying British empire

once held in having conquered so much of the world, its hubris and arrogance, the humiliation and exploitation wrought by colonialism, and the disastrous consequences of this empire on much of the rest of the world. King continues:

All of these things came to my mind when I stood there in Westminster Abbey with all of its beauty, and I thought about all of the beautiful hymns and anthems that the people would go in there to sing. And yet the Church of England never took a stand against this system; the Church of England sanctioned it; the Church of England gave it moral stature. All of the exploitation perpetuated by the British Empire was sanctioned by the Church of England.

But something else came to my mind: God comes in the picture even when the Church won’t take a stand. God has injected a principle in this universe. God has said that all men must respect the dignity and worth of all human personality, and if you don’t do that, I will take charge. It seems this morning that I can hear God speaking. I can hear him speaking throughout the universe, saying, “Be still and know that I am God. And if you don’t stop, if you don’t straighten up, if you don’t stop exploiting people, I’m going to





rise up and break the backbone of your power. And your power will be no more!” And the power of Great Britain is no more.

Note how King is first provoked by his experience of beauty—not only of the architectural marvels that move him, but also the imagined sounds of “beautiful hymns” that people would sing there. Yet he recognizes how this beauty is intertwined with images of injustice and cruelty. Beauty seems to implicitly demand justice, which provokes indignation for King as a believer, who also believes that this indignation is experienced by God himself. What this awakens then is the idea that God, unlike people and institutions, will not forget or ignore injustice. Beauty thus seems to awaken a commitment both to justice and to a faith which demands such justice. This expectation leads him to denounce the travesty that the same institution which can generate such beautiful structures was complicit in grave injustices.

As King continues his sermon, recounting the images of God’s justice that are provoked by the earlier experience of dissonance, he presents two other images which suggest a resolution to the discord—images which integrate beauty and justice. The first is an image of a God who “struggles with you,” sharing in our experience of human injustice and suffering, but also a God who will—King claims to believe with certainty—come

in resplendent “glory,” referring to a final day of judgment, an assurance of justice. The term glory usually has connotations of power—for example, in characterizing the glory of the British empire. But the reference to God here emphasizes not power so much as beauty—radiant and resplendent, but also just.

The second image comes from the prophet Isaiah’s vision—an image which has profound meaning for King, and which he cites on several other occasions, such as his famous “I Have a Dream” speech: “every valley shall be exalted, and every hill shall be made low; the crooked places shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” Citing this passage, he continues, “That’s the beauty of this thing: all flesh shall see it together.” It may seem like a pie-in-the-sky ideal: “there waiting with its milk and honey, and with all of the bountiful beauty that God has in store for His children.” But these ideals matter for the precise forms and means of justice we pursue here and now.

In invoking Isaiah’s vision, King depicts a landscape that is transformed, a world put right and made beautiful. These scriptural lines paint a vibrant picture of an ideal future, and even though it may seem only a distant hope, it is an image that drives us toward justice here and now. It reminds us that the pursuit of beauty and justice are

intimately intertwined and that our shared dreams and aspirations for a more beautiful world are not in vain.

Whether in the fleeting splendor of cherry blossoms, the unexpected delight we can encounter in simple foods, the vibrant hues of renewed cityscapes, the poignant melodies resonating even through war-torn ruins, or in the sacred harmony of spirituals born from pain, beauty stands as a testament to the resilience of hope. It whispers a promise of life's inherent value. It calls us out of ourselves, inviting us to recognize the potential for transformation even in the face of adversity. Rooting us in hope, beauty stirs within us a yearning for harmony, for justice, compelling us to reconcile the discord between the world as it is and as it should be. It serves not merely as an aesthetic distraction but as an affirmation of our shared humanity, a symbol of a brighter future, fueling our hope and inspiring our actions towards a more beautiful world and a fulfillment that lies beyond. 🌸🌿



NOTES

1. Joseph Pieper, "On Hope", trans. Sr. Mary Frances McCarthy, SND, in *Faith, Hope, and Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), p.109.
2. Edi Rama, "Take back your city with paint," TEDxThessaloniki, May 2012, Video, ted.com/talks/edi_rama_take_back_your_city_with_paint.
3. C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (HarperOne, 1956), p.86.
4. Susan Cain, *Bittersweet: How Sorrow and Longing Make Us Whole* (Crown, 2022), p. xxiii,
5. Pope Benedict XVI, "The Feeling of Things, the Contemplation of Beauty." Message to the Communion and Liberation (CL) meeting at Rimini, August 24–30, 2002.
6. Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton University Press), pp. 80, 97.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 100, 109.
8. Martin Luther King, Jr. "The Birth of a New Nation," Sermon Delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church (April 7, 1957), kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/birth-new-nation-sermon-delivered-dexter-avenue-baptist-church.

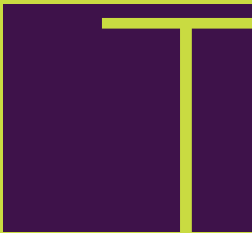


Brandon Vaidyanathan is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Sociology at The Catholic University of America. His research examines the role of culture in religious, economic, and scientific institutions, and he is the author of *Mercenaries and Missionaries: Capitalism and Catholicism in the Global South* and co-author of *Secularity and Science: What Scientists Around the World Really Think About Religion*.

Brandon is also Founder of Beauty at Work (beautyatwork.net), a content platform which includes a podcast and youtube channel exploring the role of beauty in our work and in our lives.

JONATHAN WILSON-HARTGROVE

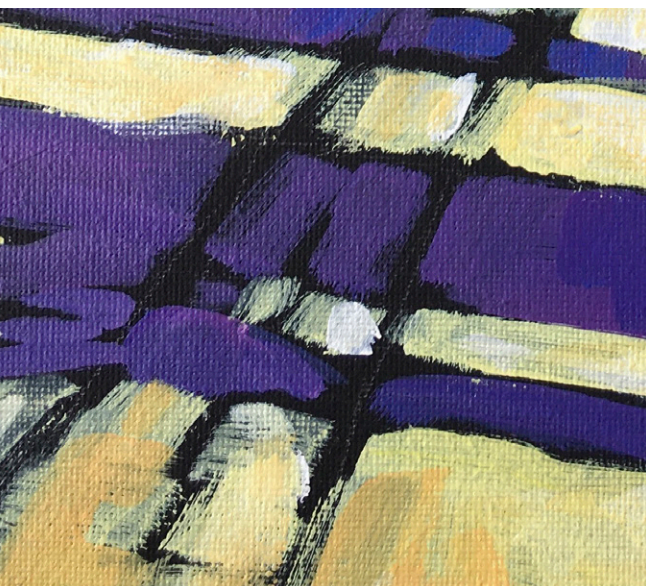
The Hope of a Living Cross



Two decades ago, when my wife, Leah, and I moved to Durham, North Carolina's Walltown neighborhood, we were young Christian activists who were determined to interrupt the violence of this world's systems. In the spring of 2003, we had joined the Christian Peace Teams in Baghdad, Iraq during our nation's "shock and awe" campaign to overthrow Sadaam Hussein's government. We did not know a way to stop an illegal and unjust war that was being waged in our name, but we were moved by the witness of fellow Christians who insisted that we could put our lives on the line to be with the people who were suffering from our country's bombs. This, it seemed to us, was Christian hope. "Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it," the German theologian Jürgen Moltmann wrote. "Peace with God means conflict with the world, for the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present."







The promised future of a peaceable kingdom goaded us into a war zone, and in the midst of it we experienced a miracle. On the highway that runs through the Anbar province of Western Iraq, one car in our team's caravan crashed into a ditch outside of a town called Rutba. In the middle of a desert, and in the middle of a war, they stumbled back up to the roadside bleeding and unsure what to do. We had come to be with people who were suffering; now, we were suffering with them. When a passing car of Iraqis stopped, they took our friends into their vehicle and drove them into town where they found a doctor who said to them in English, "Three days ago your country bombed our hospital. But we will take care of you." He sewed up their wounds and saved their lives.

When the car I was traveling in turned around and found our friends, I asked this doctor what we owed him for his services. "You do not owe us anything," he said. "Please just go home and tell people what's really happening here." When we did, I found myself telling a 21st-century version of the Good Samaritan story that Jesus tells in Luke's gospel. The people who were supposed to be our enemy had stopped by the roadside, picked up our friends, and made sure they were taken care of. At the end of Jesus' version of this story, he says, "Go and do likewise." We felt like he was talking to us. We came home to an historically Black, low-income neighborhood in our own country and started a hospitality house to try to love our neighbors as we had been loved. To remember the miracle we'd experienced, we called the place Rutba House.

In those early years, when we were strange white folks inviting neighbors we didn't know to come join us for dinner, a lot of people kept their distance. But kids were always game for a meal and a soccer match in the parking lot after dinner. For a couple of years, Leah ran an afterschool program in the neighborhood, getting to know families through their kids and learning how much folks were up against as they often worked two and three jobs to keep their children housed, clothed, and fed. Hope, it seemed to us, was parents working against all odds to make opportunities possible for

their children. We wanted to invite others to share their hope, so we started a wrap-around program for kids when they got to middle school to invest all that we could in their future. Walltown, we knew, wasn't going to change tomorrow. But we had hope that kids we knew and loved could interrupt the neighborhood-to-prison pipeline that had taken so many of their family members from them. Hope didn't just mean suffering injustice with folks to insist that things didn't have to be this way. It also meant investing in a better future—and inviting other people to join us in that.


We've been here long enough now that we've had the chance to watch those kids grow up. We've watched some of their hopes and ours become real, and we have felt what it's like for hope to be crushed, sometimes before it even had a chance to come into full bloom. In the midst of the pandemic lockdown, when people around here weren't meeting in-person for anything, a young man we'd met at the bus stop his first day of kindergarten—a kid who was in the first cohort of that program we started for middle schoolers—was gunned down in the street at 23 years-old. We had his funeral outside in the graveyard and stood socially distanced from one another until the funeral directors had committed his body to the ground. As we were leaving, I spotted the other guys from his group standing together. One of them had flown back from the Ivy League school

where he was finishing his undergraduate degree. Another one, last I had heard, was homeless. Here they were, together, for a reunion no one had planned, facing a reality no one had hoped for.

You cannot live and hold onto hope in a place like this without recognizing that the challenges we face are bigger than the choices people make and the opportunities available to them. No one who hoped and prayed with that group of kids through their teen years could have told you who would end up living in a dorm with the children of corporate executives and who would end up living in the woods. But any social scientist can tell you that one in three Black men who grew up in America in their generation will end up living inside a prison at some point in his life. They can tell you that every one of them is more likely to die from gun violence in their 20s than from any other potential cause of death. And they can also tell you that these are not inevitable circumstances but rather the result of policy choices that have been made in statehouses and in the US Congress. We know what could be done to change these statistics, but our representatives will not act to curb gun violence, fight poverty, or end mass incarceration.

Where, then, do we turn for hope? Extraordinary efforts to interrupt broken systems for particular kids can make a huge difference—but not always. Movements





for social change can compel politicians to do even what they do not want to do—but it takes a lot of effort and, usually, a really long time. So, what to do?

I've been turning to the 19th century abolitionists lately, re-reading their words and trying to imagine what they would say to us in this moment. Slavery, they knew, was wrong, so they took direct action to interrupt it. They built an underground railroad—often at risk of their own life and liberty—and they got everybody out they could. But they knew they'd never get everyone out, and they knew from personal experience that, when you crossed the Mason Dixon line, survival entailed a whole new set of challenges. Even still, they held onto hope by doing everything they could to help the person in front of them toward freedom.

But that wasn't all. Yes, hope meant investing whatever resources you had to help enslaved people get free. But it also meant building a movement to change the laws that said some people could own other people. This was a long-term movement that lasted decades and sometimes even seemed to be counter-productive. When the Supreme Court issued its Dred Scott decision, saying that no Black person in America had any right that white people were bound to respect, it appeared to some as if the struggle for abolition had, in fact, damned all free people of African descent

in America. But Frederick Douglass, who had long since learned what it meant to hope against hope, argued that such an extreme decision from the high court should actually *encourage* the abolitionist movement. It was but a necessary step in the chain of events that would lead to the downfall of the entire wicked system.

Where does that sort of hope come from? It is not unique to the abolitionists. In one way or another, it's the virtue that has moved suffering people to work together for change throughout human history. If you don't have the guns or the money or the computer with all the data, what are you to do in a world where people who have power will use it to benefit themselves and use or abuse other people? It is, it seems to me, a deeply human dilemma. Christianity claims that, in the face of such an impossible situation, we have but one hope: that the Maker of all things who knows better than any of us how the world really works has shown up in the person of Jesus and demonstrated the way to freedom. The trouble, though, is that most people who call themselves Christian aren't very much impressed with the way that Jesus offers.


Mahatma Gandhi happened to be traveling on a British ship one Christmas, after he had already become famous for his nonviolent campaigns in India. His fellow travelers asked if he would be willing to give a Christmas message. Gandhi was

not a Christian, but he had learned a lot from Jesus by way of Leo Tolstoy's writings and the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew's gospel. So he agreed to preach the Christmas message, and he delivered it in two sentences: "Living Christ means a living cross. Without it life is a living death."

To live the way of Jesus in the world is, as Moltmann says and Gandhi well understood, to embrace a way of suffering alongside all who live with their backs against the wall. There is nothing inherently redemptive about suffering itself. Injustice is evil, and it is sustained by the banality of our easy acceptance that the way things are is the way things have to be. But the way of Jesus isn't just suffering; it is a "living cross." When we choose to live in the face of evil with the confidence that life is stronger than death, we can live in the power that created the universe—the love that moves the sun and other stars. Our hope isn't that we have the power to change anyone or any system, but rather than we can live here and now in the way of truth.

Will this kind of hope change anything? Looking back, we can say it has. This is

There is nothing inherently redemptive about suffering itself. Injustice is evil, and it is sustained by the banality of our easy acceptance that the way things are is the way things have to be.

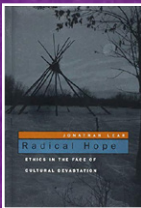
the hope that ended slavery, that gave us a labor movement, that fueled the civil rights movement, and that sustains today's climate activists. But we also have to confess that it hasn't. Many hoped for freedom they never experienced in this life; a young man whose hope I shared for years lies buried in a graveyard just a few miles from my home. If we are honest about hope, we must confess that it does not promise any particular set of results that we can predict on our schedules. But I'm convinced that Gandhi is right: without it life is a living death. The hope I know in the way of Jesus is a hope that sustains me in a beloved community that shows me what a life worth living looks like. 



Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove is Assistant Director for Partnerships and Fellowships at Yale University's Center for Public Theology and Public Policy. He is the author of *The Awakening of Hope: Why We Practice a Common Faith* amongst many other books and articles, and he lives with his family at the Rutba House, a house of hospitality in Durham, North Carolina.

Good Reads

We asked our authors to recommend a book they had read over the past couple of years. Here is what they said:



Radical Hope

Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation

BY JONATHAN LEAR

Drawing on the story of the existential threat to the Crow Nation, Lear considers how cultivating radical hope helps people endure the unimaginable. It's a book for anyone whose life is precarious, which is to

say, it's a book for all. —LYDIA S. DUGDALE

The Kite Runner

BY KHALED HOSSEINI

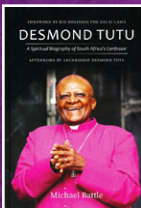
The Kite Runner is a powerful, emotional novel that shows the complex reality of human existence through the lens of friendship. One of the best stories I have read. —NOOSHIN JAVADI



Desmond Tutu

A Spiritual Biography of South Africa's Confessor

BY MICHAEL BATTLE



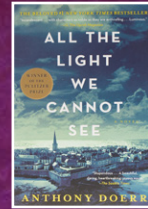
In his *Spiritual Biography* (2021), Michael Battle shatters the false binary between the sacred and the secular by making a compelling case that Archbishop Tutu's political actions for social justice were not in spite

of his deep spirituality, but rather because of it. In this regard Tutu's social spirituality modeled and embodied what *The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church*, produced by black Anti-Apartheid theologians in 1985, called prophetic theology, i.e. speaking truth to power. —A. RASHIED OMAR

All the Light We Cannot See

BY ANTHONY DOERR

This book is a hauntingly beautiful, fast-paced story of hope, courage, and everyday resistance during World War II, which seems an apt recommendation for this issue of *Virtues & Vocations*. It reminds the reader that there is light (and goodness) even in the darkest (and cruelest) of times. —SUZANNE SHANAHAN



Wanting

BY LUKE BURGIS

It's rare to encounter an idea that fundamentally reshapes the way you see the world. Rene Girard's theory of mimetic desire was such an experience for me. It revealed that most of my desires were not my own, but borrowed; I was unwittingly imitating others. Recognizing how and why this happens is liberating; it allows you to uncover the hidden influences driving your desires, and empowers you to redirect them. Luke Burgis's *Wanting* offers the best recent introduction to Girard's oeuvre and to how mimesis works in all aspects of our lives.

—BRANDON VAIDYANATHAN

We Are Called To Be A Movement

BY WILLIAM J. BARBER, II

In the age of YouTube, sermons are almost never published anymore. But Rev. Barber is a master of the art of preaching in the public square, and this sermon to America, which can be read in a single sitting, diagnoses so much of what ails us as a society and breathes a prophetic Word of hope into our common life. At its best, a sermon can get inside its listener and not only speak to them, but also *through* them. I love this book because it invites its readers to join a movement that offers real hope to them and the world around them.

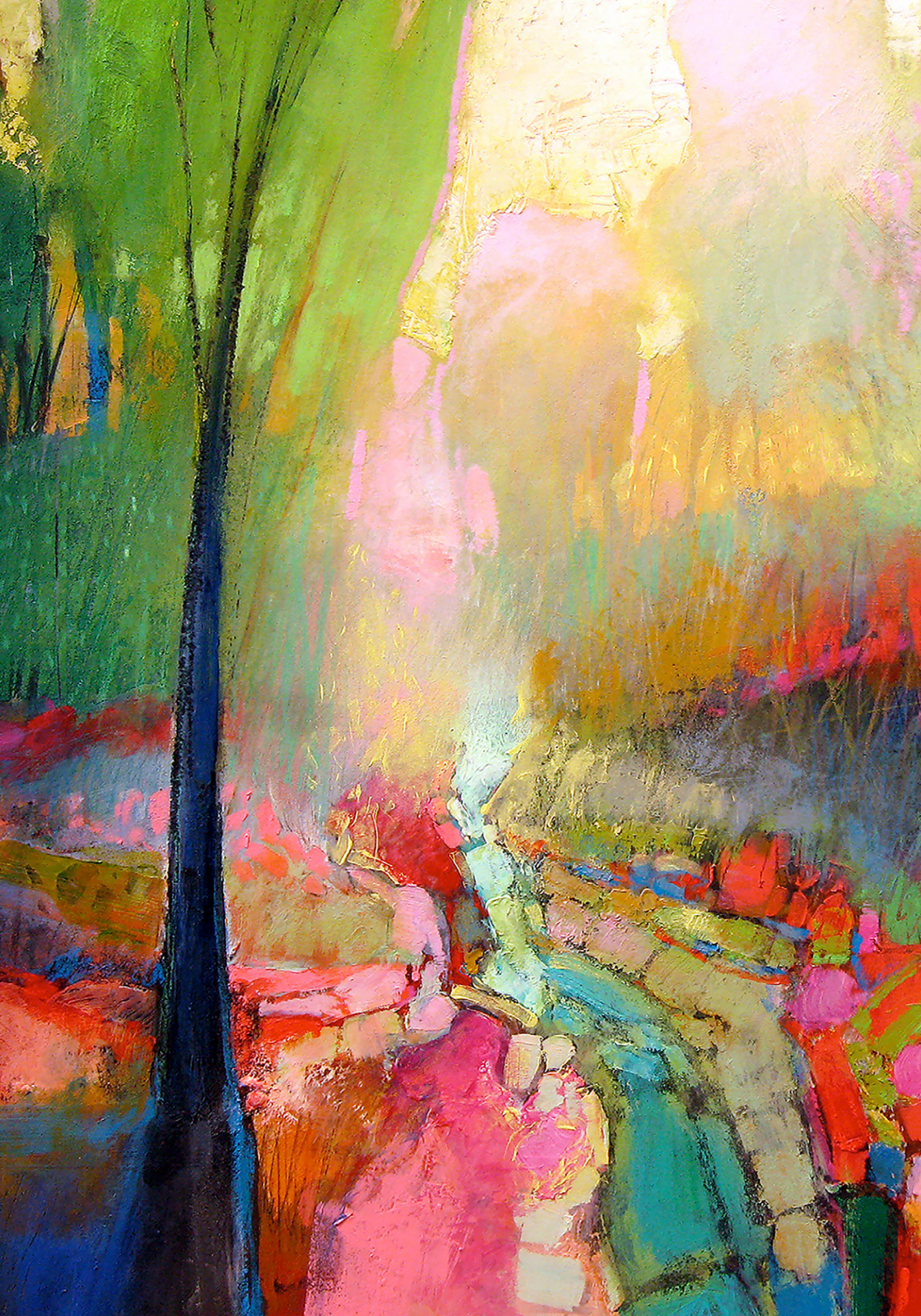
—JONATHAN WILSON-HARTGROVE



Once There Were Wolves

BY CHARLOTTE MCCONAGHY

This is the most gripping novel I have read in years, with characters hard to forget. It describes how violence undoes the world, and what forms of empathy we will need to live peaceably with each other and with the earth. —NORMAN WIRZBA



LYDIA S. DUGDALE

The Virtue of Hope in the Face of Death



As a medical doctor who cares for older and ailing patients, I have long struggled with how to inspire hope when the medical facts paint an otherwise grim picture. In the face of imminent death from cancer, a fatal drug overdose, or a devastating injury—what can a doctor say about hope in such cases that is not mere platitude?

When I was a young physician, I secretly rolled my eyes at doctors who encouraged their patients with terminal diagnoses to tackle bucket lists, as if seeing the Grand Canyon or tasting chocolate ice cream one last time were sufficient salves for mortal wounds. We doctors decry the suggestion of giving patients false hope, but then we offer patently sugarcoated alternatives. *Surely, we can level with our patients*, my younger self would think. *Surely, the sick and dying deserve a robust hope.*



To be fair, there's nothing wrong with setting more modest goals for oneself as the trajectory of life changes. I've cared for many adult patients with disabilities, for example, whose family members have had dramatically to re-imagine their lives in order to care for children-turned-adults with special needs. Although such changes of plan often endure for decades, they can be no less drastic in the face of a terminal diagnosis or sudden death. Shocking events demand a reckoning by all affected. So, bucket lists and chocolate ice cream are fine, but they are not enough. Health care professionals can do better at instilling hope in the face of sickness and death.

That doesn't mean there's a clear path forward. In our pluralistic world, hope and meaning can be dialed up or down depending on culture, ethnicity, community, or other sources of identity and belonging. Some individuals no longer rely on social groups to help them make sense of life's deepest existential questions. Instead, widespread assent to radical self-determination and "you do you" rhetoric, combined with a pluripotent social media, mean that people can believe everything or nothing on a whim and without substantive accountability.

In my book *The Lost Art of Dying: Reviving Forgotten Wisdom*,¹ I describe a genre of literature called the *ars moriendi*, or *art*

of dying, that was first popularized in the late Middle Ages and circulated for about 500 years. The *ars moriendi* were handbooks on the preparation for death. Earliest iterations generally taught that the dying faced five primary temptations or vices—doubt, despair, greed, pride, and impatience. To die a doubting, despairing, greedy, prideful, or impatient person was to die poorly. And the best way to counter these vices, the handbooks taught, was to cultivate their reciprocal consolations or virtues—faith, hope, generosity, humility, and patience. Becoming generous or patient wasn't work to save up for the end of life, however. Rather, to die well, one had to live well. And living well meant practicing the virtues over the course of one's life in the context of community. After all, the good life (and a good death) could only be understood communally.

Most Western Europeans of the late Middle Ages, however, could not read. The faithful thus learned their theology not from text but through participation in services and liturgical practices, as well as through art, icons, altarpieces, and other religious visual imagery. Accordingly, there began circulating by 1450 an illustrated version of the *ars moriendi* containing 11 images that paired the 5 temptations to dying poorly with their respective virtues. Throughout the first 10 images, it is clear from representations of angels and demons that a battle wages for the dying man's

soul. The eleventh image illustrates the dying man's moment of death, victorious over the forces of evil. For our purposes, consider the images of despair and hope.

Figure 1 depicts the temptation to despair. The dying man lies in bed, surrounded not by loved ones but by reminders of past indiscretions. What is more liable to drive a person to deep hopelessness than a room full of beings reminding him of the myriad ways he's hurt others? He's an adulterer! Or so says the figure in the image at 11 o'clock, accusing the dying man of adultery and bringing a woman as proof. The accompanying scroll, in Latin, says it all: *Fornicatus es.*² What's more, he's greedy! The demon at 3 o'clock suggests as much and points out a poor, dejected man on a box, presumably in need because of the avarice (*Avare vixisti*) of the dying man. In the lower left corner, there also sits a man thought to be naked because of poverty. The demon attending him clutches a bag of money, again reinforcing the greed of the dying man. Other demons indicate other failures: Murder (*Occidisti*)! Perjury (*Perjurus es*)! And if that's not enough,



Figure 1. "Temptation to Despair,"
Ars moriendi, Germany 1466.
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

there's a host of other sins (*Ecce peccata tua*) scribbled on a board. Such damning taunts are enough for the dying man to despair of his hopeless condition.

But it is the aim of the *ars moriendi* genre not to leave the viewer in a state of despair. To die despairingly is to die poorly. Instead, the dying man must cultivate hope, and those attending him must also cultivate

hope while they are living and well. In **Figure 2**, Comfort Through Hope, an angel encourages him not to despair. “Hope is possible, after all,” writes the theologian Allen Verhey. He continues:

And the evidence surrounds the bedside. There they are, sinners all, brought through the judgment by the grace of God. Is the accusation fornication? But there is Mary Magdalene, with her reputation as a sinner. . . . Is the accusation avarice? But there is the thief on the cross. Is the accusation murder? But there is Paul . . . struck down from his horse on the way to Damascus to persecute and kill. And is the accusation perjury? But there is Peter, holding the keys of the kingdom. . . . And there in the background are the heavens opening, with a path for sinners.

Here is proof that no matter what he’s done, hope *is* possible. And the defeated demons go slinking off.

In *The Lost Art of Dying*, I posit that we moderns would die better were we to revive the wisdom of the *ars moriendi*. If that’s true, and if it makes sense for doctors to encourage their sick and dying patients and their communities to practice hope, this prompts another question. What do we mean by hope?

Hope has been defined in myriad ways, but if we’re going to draw from the *ars moriendi* as a medieval commendation to practice hope over a lifetime, and even in the face of death, it makes sense then to consider an account of hope from that era. Perhaps best known among thinkers of the Middle Ages is the philosopher and theologian Thomas Aquinas, whose work on hope draws broadly from thinkers, both his predecessors and contemporaries.

The virtue of hope, for Aquinas, is a theological virtue, meaning that it is given by God. Hope is the second of the theological virtues—nestled, as we find it, between faith and love.³ According to Aquinas, hope leans on God’s help to obtain the difficult to achieve but possible future good of eternal happiness with God in Heaven.⁴ Since God’s very essence is goodness, ultimate happiness comes from union with such an infinite good.⁵ By contrast, *de-speratio* (despair or desperation) derives its name from being contrary to *spes* (hope).⁶ Aquinas says that despair is not only the opposite of hope, but also the withdrawing from hope.

As is the case today, not everyone believed in God in the late Middle Ages. Does Aquinas then have an account of hope for the non-believer? In fact, he does. His non-theological ordinary hope is not a God-given *virtue*, however, but a *passion* or emotion natural to human beings.



Figure 2. "Comfort through Hope," *Ars moriendi*, Germany 1466. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



If you want to be a person of hope, you have to practice it. It is not enough to wait passively for the appetite of hope to come upon you. If you want hope in the face of death, you have to repeat it continually until it becomes a part of your nature.

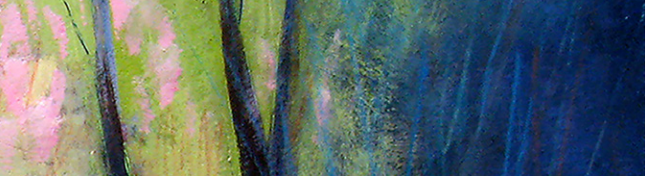
By *passion*, Aquinas suggests a certain passivity—passions happen to a person. Just as a hankering for a hamburger happens to a person, so too does hope—an appetite for the good.⁷ Hope regards a future good that takes some work but is possible to obtain.⁸ It is not for things we already have or for bad things or for things that are trivial or impossible to attain; hope is the expectation for a future arduous good that is within the realm of possibility. It is a familiar, natural hope that belongs to earthly life now.

But here we face a dilemma. Although the *ars moriendi* texts taught that both the living and dying could cultivate hope to mitigate the possibility of a life and death of despair, the earliest versions assumed a theological virtue of hope—hope for the happiness of Heaven—not an ordinary natural passion or emotion of hope. But just as all versions

of the *ars moriendi* did not remain under the banner of Christendom, neither did all its practitioners. And as the *ars moriendi* secularized, there arose a need for an account of hope as a virtue that did not necessarily culminate in union with God, along with a way of thinking about hope as a virtue that one could nurture and not just passively experience.

Scholars after Aquinas debated among themselves whether hope is in fact a virtue and whether it can be cultivated independently of divine assistance. If hope has no ultimate fulfillment (such as union with God), does it lose its relevance? Or can human beings rationalize their way to hope? And so forth. But these were questions for the learned elite and not for the average inhabitant of Western Europe during the late Renaissance.

Commoners on the whole had more pragmatic considerations: “If we don’t want to die as greedy despairing fools, how then do we exercise generosity and hope throughout our lives?” Answering questions such as this didn’t necessarily require the divine; it required good habits. But habituating to virtue takes work. As the sixteenth-century philosopher and theologian Erasmus puts it, “This preparation for death must be practiced through our whole life. . . . [A]n action continually



repeated will become a habit, the habit will become a state, and the state become a part of your nature.”⁹ His contemporary Robert Bellarmine sums it up simply, “He who lives well will die well.”¹⁰ If you want to be a person of hope, you have to practice it. It is not enough to wait passively for the appetite of hope to come upon you. If you want hope in the face of death, you have to repeat it continually until it becomes a part of your nature. But what does practicing hope look like for the person who rejects the idea that hope’s fulfillment is eternal happiness with God in heaven?

I want to suggest two answers. First, the nonbeliever may depend on others to exercise hope. Although Aquinas acknowledges God as both the ultimate hope and divine assistance as what he calls “the first cause” leading to happiness, he is clear that one can place one’s hope in a person or a creature as what he calls the secondary or instrumental agent through whom one is helped to obtain the good.¹¹ That’s why, he says, we ask others for help; our hope is that they will help us reach a place of flourishing. So, nonbelievers can practice the theological virtue of hope by proxy, through community. And we see this in the hospital where the dying may ask their loved ones or the family priest to hope and pray on their behalf, when they themselves cannot hope.

Second, it is possible—although perhaps not acceptable to orthodox Christians—to

decouple the notion of the Christian God from the idea of the infinite good. As we have said, Aquinas’ virtue of hope leans on God’s help to obtain the future good of eternal happiness with God in Heaven, and since God’s very essence is goodness, final happiness comes from union with this infinite good.¹² If we break this down into its components, Aquinas’ virtue of hope could be said to require:

1. God’s help, or divine grace
2. An infinite good as its object
3. Future fulfillment

The question then becomes whether we can find a satisfactory non-religious accounting of grace, the infinite good, and future fulfillment that can do the work of the (theological) virtue of hope.

The philosopher Iris Murdoch was interested in the possibility of an infinite good separate from religious notions of God. Let’s now consider how Murdoch might explain each of these three components of the virtue of hope using her non-religious concept of the sovereignty of the good.

First, in Christian parlance, ‘grace’ is often defined as unmerited favor, good will, or blessing. It is a form of gift that one receives; or, as Aquinas puts it, grace signifies something bestowed on a person by God.¹³ Murdoch says that the “concept of grace can be readily secularized,” by which



she means that we can expect to “receive a return when good is sincerely desired” that does not come from the divine.¹⁴ She also describes grace as “an unforeseen reward for a fumbling half-hearted act.”¹⁵ In contrast to Aquinas, who suggests that divine grace precedes human ability to hope for the good, Murdoch seems to suggest that the orientation of human hearts toward the good results in grace as a sort of return on our investment in the good. Although this grace is *post hoc*, I here suggest that there’s no reason to assume that the recipient of such *post hoc* grace can’t “pay it forward”, thereby facilitating the hope of another. For example, if a child witnesses the grace in her mother’s life as a result of her mother’s hope for the good, that child can build from that foundation of grace in her own hope for the infinite good. Murdoch’s notion of *post hoc* grace can thus become the grace that *precedes* another’s habit of hope.

Second, the virtue of hope requires the infinite good as its object. And on this point, Murdoch’s work shines brightest. She says, “Good is the focus of attention

when an intent to be virtuous coexists (as perhaps it almost always does) with some unclarity of vision.”¹⁶ Although she does not here speak specifically of the *virtue* of hope, she is discussing the virtuous life more broadly—that is, the life oriented toward human happiness—and she ties it to an ill-defined future good, the same object for Aquinas’ ordinary (non-virtue) of hope. She anticipates that some might say,

It makes sense to speak of loving God, a person, but very little sense to speak of loving God, a concept. ‘Good’ even as a fiction is not likely to inspire, or even be comprehensible to, more than a small number of mystically minded people who, being reluctant to surrender ‘God’, fake up ‘Good’ in his image, so as to preserve some kind of hope.¹⁷

Murdoch says that she herself is half inclined to think in such terms. Yet, she continues to believe that “there is more than this,” that some “very tiny spark of insight” is real.¹⁸ Although she says she

refuses to believe that the Idea of the Good exists “as people used to think that God existed,” she nevertheless insists that “[t]he image of the Good as a transcendent magnetic centre seems ... the least corruptible and most realistic picture for us to use in our reflections upon the moral life.”¹⁹ Murdoch’s infinite Good is not God, but it can indeed be the object of human longing and attention, and it can, she suggests, provide moral clarity.

Third, the virtue of hope—as with its ordinary or natural counterpart—requires future fulfillment. Since futurity is neither theological nor secular, we need not flesh it out further. However, a metaphor from Murdoch helps to pull together the whole account of a secular virtue of hope.

Recall again the idea of habituating to hope for a future good that is arduous but possible to attain. This future good is infinite, poorly defined, but draws us toward it. Hope, then, can be understood as the habit of orienting time and time again toward that supreme good, recognizing that some sort of good grace will return to us even as we practice leaning in toward the good. Murdoch says this is

very much the action of the artist, who “is obedient to a conception of perfection to which his work is constantly related and re-related in what seems an external manner.”²⁰ The artist works toward the ill-defined good that “lies always beyond, and it is from this beyond that it exercises its authority.” It would here be foolish to suggest that the artist is exercising the passion or emotion of hope as he applies stroke after stroke to his canvas in pursuit of the good. Rather, the artist has cultivated the virtue of hope that holds out for a future good that is elusive yet possible to attain.

Murdoch, born into a family of Presbyterian and Church of Ireland extraction, is never very convincing in her rejection of the possibility of God. Although her account of the Good as replacement for the idea of God can helpfully cast the theological virtue of hope into quasi-secular terms, the student of Murdoch is left wondering whether she is on to something when she says, “there is more than this.”

The theologian Andrew Pinsent raises the same question in different terms. He notes that the language of hope is everywhere in





secular spaces, not least the supermarket and retail shops. He writes:


I have found many goods that offer, for example, “snacking nirvana,” or “bliss,” or “paradise,” or “heaven,” or products, such as from a famous coffee company, that promised to warm my soul, not just my stomach. The prevalence of this soft-focus religious language, to sell everything from holidays to oatmeal, witnesses to a confidence that human beings have at least an inchoate desire for the happiness of heaven regardless of their personal religious commitment.²¹

Although Pinsent suggests that such consumerist references to hope belong to the passion of hope rather than the theological virtue, one might argue that other expressions—such as the Good sought by Murdoch’s artist—suggest a virtue of hope that can be practiced time and again as the artist approximates to the Good.

Murdoch’s Good—in contrast to Aquinas’ God—is not knowable. It’s very clearly *not* a god who invites his creatures into a relationship of eternal happiness. Still, Murdoch maintains that “there is a place both inside and outside religion for a sort of contemplation of the Good.”²² Hope for the Good is not mere platitude—that is, it’s not chocolate ice cream or the Grand Canyon. Rather, Murdoch says, it’s hope for “a distant transcendent perfection, a source of uncontaminated energy, a source of *new* and quite undreamt-of virtue.”²³

Religious or not, people who suffer—which at some point includes all of us—need to be able to practice the virtue of hope, to move toward the good, even if it takes hard work and even if it is difficult to attain. Anything less is to leave people to despair, which serves no one. The appeal of the *ars moriendi* genre of literature is that it offered guidance to communities in the form of an art of dying that was best understood as an art of living. People who seek to live and die well must become

People who seek to live and die well must become people of hope, moving toward the good and not withdrawing from it.

people of hope, moving toward the good and not withdrawing from it. Whether the infinite good is ultimately unknowable remains to be determined by each of us in our communities. But one thing is nearly certain. If we don't make a habit of moving toward the good, we may never discover whether the good is, in fact, God. 

The author wishes to thank John Hare, Ashley Moyses, and Benjamin Parviz for advice on earlier drafts of this manuscript.

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4. ST II-II, q. 17, art. 2-3.
5. ST II-II, q.17, art. 2.
6. ST I-II, q. 40, a. 4.
7. ST I-II, q. 22, art. 2.
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9. Erasmus, "Preparing for Death" (1553), in *Collected Works of Erasmus: Spiritualia and Pastoralia*, ed. John W. O'Malley (Toronto: Univ of Toronto Press, 1998): 392-450, 398, and 421. As quoted in Allen Verhey, *The Christian Art of Dying: Learning From Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011): 255.
10. St. Robert Bellarmine, *The Art of Dying Well (or, How to Be a Saint, Now and Forever)* (Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 2005), 3.
11. ST II-II, q. 17, a. 4.
12. ST II-II, q. 17, art. 2-3.
13. ST I-II, q. 110, art. 1.
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A. RASHIED OMAR

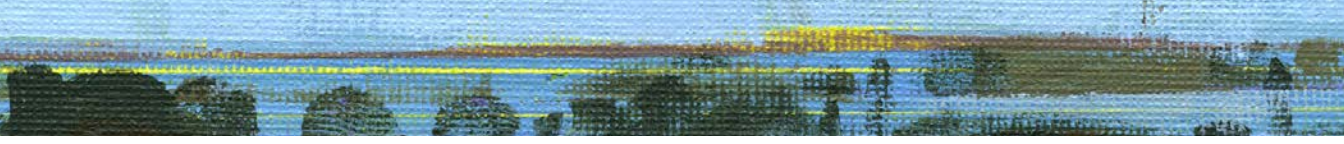
Imagining a More Compassionate Post-Covid-19 World



The early days of the pandemic were filled with fear and uncertainty, but we also witnessed levels of compassion, solidarity, and sacrifice that were previously unimaginable.

In the midst of suffering, a seed of hope grew as we heard stories of medical personnel mobilizing, people sewing masks in their homes, and others singing from balconies to remain connected. The potential of the human spirit flourished, and many hoped that this spirit would remain after the pandemic ended, moving us toward a more compassionate and connected world.

As the pandemic wore on, divisions and selfishness reappeared, and our early hope seemed naïve. Now, many are glad that things have mostly returned to normal. Schools are open, lockdowns have ceased, and (while they are still present) masks are optional. But even as many are relieved by a recovery of the status quo, we are also left to wonder whether this is really the most we



should hope for. The pandemic revealed broken systems and relationships with new clarity, and those issues still remain. Is the status quo really all that is possible? Or does that seed of hope and compassion we witnessed in the early crisis still exist? If it does, how can we nurture it and help it grow?

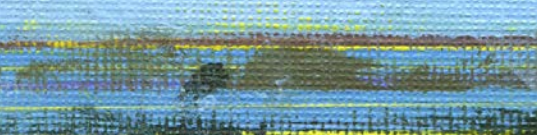
“CATASTROPHE COMPASSION” AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH

The hope of a transformed post-pandemic world is supported by contemporary trauma research, which demonstrates that trauma does not inevitably result in ongoing stress, but can engender positive growth. Consonant with these research findings, in *The War for Kindness: Building Empathy in a Fractured World*, Jamil Zaki coined the phrase “catastrophe compassion.”¹ Disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, war, and terror attacks are places where compassion and care emerge, according to research by Zaki and others. “During and in the immediate aftermath of disasters, people realize how much they need each other and they band together, finding ways to help and comfort strangers. Suffering together, they develop a sense of shared identity, purpose and solidarity.” This, Zaki contends, is catastrophe compassion.

Building on this concept, Zaki’s critical question for today is: “Instead of emerging from the Coronavirus pandemic resilient to crisis and catastrophe, what if we grew stronger because of it?” In response to this question, Zaki argues that the spontaneous outpouring of compassion and charity that is oftentimes witnessed during times of trauma can present people with a view of themselves that surprises them. Driven by what he calls “otherishness” rather than selfishness, it can awaken in individuals, and society as a whole, compassion for the other that was lying dormant.

According to Zaki, if this “catastrophe compassion” can be harnessed during the post-trauma period, it can lead to significant growth both at the personal level for individuals as well as at the societal level. The challenge, however, is to “institute personal and social norms that are more balanced, just and equitable.” Zaki cogently reminds us that a better normal also means creating more compassionate social structures.²

As I reflect on the trauma we have all experienced and continue to experience from the pandemic at the global, local, and personal levels, I would like to suggest modest ways in which we have witnessed “catastrophe compassion” during the Covid-19 pandemic, and how we can turn our “catastrophe compassion” into opportunities for personal growth and the transformation of a post



Covid-19 world into a more compassionate, caring, and just one.

GLOBAL TRAUMA SEEING INEQUALITY, PURSUING SOLIDARITY

First, we can hope that seeing suffering more clearly might lead to a new commitment to compassion and justice. The Covid-19 pandemic as a global health emergency has laid bare the huge inequalities in wealth distribution, and especially health disparities, within and across nation states. While almost everyone was adversely impacted by the pandemic, it was palpable that the marginalized and poorer members of our societies were bearing the brunt of the anguish and distress that resulted from prolonged lockdowns, lack of access to health care, job losses, lack of access to water, and the impossibility of maintaining social distances in overcrowded urban sprawls. In a briefing to the White House, the chief medical expert of the United States Coronavirus scientific team, Dr. Anthony Fauci said:

“Health disparities have always existed for the African American community . . . [coronavirus is] shining a bright light on how unacceptable that is because, yet again, when you have a situation like the coronavirus, they are suffering

disproportionately. We will get over coronavirus, but there will still be health disparities which we really do need to address in the African American community.”³

The structural conditions that inform pre-existing conditions and health disparities and its negative manifestation during the Covid-19 pandemic are not unique to the USA. This is a global phenomenon which was most visible in the new and fast spreading coronavirus variants that ravaged parts of India and Brazil. It led the well-known Indian writer and social justice activist, Arundhati Roy, to describe the current death and devastation wrought by the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in India as a “crime against humanity.”

Chief among the reasons Roy provides to justify her judgment is the weak public health system. She contends that India spends about 1.25% of its gross domestic product on health, far lower than most countries in the world, even the poorest ones. She cites a 2016 Lancet study that shows that 78% of India’s healthcare located in urban areas and 71% in rural areas are now handled by the private sector. She furthermore argues that “the private sector will not cater to starving, sick, dying people who don’t have money.” This massive privatization of India’s healthcare, she contends, is a crime against the vast majority of India’s citizens.⁴



In light of the horrifying manner in which the Covid-19 pandemic has made manifest for the world to see and fully appreciate the callous injustices of healthcare systems across the globe, it should be clear that justice and compassion demand a commitment to Universal Health Care.

With respect to the broader injustice of the huge disparities in wealth and income levels that the pandemic made visible, I commend the intuitive manner in which most governments across the world responded compassionately to the plight of the most vulnerable members of our society during the enforced lockdown periods. Ironically, social welfare measures

were approved by many of the same politicians who, in so-called normal times, were vocal in their condemnations of government fulfilling such a role. Now that it has been proven that governments are able to do more in caring for the most vulnerable of their citizens, we should actively campaign for such social welfare measures to become a more permanent feature of good governance.

Notwithstanding the many negativities that were made manifest during the Covid-19 pandemic, there were also many examples of “catastrophe compassion,” such as the relatively better cooperation we witnessed between nation-states.

While there are still horrifying levels of competition and self-interest between countries, during the pandemic the global community has been compelled to accept that none of us live on an island and that our destinies are intricately connected. During this pandemic, we have witnessed previously unimaginable acts of compassion and solidarity between countries. For example, in response to the devastating second wave of Coronavirus infections that was crushing parts of India, a Pakistani NGO responded compassionately to the plight of its neighbors by offering to send 50 ambulances with support staff across the border to assist with transporting patients to hospitals. This compassionate gesture, together with messages of solidarity from the Pakistani government, led to a Twitter campaign #PakistanStandsWithIndia, which went viral.⁵ There are numerous similar examples. If we are able to sustain just a small amount of this kind of cooperation and solidarity, we will be able to fashion a more compassionate post Covid-19 world.

LOCAL TRAUMA PHYSICALLY DISTANT BUT SOCIALY CONNECTED

The second place of trauma from which catastrophe compassion arose was at the local level, where the rupture of our relationships with our loved ones, friends,

neighbors, and colleagues was felt most acutely. Unlike other disasters, such as an earthquake or a shooting or bomb attack, during the pandemic we feared the possibility that each person we interacted with, even if they were our own spouses, children, and parents, held the possibility of infecting us with the dreaded coronavirus, or of us infecting them. This was devastating, since during a time of disaster our anxiety and stress levels are at their peak, and it is at this time that we are most in need of each other for comfort and solace. The pandemic, however, ripped us apart from each other. For most, if not all of us, this was a harrowing and novel experience. We were compelled by the sheer human instinct to cope with our isolation to find creative ways of continuing to interact with each other at a distance.

There were countless examples of ordinary people at community levels reaching out to each other. What was most heartening and inspiring was the incredibly creative ways in which communities spontaneously emerged to take care of the food, health, and other basic needs of the elderly and the vulnerable within their midst. Local community soup kitchens and food gardens began mushrooming all over, and some people could literally get fresh vegetables and food from their streets.

Moreover, we became aware and conscious of the critical role of our essential workers





We need to acknowledge the vital roles that all essential workers play in our lives and to pledge and promise to never again take them for granted.

in keeping us alive, healthy, and functioning. Healthcare workers risked their lives to save the lives of others. There were many community general practitioners (GPs), hospital staff, doctors, and nurses who succumbed to the virus as a result of caring for others. We also became much more appreciative of the important service that teachers were performing in educating our children, channeling our children's energies into productive activities, and in many cases, providing child-care. But most of all, we were made aware of our utter dependence on supermarket workers who had to come to work in order to keep our grocery stores open for us to buy our food. While we were sheltering in place, trash collectors were on the streets, keeping our neighborhoods clean and hygienic. Unlike many of us, these essential workers were not allowed to stay at home, but had to risk their lives

to keep the basic necessities of life functioning.

We need to acknowledge the vital roles that all essential workers play in our lives and to pledge and promise to never again take them for granted. In this regard,

we need to demand more compassionate employment conditions, especially for our so-called blue-collar workers. In a post Covid world, we cannot afford to retreat back into our selfish laagers. Instead, we need to embrace the lessons learnt during this time of tribulations and distress. We must become more "otherish." We need to continue to build on the community networks we have established and take these and the many wonderful and creative ways in which we created community under the restrictive Covid-19 protocols forward into the future.

PERSONAL TRAUMA OVERCOMING LOSS AND GRIEF

The third and final level of trauma arising from the pandemic that I would like to

acknowledge is located at the personal level—and is difficult to express in words. All of us have experienced the personal loss of a loved one, friend, or colleague. Under pandemic conditions, our burial and grieving rituals have had to be curtailed, adding to the trauma of the loss. As we enter a post-Covid world with cautious optimism, let us celebrate the triumph of the human spirit against all odds. In finding the strength and courage to carry on after the loss of a loved one, in appreciating the simplicity and beauty of having one another, and in valuing our precious time, we nurture hope for a more compassionate world.

HOPE FOR GREATER FLOURISHING

From the deeply personal to the global, we have witnessed inspiring examples of “catastrophe compassion” during the coronavirus pandemic. The critical question now is how we can sustain this impetus towards compassion in the future. This,

indeed, is the challenge of our times. I am confident that we will be able to turn some of these incredible outpourings of compassion and solidarity into opportunities for growth and transformation, and that, God-willing, we will be able to fashion a more compassionate, caring, and just post Covid-19 world. ❧❧

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NOOSHIN JAVADI

A Glimmer of Hope

Horizontality in the
Leadership and Art of
Woman, Life, Freedom

A reflection inspired by the Mozaik Philanthropy
WOMAN. LIFE. FREEDOM. virtual exhibition



"The Cage" by Avin Abbasi. Photography, 2022.

"WOMAN, LIFE, FREEDOM" EXHIBIT / MOZAIK PHILANTHROPY

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I vividly remember the streets of Iran, woven with threads of beautiful traditions and burdened by the iron grip of the government. Streets hold memories that are entwined into the fabric of my being, sweet and bitter. They bear witness not only to my footsteps, but to my dreams, desires, and yearning for a life that always seemed just beyond my grasp.

As a child, I navigated my hometown streets in joy, which soon turned into silence—a silent observer of a world that insisted on dictating my worth and defining my role under the norm of religion. Scrolls of rules from centuries past—written by men—that dictated my gender, clothing choices, and societal role, robbed me of the freedom to sing loudly, to dance in public, and to feel the wind in my hair.



"Change Is Coming" by Leigh Brooklyn.

Stencil vector art/digital illustration
for street art, 2022.

"WOMAN, LIFE, FREEDOM" EXHIBIT / MOZAIK PHILANTHROPY

The weight of the mandatory hijab draped over me, suffocating my hair, my body, and my spirit. With each passing day, my yearning to walk those very streets unrestricted and liberated intensified. I craved the gentle touch of the wind in my hair and the warm embrace of the sun on my uncovered skin, free from the chains of judgment and disapproval from my beloved family and society.

In seeking those simple joys of life, I longed to be a boy, to inherit the privileges and liberties that were bestowed upon them so effortlessly. I yearned to sing unabashedly with a voice that echoed through the streets, to express my opinions without

hesitation, and simply to exist as myself, untouched by the heavy hand of government oppression and the family traditions that were not sweet anymore. Every single morning of my life when I had to wear a hijab, and every single time that I was arrested by morality police for wearing an "improper" hijab, forged me into a resilient teenager filled with a rebellious spirit.

My last memories of Iran form a vivid canvas in my mind, with hues of hope and determination. A protest in front of Tehran University. Heart pounding in my chest, I stood among other, mostly student, protesters, vulnerable in front of row upon row of riot guards. An hour later, I found myself running with women and men alike, seeking refuge from the advancing riot guards. Beside me were women with hijabs, defying the stereotypes and joining the chorus of voices. In that moment, I witnessed the unity, the voices coming together demanding change, demanding freedom. At that moment, I felt a spark of hope ignite within me, a belief that maybe, just maybe, the world I yearned for was within reach. We heard bullets firing into the crowd—one, then another—and the sweet scent of hope was soon overpowered by the smell of tear gas and the deaths of hundreds of students and protestors.

Sadly, the hope that once burned fiercely within me was squelched after the crack-down on the protesters in 2009. The

government's brutal suppression extinguished the flicker of optimism, leaving behind a lingering sense of hopelessness. But it was also in that protest, in front of Tehran University, that the seeds of rebellion were sown deep within me.

In 2022, after over a decade of stifled voices, the tragic killing of Jina Amini by the morality police for her "improper" hijab ignited a powerful uprising. Jina, a Kurdish girl, became a catalyst, inspiring the marginalized Kurdish community in Iran to spearhead a protest movement under the resounding slogan of "Woman, Life, Freedom." They sparked a resistance that spread throughout the nation, drawing women, queers, and other marginalized groups from all corners of the country into the uprising.

The common thread that unites the rest of the women in Iran with the Kurds is their shared experience of being relegated to second-class citizenship. The struggle for equality and justice unites these groups as they advocate for their rights amidst the complexities of challenging, deeply entrenched patriarchal structures.

This uprising, rooted in Kurdistan and led by marginalized individuals, marks a distinct departure from previous movements in Iran. It bears the name "Zen Zian Azadi," meaning "Woman, Life, Freedom," drawing inspiration from both the feminist



"Hope" by Avin Abbasi. Photography, 2022.
"WOMAN, LIFE, FREEDOM" EXHIBIT / MOZAIK PHILANTHROPY

struggle and the Kurdish freedom movement. The powerful words of Öcalan resonate deeply: "A country can't be free unless the women are free."

What captivates me the most is the embodiment of resistance, transforming the body into a battleground where norms are challenged. Dancing in the streets becomes a powerful act of defiance, a protest against a society that denies women their basic freedoms. Women cast aside their hijabs, symbolically liberating themselves from the chains imposed upon them. Some even go a step further, cutting their hair as a powerful act of protest against the regime's policies.



"Untitled" by Baset Mahmoodi. Photography, 2022.
"WOMAN, LIFE, FREEDOM" EXHIBIT / MOZAIK PHILANTHROPY

In a society where dissent is silenced by state-controlled media, street art and social media emerged as beacons of resistance.

Before delving into the significance of art within this uprising, it is crucial to acknowledge two fundamental aspects that have shaped the nature and role of the art. First, the leadership in this movement is dispersed, not reliant on a single figure. It originates from the margins, where the oppressed gather strength and solidarity. Within the uprising, a remarkable form of leadership emerges—horizontal leadership—transcending conventional hierarchies and nurturing a collective spirit that empowers individuals to forge a path of change together. This inclusive approach

fosters unity, collaboration, and a shared sense of responsibility, propelling the movement toward freedom and social transformation.

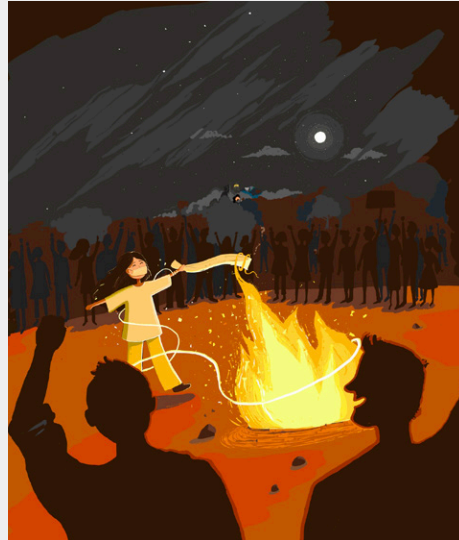
Second, a shift in the standard perspective on Iranian women is imperative. These women in the streets are not the oppressed figures often depicted by the world and media. It is crucial to see beyond the narrow lens through which they are often portrayed. They are not mere victims but fierce warriors, navigating a complex landscape with courage and resilience. The Western media and academia must recognize their strength and resist oversimplifying them based on the hijab, avoiding perpetuating stereotypes that limit their identities and overlook their complexity.

By acknowledging these factors, we lay the foundation for understanding the role and significance of art within this extraordinary, indigenous-led, feminist uprising. As I explore the role of repetition in the art of uprising and its connection to horizontal leadership, I will focus on two aspects that have deeply resonated with me: the body as the battleground and the horizontal web of art-making.

BODY AS A BATTLEGROUND

In the face of bullets, arrests, and torture, the streets transformed into an alternative canvas for the message of the uprising. In a society suffocated by oppression, where archaic rules dictate every aspect of women's bodies, dance emerged as a potent form of resistance.

It all began with a courageous girl, boldly moving and spinning with unwavering determination. As she danced, she symbolically set her hijab scarf on fire. Undoubtedly, many others had done the same, but it was the viral video of this girl's act that became a catalyst. This powerful gesture ignited a revolutionary wave as people throughout the country joined in, dancing and following the score of liberation. Their bodies became the embodiment of resistance, every step in the dance a language of defiance. They shattered the



"Baraye" by Shabnam Adiban.

Digital art/animation still, 2022.

"WOMAN, LIFE, FREEDOM" EXHIBIT / MOZAIK PHILANTHROPY

stereotypes that portrayed them as passive and powerless, revealing the true strength that resided within them and their bodies.

Dancing and burning scarves in the fire became a symbolic act, repeated again and again, marking the end of oppression and igniting the flames of liberation. With each instance, the symbolism gained momentum and resonance. In the very streets where men enforced the wearing of scarves, the act of burning them served as a powerful reminder of their defiance.

Dance also possesses a contradictory nature within societal traditions. While Shia Islam has a strong tradition of mourning and sadness as a form of spiritual



"A Mirror in Front of You" by Mansooreh Bagharaee. Mirror embroidery and embroidery with natural hairs, 2023.



"Jin, Jiyan, Azadi" by Pedram Baldari. Digital art, 2022.

practice, the act of dance in this context stands in stark opposition. Dance becomes a symbol of joy, celebration, and resistance, challenging the narrative of sorrow and embracing the power of happiness.

Additionally, dance is a celebration of diversity. In a country where approximately 51 to 65 percent of the population are Fars, leaving almost half of the population marginalized, ethnic groups such as Kurds, Baloch, Gilaks, Turks, and Turkmen each bring their unique dances, representing their distinct identities and cultural heritage. Despite cultural

assimilation and language restrictions, dance persists as a resilient expression of resistance and a celebration of diversity within Iranian society. **"Baraye"** (previous page), an animation by Shabnam Adiban, captures a poignant moment of Kurdish dance.

HORIZONTAL WEB OF ART-MAKING

During the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, I personally witnessed a remarkable shift in the art emerging from Iranian

society within and outside of Iran, as non-academic and amateur artists' works began to circulate widely on social media. It was a transformative moment that shattered the traditional hierarchy of art. It began with one person's artistic response to a powerful photo on social media. Soon, others were compelled to join in, each adding their own unique twist and perspective to the evolving artistic expression, and all reacting to the same photo—the picture of a woman whose back was pock-marked with bullet holes.

In **"A Mirror in Front of You"** by Mansooreh Bagharaee (previous page, left), the artist ingeniously utilized embroidery, using the hair of protesters to form the shape of the girl's body, while skillfully transforming the bullets into round Baloch-style mirror embroideries, creating a fusion of traditional feminine craftsmanship in service of resistance.

In **"Jin, Jiyan, Azadi"** by Pedram Baldari (previous page, right), the artist followed a similar approach, integrating the original image while incorporating alphabetical representations of the bullets. Through skillful calligraphy, the bullets formed the slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom" in Kurdish. This choice of language added an additional layer of meaning and resonance to the artwork. The artwork's powerful symbolism captivated viewers, evoking a profound sense of empowerment and resistance.



"The Shahnameh of the Iranian Revolution (Razor Growth from the Wound)" by Meysam Azarad.

Digital poster/graphic design, 2022.

"WOMAN, LIFE, FREEDOM" EXHIBIT / MOZAIK PHILANTHROPY

Each artist approached the creation of their artwork with a distinct choice of material, each intertwined with their unique history. In the first example, the female artist chose hair as her medium. By incorporating the hair of protesters, she not only added depth to the artwork, but it also carried profound symbolism about the ownership of the hair. Mansooreh Bagharaee captured the essence: "In my country, women's hair carries tremendous political weight. Once severed and repurposed into wigs or brushes, it loses its inherent controversy. It seems that freedom is only granted in

death, as the living are confined by societal constraints.”

In the second image, the Kurdish artist took a different approach, using the scars left by the bullet as the material for their artwork. This choice of material holds deep significance for the Kurdish people, as it reflects their enduring struggle and the wounds inflicted upon them throughout the history of the Kurdistan war in Iran. By incorporating these bullet scars, the artist not only visually represents their physical impact, but also symbolizes the resistance and resilience of the Kurdish people in

the face of adversity. The artwork serves as a reminder of their ongoing fight for freedom and justice.

These two examples, among so many others, highlight the collaborative nature of the movement, as numerous anonymous protesters created variations of the same image, which artists eagerly embraced and interpreted in diverse ways. The images “**The Shahnameh of the Iranian Revolution (Razor Growth From The Wound)**” on the previous page and “**People,**” below, offer distinct artistic interpretations of the same type of photo,



From “People” by Ghazale Bahraie. Triptych Drawing/Ink on Board, 2022.

“WOMAN, LIFE, FREEDOM” EXHIBIT / MOZAIK PHILANTHROPY

each adding significant meaning and depth to the visual narrative.

This dispersed creative process fostered a sense of collaboration and challenged the art scene. Simultaneously, amidst the enthusiasm of the uprising, the crowd in Iran found a symbolic way to assert their ownership of the art of resistance. They took red paint, symbolizing blood and sacrifice, and marked the doors of prominent galleries that had opened their doors during the months of protest. This act was not necessarily an endorsement or disapproval of the galleries, but rather a powerful statement that separated the uprising's art from institutional control and asserted the people's claim over their own narrative. (It is important to note that my role is that of a witness, neither approving nor disapproving of these acts, but recognizing their significance in reshaping the art landscape).

Repetition in this horizontal web of art-making played a vital role in the uprising, reinforcing the significance of the image and its message. With each iteration,

the impact grew stronger, reaching a wider audience and amplifying the voices of those fighting for change. This organic and collaborative process demonstrated the power of art to inspire and unite. As more individuals chimed in, the artwork multiplied and diversified, capturing the collective spirit of the movement.

ART AND HOPE

In the landscape of protest and art, a network of horizontal leadership emerged, interlacing voices and aspirations into a tapestry of collective action. And at its core, hope served as a guide. As Sahar Zand, the journalist and filmmaker expressed, "The authoritarian regime of Iran is clearly desperate to kill any and all hope. Because they know as long as we stay hopeless, we will resign to their oppression and injustice. But as history has shown over and over again, the light of hope emerges from the depth of the darkness." May our streets bear new memories, as those on the margins tread a path to freedom by the light of hope. [V&V](#)



Nooshin Javadi is an assistant professor of sculpture at the University of Notre Dame. Her work has been exhibited at Walker Art Museum and Museum Fur Kunst among others. She is the recipient of several awards including the Jerome Emerging Artist Fellowship and the Target Studio for Creative Collaboration Fellowship at the Weisman Art Museum.

ADAM ZAGAJEWSKI

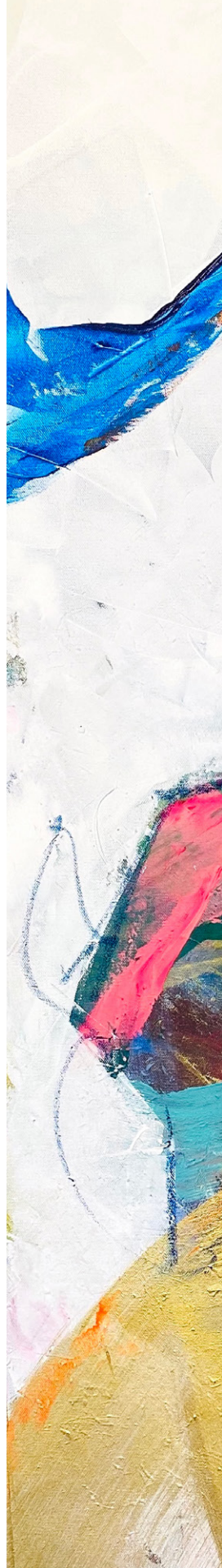
TRANSLATED BY CLARE CAVANAGH

Try to Praise the Mutilated World

Try to praise the mutilated world.
Remember June's long days,
and wild strawberries, drops of rosé wine.
The nettles that methodically overgrow
the abandoned homesteads of exiles.
You must praise the mutilated world.
You watched the stylish yachts and ships;
one of them had a long trip ahead of it,
while salty oblivion awaited others.
You've seen the refugees going nowhere,
you've heard the executioners sing joyfully.
You should praise the mutilated world.
Remember the moments when we were together
in a white room and the curtain fluttered.
Return in thought to the concert where music flared.
You gathered acorns in the park in autumn
and leaves eddied over the earth's scars.
Praise the mutilated world
and the gray feather a thrush lost,
and the gentle light that strays and vanishes
and returns.


Adam Zagajewski, "Try to Praise the Mutilated World" from *Without End: New and Selected Poems*. Copyright © 2002 by Adam Zagajewski. Used by permission of Farrar, Straus & Giroux, LLC, us.macmillan.com/fsg. All rights reserved.

ARTWORK BY DIONNE WOODS









ARTWORK BY JED DORSEY

INTERLUDE

Cultural Devastation & Illumination

“When I looked at the example of Plenty Coups, I thought, this is a person who is standing up and facing a devastation, acknowledging the devastation, and simply refusing to give into despair. And that’s what made the hope radical, because he could no longer say which thing it would be.”

JONATHAN LEAR

INTERVIEW

Radical Hope Retrospective

*An Interview with
Jonathan Lear*



Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation by Jonathan Lear was first published by Harvard University Press in 2006. Lear, a professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago, is also a trained psychoanalyst. In the years since he wrote *Radical Hope*, he has maintained and expanded his relationship with members of the Crow tribe, and has continued to explore the themes of the book. His most recent book, *Imagining the End: Mourning and the Ethical Life* (Harvard University Press, 2022), picks up some of these threads. We sat down with Lear to talk about radical hope, the philosophical imagination, and the Crow.







New to *Radical Hope*? We recommend starting with Charles Taylor's review of the book from 2007 in the *New York Review of Books*, which provides an overview and defines terms, such as "counting coups." More fundamentally, *Radical Hope* is about what happens when a culture dies, when the roles, values, symbols, and ways of being and organizing daily life are lost forever. Radical hope in this instance is a rare courage and creativity to see beyond despair and imagine an alternative mode of flourishing. "As a story of courage and moral imagination, it is very powerful and moving. But it also offers the kind of insights that would-be builders of 'new world order' desperately need." (Taylor 2007)

Suzanne Shanahan: Thank you for joining us today. I wanted to start by sharing a little background about why I have been

captivated by the notion of *Radical Hope* and have taught it in my first-year student seminar since it was published.

My work is on displacement and refugees, and I work with refugees in the Middle East and East Africa, but I also do a lot of work on the process of resettlement into the United States. The first time I was teaching a service-learning course called Refugees, Rights and Resettlement, the class sponsored a Bhutanese refugee family. This was a 30-year-old single mother of four children, ages 15 and younger, all of whom had never been in formal schooling and were illiterate and enumerate. And I remember clearly this one moment when they had arrived in the United States without even a change of clothing, and so through a translator I had said, "we're going to go shopping," and I brought them to Target. When

we arrived in the Target parking lot, they got out of the car, and the oldest daughter and the mother fell to their knees and wept because they had no idea what this thing was. They had a vision in their mind of what shopping was, and it was an outdoor experience. It was very communal. It was a place of joy and interaction and human connection, and the Target parking lot is a lot of things, but not that.

And so this notion of cultural devastation and of how to reimagine one's life has been sort of a recurrent theme, both in my work with folks who are still displaced in refugee camps, but also those coming to the United States. It has been fascinating to me over these many years the extent to which this is the one text that enables students to understand. And so, *Radical Hope* has had such a profound impact on so many of my students over the years, that this opportunity to talk with you about it is a fantastic treat.

Jonathan Lear: Thank you. It's lovely to meet you. When I write, I hope that my emerging book will find its readers, but I do not know who they will be. It's always a special treat for me to meet such a reader.

SS: I wonder if we could start by talking a little bit about the origins and inspirations for *Radical Hope*.

JL: When I was a young professor at Yale in the late-80s there was a lunchtime lecture



at the Humanities Institute, and another young faculty member, William Cronon, was giving a talk. He quoted Plenty Coups. He used that phrase, "When the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground, and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened." As soon as I heard that I felt struck by it. It really upset me. And then the lunch was over and I forgot about it.

About 10 or 15 years passed. I had left Yale and come to the University of Chicago. I would take walks along the lake pretty much every day. One day when I was walking, those words of Plenty Coups came back into my mind, it felt like from nowhere.

I'm also a trained psychoanalyst, so when things come back into my mind, I tend to

pay attention. I thought, “Something’s happened here,” but I didn’t know what it was. I felt this phrase matters to me, and I’m going to find out about it.

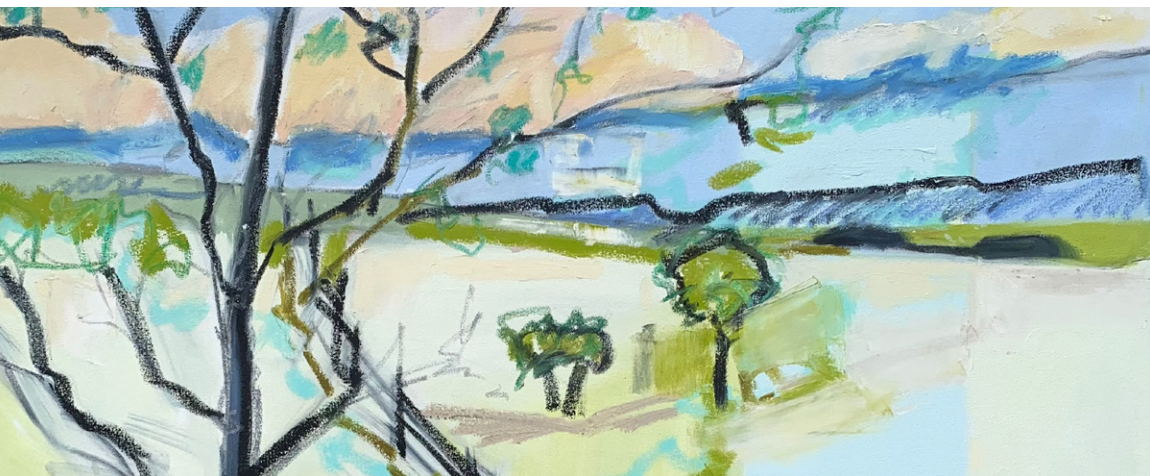
I’ve taken it to be part of my job is to figure out what philosophy is and what it should be. The people who have influenced me over the years are Socrates and Aristotle and Kierkegaard and—he’s not a philosopher—Freud. They have a lot of differences, but they share a Socratic impulse.

Socrates was out on the street. He was open to meeting people and he was ready to see philosophy emerge in everyday issues. His interlocutor would be walking the other way on the street. Euthyphro was about to sue his father for impiety, and Socrates says “well, what is impiety?”, and philosophy begins. Socrates was ready to

see and hear how philosophy could open up in an everyday moment. That has been very important to me.

In a different way, Aristotle, was confident that philosophy emerges from the details of life. He spent time looking at trees and mollusks, listening to birds, fish and scallops. And, again in different ways, with Kierkegaard and Freud: they committed themselves to the idea that a universe of meaning could open up from the details of human lives.

And so this phrase from Plenty Coups coming to me felt like what Kierkegaard called a confrontation. I could either ignore it (and go on with daily life) or I could try to face it and see what it might come to mean. But there was no getting around *that* choice. So, I got started.



SS: I wonder if that psychoanalytic training and perspective and the attempt to bring that together with philosophy is part of the reason why these books are so accessible. I would say philosophy animates both *Radical Hope* and *Imagining the End*, but there's something about the fundamental nature of the human condition that it is coming from outside philosophy and enables one to generalize these books and apply them to a range of situations and cases.

So, once you decided to let Plenty Coups confront you, what did you do next?

JL: There's a great bookstore here in Chicago, the Seminary Co-op. They had a classic biography of Plenty Coups by Frank Linderman. When I read it, I had two thoughts: one is that Plenty Coups wanted to open a conversation and he didn't know who his readers would be, and two, I wondered what it would mean to honor him by entering and continuing the conversation.

Again, I'm a philosopher. I honor other disciplines, and I've learned so much from historians and anthropologists, but I don't want to be a historian or an anthropologist. So, what I thought I would do as a distinctively philosophical exercise would be to honor Plenty Coups by carrying out a rigorous imaginative exercise with the question, "What might he have meant if



he was trying to say something true?" I wanted to respect him by taking him to be saying something true and important, but that I did not yet understand. That was how it got started.

SS: I like how you're describing the intellectual roots of this and the Socratic approach to the relevance of philosophy in the world; and while not an anthropologist, you describe this as a work of philosophical anthropology. I wonder, as a speculative conversation with Plenty Coups, what guided your intellectual process, what were the materials, and how did you navigate the absence of the central character?



JL: I feel the words “philosophical anthropology” are completely earnest, but Kierkegaard says just because it’s earnest doesn’t mean it isn’t also ironic. And so, there’s a certain kind of irony there, but a serious form of irony.

Firstly, I’ll say I tried to be constrained by all the facts as I know them. I tried to be a serious student. I read voraciously and spent a lot of time with Crow friends. But what I tried to do in the essay was work out a rigorous, but an imaginative exercise. There’s no claim about getting to the truth about what he *really* meant. I don’t know what he really meant, but I’m not trying to do that. I’m trying to figure out what might he have meant if he were trying to witness a truth. And that’s a philosophical exercise.

But the conversation is also with anyone who wants to be a reader and enter into a conversation with me—especially the Crow people I met who are also very concerned about what he might have meant. What is his meaning for their present and future? How are they to understand their past?

SS: How did the Crow who you met influence you?

JL: When I started, I flew up to the reservation, which is in southeast Montana. I really didn’t want to impose on anybody, but I looked online, and there was a tribal college and a member of the faculty who was teaching Crow history and Crow culture to the Crow people themselves. I wrote to him and said, “I really don’t want to impose, but I’m interested in Plenty Coups and what he was saying, and might we meet?”

We met for breakfast, and after an hour I planned to say thank you so much and goodbye, but he asked what I was going to do with the rest of the day. I told him I planned to drive about 70 miles over to Plenty Coups’ home and take a look. And he said, “Well, I’ll come too.” We ended up spending the whole day together, and that began a friendship that exists to this day.

I just saw him a few weeks ago. The pandemic was a big hiatus, but until then I had been going up to the reservation 2 or 3 times a year and a lot of my Crow friends

have come to Chicago. That's a big part of the story about what has happened since the book was published.

SS: In what ways has the concept of radical hope that you explored in the book and the conversation with Plenty Coups developed through these friendships?

JL: When the book first was published, I got invited to the Crow Reservation by the faculty of Little Bighorn College, and I didn't know how that would go. Would they hate the book? Would they like the book? The room was absolutely packed with faculty and students and tribal elders. I was introduced and I had just begun—I really didn't get 30 seconds into my talk—when one of the tribal elders sitting in the front raised his hand and I called on him and he said, “Who are your people?”

I learned much later, you introduce yourself in this culture by explaining where you are from and who your people are. But at the time nobody had ever asked me that question. It's not a question I had thought about. But on my feet I said, “I think the best answer to your question is that I'm Jewish.” And then it just came into my mind and I said, “I think that around the very same time your ancestors were moving on to this reservation, my ancestors were getting out of Europe as fast as they could. They were escaping Europe.” At that point another tribal elder raised his

hand and asked, “Why do you Jews never fight among each other, while we Crow are always fighting against each other?” Obviously, that is not how it seemed to me! I just let the conversation go where it would. It turned out what they really wanted to know about was how the Jewish people have survived. How could it be that we're not an extinct tribe? They wanted practical advice. They don't know whether they're going to be here in 50 years, and so they really wanted to talk about the question, “How does a tribe survive?” And that's what we talked about.

In almost 20 years of doing this, I've had a lot of people come visit me in Chicago over the years, and a lot of them want to go to synagogue. So the conversation is ongoing. Plenty Coups is the absent person, around which all these friendships have formed, but the focus in these relationships is really on going forward, and not on looking back.

SS: And this has led to other collaborations, such as the Apsáalooke Women and Warriors project. [Apsáalooke is another name for the Crow tribe].

JL: Yes. The President of the University of Chicago asked me if I would run a new kind of interdisciplinary institute at the University called the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society, and I did that as sort of citizenly service to the University for eight years. When I got started, we





When I looked at the example of Plenty Coups, I thought, this is a person who is standing up and facing a devastation, acknowledging the devastation, and simply refusing to give into despair. And that's what made the hope radical, because he could no longer say which thing it would be.

funded a project called the Open Fields Project, which included anthropologists on the faculty here along with native peoples and curatorial staff at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. The aim was to look into what the future of a museum holding indigenous people's artifacts should be. We at the Neubauer started bringing Crow people into Chicago to meet with people at the Field Museum, along with other Native Americans to talk about these very big issues. As one might expect, there were a lot of questions and a fair amount of tension, but it was overall a creative process.

And then there was an accidental cancellation of one of the big shows they had been planning. It was a lucky moment. I said to one of the head curators that the Crow people could put on an exhibition. We already had Nina Sanders, who is Crow, working with us and she is an outstanding

curator. The Field Museum decided to take the leap. Many Crow people contributed and the Field Museum staff worked so hard. The outcome was the *Apsáalooke Women and Warriors* exhibition, the first exhibition in the Field Museum's history in which the curator was

Crow. And the theme of the exhibition was not just a retrospective and nostalgic look at the "Indian" past, but it included the art and creations of many contemporary Crow artisans and artists. It was forward looking. As one of my dearest Crow friends said to me, "This is the first time we have got to tell our story to others."

SS: What I like about the exhibit is how it continues your participation in that conversation, but also the forward-looking nature. How conceptually did you get from "And then nothing happened" to this notion of radical hope, which is forward-looking when so much is unknown, but also that has an absence of despair?

JL: When I looked at the example of Plenty Coups, I thought, this is a person who is standing up and facing a devastation, acknowledging the devastation, and simply refusing to give into despair. And that's

what made the hope radical, because he could no longer say which thing it would be.


At the time of the *Apsáalooke Women and Warriors* exhibition, we had 70 Crow people come to Chicago as our guests for a week and there was a Crow celebration. We had a parade on the campus of the University of Chicago. It was the most beautiful parade in the history of the universe as far as I'm concerned. But at the end there was a Crow ceremony—on the lawn of the Neubauer Collegium, and one of the tribal leaders said to the curator, Nina Sanders, “You have counted coups today.” And she had! I had watched her fight for a year, struggling about how to design the exhibition, how to show it, who gets to do what – it was a lot of earnest struggle. It wasn't all fun. And so the parade was not just a celebratory parade; for the Crow participants, it had a historical meaning of coming in and taking control of how things are going to go now.

Plenty Coups could never have imagined that this is the fate of what counting coups would become—what Nina Sander's accomplishments mean now. If he had lived until this time, it would be clear

to him. But back in that warrior culture he was exiting, there is no way to think about what Nina accomplished as counting coups. It took 100 years, but I could see before my eyes the concept being brought back to a new life. She is a warrior, and she did count coups.

I felt this was exactly what I was trying to understand. I couldn't understand it ahead of time, but it's what the world has taught me. But what makes me so happy is that I was part of a conversation that kept going, and others took it over, and the Crow took it back, and that's exactly what should happen.

SS: That's extraordinary.

JL: Thank you. I also realize we would not be having this conversation if I had not written the book, and I am grateful for this. For me, success is finding a reader who can use her own imagination to think “I'm teaching about refugees from Africa. This book works for me and it will work for my students.” That's great. That's what I like. For me, that is what it looks like for things to work. 



Jonathan Lear is the John U. Nef Distinguished Service Professor at the Committee on Social Thought and in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Chicago. He is the author of *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* and *Imagining the End: Mourning and Ethical Life*.

A NEW VIEW

Incarceration seems hopeless by design. Even beyond the realities and limitations inherent in the nature of a prison sentence, the environment itself can feel crafted for despair.

Visiting family members of the incarcerated know well the shades of gray and right angles that run from the concrete walls to the electronic body scanners to the tile floor. Here in Indiana, this gray might even feel like an extension of the colorless winter skies and barren landscapes that surround the facility for many months of the year.

This spring, however, the persistence of hope was manifest. As visitors entered the Westville Correctional Facility, they were scanned and patted down among a panoply of color that transformed the security gate into an art gallery. Nearly 100 images were displayed in quilt-like fashion—a tapestry of reds and blues, oranges and greens, water and trees and birds—inviting onlookers not only to attend to beauty, but also to consider the artists who created the pieces deep within the walled facility.

The artists were students enrolled in Introduction to Watercolor through the Moreau College Initiative (MCI), an AA and BA degree program for incarcerated people run by Holy Cross College in partnership with the University of Notre Dame. Rev. Martin Lam Nguyen,





CORROR JACKSON

C.S.C., who has taught through MCI for six years, says he does not teach his students how to paint; he teaches them how to see. In turn, his students, through their painting, challenge perceptions and invite others to take a deeper look.

The artwork in this essay is but a sample of the many images that make up the exhibit, with a piece here from each student in Nguyen's class. We invite you to look at the paintings in front of you and consider the artists behind them.



Clarence Sandifer



Mitchel Jacob



Vincente Velez



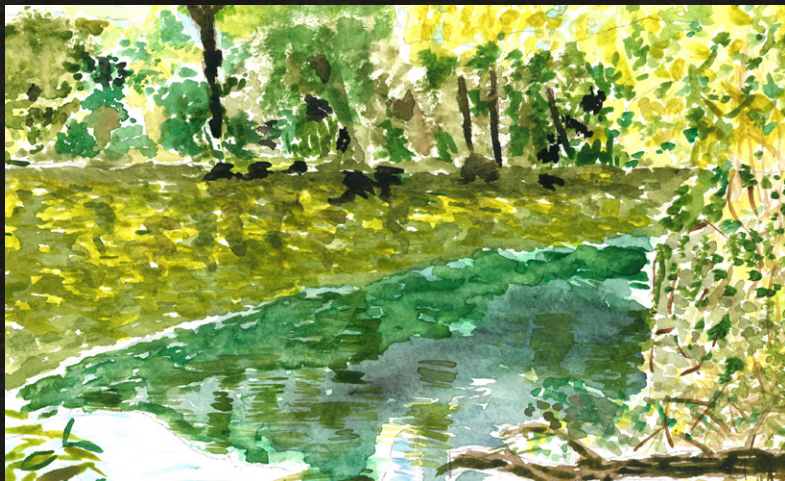
Donald M. Earl



Steven Foernzler



Quinton Jones



Barry Gaitlin



C. Shockome



Gary McCain



Tim Dennison



Conor Jackson



C. Shockome



Jarrell King



Michael Coupland





PART II

Hope as a Vocation

“Our duty is to be hopeful enough to drive creativity, commitment, and action toward values-driven choices.”

MARY C. GENTILE



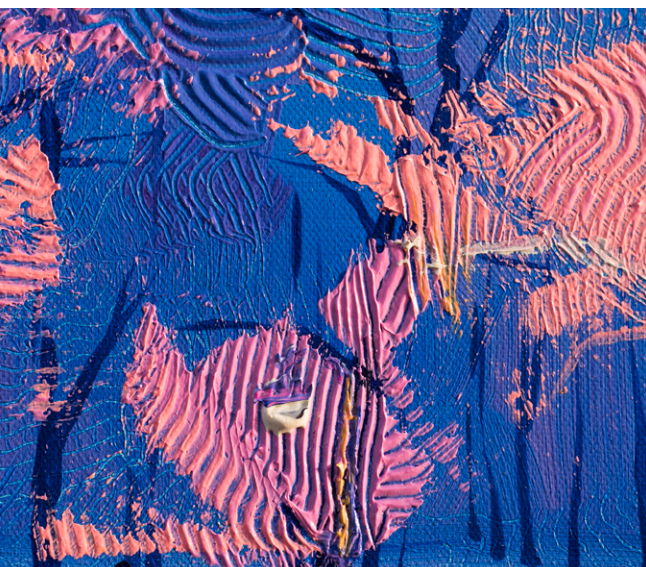
VICTOR M. MONTORI

Care to Hope



about a decade ago, a group of us imagined a healthcare system focused on care. This system would allow clinicians and patients to co-create, within relationships of trust and unhurried conversations, evidence-based treatment plans that could improve each patient's situation. What was unusual for those involved in that moment was our decision to not just imagine that future, but to begin the long and arduous process of making that future a reality. What this group harnessed when we chose to go after this utopia, that is hope.

At a workshop, a student asked the filmmaker Fernando Birri what utopias were for. Utopias, he replied, are in the horizon. If I take 10 steps toward the horizon, the horizon will take 10 steps back. If I take 20 steps forward, the utopia will be 20 steps further away. I know very well that I will never



ever reach her, he continued. So, what are utopias for, you ask? Well, for that. Utopias are for walking.¹

Hope is born with the purposeful choice of taking the first step toward the horizon. Hope grows as feet stride. Hope matures in the face of the horizon's retreat. Hope is wishful walking.

Hope that things will be better in the future rests on actions taken today. To care for the seedlings, the gardener must hope for a lovely flower or a juicy fruit; her care of the seedlings, in turn, will sustain that hope. The seeds, the dirt, the light, the water, and all that care still offer no guarantee of success. And yet, hope springs from the time, energy, and attention

invested in tending to those seeds, from the ongoing care to optimize the conditions for their growth.

Hope and care are inextricably connected. A member of the Iroquois nation could leave their home and travel far away, knowing that, upon encountering a group from another nation, they would be welcomed as visitors and receive food and shelter. That expectation of care mitigated the traveler's risk and fueled hope in completing the journey.

When people facing disease and disappointment approach healthcare, they expect care. The patients I am privileged to meet often have diabetes and other ongoing conditions. They have no foreseeable path to a cure; they will instead live with their conditions and their complications. Tending to these conditions is a continuous and never-ending slog for them and their families. To access healthcare, patients and caregivers must navigate systems with features that bely the designer's indifference to their needs, or their incompetence in meeting those needs, or their inability to overcome the competing financial goals and objectives of the system. Expert advice, medications, and technologies may improve the patient's situation, but the work to access and use this care often exceeds the capacity patients and caregivers can mobilize for this purpose. Were they to receive care, it will not just be

burdensome but also generic—not for you, but merely for people like you.

This will be worse for those living in conditions of socioeconomic deprivation. These patients will accumulate more chronic conditions starting at an earlier age and at a faster rate than their wealthier peers. They will have fewer resources to mobilize for self-care and to access healthcare; their efforts consumed instead in the hard work of surviving. The healthcare they receive is often scarce, unaffordable, and substandard. In many cases, they are greeted with the cold blade of cruel indifference where the wounded traveler would have expected the warm embrace of the brother and sister from a caring nation. Sick, exhausted, uncared for, their feet drag as their own horizon runs away from them. Despair.

Thus, like fortune and opportunity, hope is also unequally distributed. This results in pessimism for most -- there is nothing you can do about your situation is the message that many receive. The social media doomscroll reinforces this anxious sense that the world is in a bad way and can only worsen. Why not consume instead the always-on-sale wares of opportunistic politicians and corporations: the optimism of their brands, products, and promises? Optimism is opium for the people. Optimism invites people to work hard and consume harder while things get better on their own. It convinces people to wait in

their stuporous, obesogenic, lonely, and networked state for the arch of justice to bend in their direction. By normalizing inaction, optimism prevents people from mustering the motivation to walk, robs them of hope. Sedated by pessimistic anxiety or reality-free optimism, many stop walking, dying deaths of despair.

A healthcare that cannot cultivate care, that is cruel and overwhelms clinicians and patients, is in desperate need of fundamental reform. The possibility of a better healthcare system in the future emerges from people noticing this desperate situation and responding to it by choosing to work to change it. The possibility of better emerges from the action of people who choose to care. Because we live in complex





and interconnected worlds, these change makers cannot predict the full extent and effect of their actions. Perhaps it is naïve to expect a better tomorrow, but today's efforts may just create the possibility of one. Care engenders hope.

About 10 years ago, a group of us imagined a healthcare system capable of cultivating care. We imagined that utopia and chose to walk towards it. We announced that healthcare had become industrialized, carelessly processing people. That it had corrupted its mission, that it had stopped caring. That we had to work to turn away from industrial healthcare and toward our utopia—careful and kind care for all. As the industry celebrated its technological prowess and millions were invested in the sector, no effort, at scale, was in place to overcome its corruption, to turn away from industrialized healthcare. We decided to revolt.²

This decision catalyzed the formation of an organization comprised of patients and healthcare professionals from around the world, committed to action, to walking.³ These care activists recognized that a clinician cannot care for a patient that is only viewed as a diagnosis, a test result, or a medical history. Care has its own rhythm, a helpful dance that, when accelerated, becomes useless convulsion. These pathologies of care, fueled by efficiency and expediency, needed to be called out

for what they were for the revolution to follow. And so, in our own small ways, we started to do just that, naming and transforming the toxic elements of healthcare that ultimately got in the way of caring for patients.

Wherever they take place, these mini revolts seek to implement the proposals of our movement for care. There, care activists notice the problematic situation and choose to invent a response to it, one that promotes careful and kind care for all.

In inner city London, a small, disused, urban courtyard in the premises of a clinic was transformed into the “Listening Space,” a lush garden in which a community of people could gather, share their stories over a meal, and care for and about each other. Clinicians often walked through it with patients facing a difficult situation, having unhurried conversations about how to best move forward.

Online, a global community has gathered to have a monthly “Conversation for Kindness,” discovering and sharing ways to find and introduce kindness—starting, for example, with “what matters to you” rather than “what is the matter with you”—into health care.

Academics have written papers describing what healthcare leaders can do to bring about organizations and clinics able to

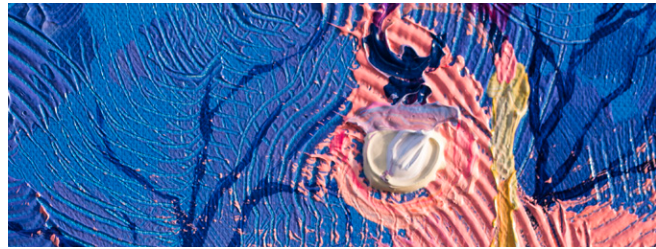
foster careful and kind care. An international collaboration published the “Making Care Fit Manifesto,” calling for patients and clinicians to work together to form individualized plans of care that minimally disrupt the lives of patients and their loved ones.

The work of care activists has started to influence policies for care across the world, including the Realistic Medicine program of patient-centered care in Scotland. Schools are beginning to teach the lessons we have learned to ensure that upcoming generations of healthcare professionals know that a healthcare capable of care is possible, feasible, and desirable. These mini revolts are hopeful steps toward a utopia of care.

As they gather on the road, care activists give each other courage, knowing full well that what they may see yonder may be a mirage, that failure remains the most likely outcome. And yet, that they must keep walking.



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Hope is wishful caring. Caring, choosing to respond to suffering and despair, creates hope for relief and healing.

In a bleak world riddled with invitations for indifference, hope emerges from the work of generous contrarians, who against all odds, reject the comforts of foolish optimism, and choose to care.

Care to hope. 

NOTES

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MICHAEL LAMB

How to Educate Hope

These days, it feels hard to have hope. From climate change, global conflict, and the lingering effects of a deadly pandemic to the persistence of political division, economic uncertainty, and various forms of injustice, there are significant reasons to feel pessimistic, and many Americans do. Polls report increased pessimism among Americans, especially among young people, who report higher levels of mental health challenges, job insecurity, and financial instability.¹

For university educators, these trends are especially concerning given the dangers of despair and the benefits of hope. Numerous studies, including many involving college students, show that those with higher levels of hope tend to express a greater sense of meaning in life, lower levels of anxiety and depression, more productivity, and increased academic achievement.² Hope is essential to flourishing.

For these reasons, Sian Beilock, President of Dartmouth College, has suggested that colleges and universities have “a role in cultivating hopefulness.”³ Contributors to this issue of *Virtues & Vocations* agree. As a scholar of hope who leads the Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest University, I want to explore what kind of hope we should cultivate and how we can educate it effectively within colleges and universities.



THE VIRTUE OF HOPE

Today, most of us consider hope to be a feeling or emotion, a desire for some future good that we believe to be possible to attain. Certainly, hope is a such feeling, one that often has positive effects. But as a feeling, hope is not always good or appropriate. We can, after all, hope for objects that are neither good for us nor possible to attain, and we can hope for genuine goods in ways that assume more certainty than is warranted. Moreover, as a mere feeling, hope is hardly stable or sustaining. Like other emotions, it can ebb and flow with the vicissitudes of fortune and circumstance. We need some way to stabilize, regulate, and guide our feelings of hope toward appropriate objects in the appropriate ways.

Here is where the virtue tradition can help. It includes a long history of conceptualizing hope as a *virtue*, a reliable and stable disposition of character that enables us to direct our desire for future goods toward appropriate objects in appropriate ways that lead to human flourishing.⁴

Understanding hope as a virtue offers four advantages for educating hope in higher education. First, developing the virtue of hope requires distinguishing appropriate objects of hope from inappropriate ones and even recognizing that the feeling of hope might not always be the appropriate

response. This is one way in which the virtue of hope differs from optimism and positive thinking, which tend to encourage a generalized positive attitude and confident expectation about all outcomes rather than a wise assessment of particular objects and the risks involved in pursuing them.

Second, and relatedly, the virtue tradition recognizes that virtues are accompanied by corresponding vices. The vices typically opposed to hope are *presumption*, in which one's hope is excessive or misplaced, and *despair*, in which one's hope is absent or insufficient. Developing the virtue of hope requires resisting temptations toward both presumption and despair.

Third, the virtue tradition emphasizes the "interconnection" of the virtues, the idea that the development and exercise of any one virtue relies on the support of other virtues. The virtue of hope, for example, relies on practical wisdom to discern hope's proper objects and the best means to achieving them, humility to recognize our limitations and chasten presumption, and gratitude to acknowledge others' support and resist despair. Educating the virtue of hope requires supporting the development of these and other virtues.

Fourth, the virtue tradition views virtues as acquired and dynamic rather than inherited and static. Since virtues are understood as *habits* or *dispositions* of character, they

must be developed and sustained over time through intentional practice. As a result, the virtue tradition includes pedagogical practices and strategies that can aid in educating the virtue of hope.

SEVEN STRATEGIES FOR EDUCATING HOPE

How can colleges and universities cultivate hope?

Over the last few years, colleagues from the Oxford Character Project and I have identified seven strategies for educating virtues of character based on research across multiple fields.⁵ At Oxford and Wake Forest, we have integrated these strategies in curricular and co-curricular contexts with undergraduate students as well as graduate and professional students. Empirical studies affirm that these strategies have been effective in developing virtues of character.⁶ Drawing on examples from “Commencing Character”—an undergraduate seminar that integrates these seven strategies with the study of virtue theory and contemporary commencement speeches—I want to illustrate how such strategies might help to cultivate the virtue of hope.

1. Habituation through Practice

To develop hope as a stable virtue of character, we must *habituate* it, much like a

skill, by practicing the right kind of hope over and over again until it becomes a settled habit. As Krista Tippett suggests, hope is like a “muscle” that strengthens the more we use it.⁷ As in weight training, its practice can stretch and strain us but, ultimately, can help us grow stronger.

One way to encourage students to habituate hope is ask them to practice it over several weeks. In “Commencing Character,” I ask students to choose a virtue they wish to strengthen and then to analyze its conceptual structure, develop a plan to cultivate it, and apply that plan over two weeks before reflecting on what they learned. Some students focus on hope, integrating practices that help them reflect concretely on their hopes and recognize when they are tempted toward presumption and despair. One self-proclaimed “pessimist” discussed how the process transformed her perspective and bolstered her agency. Even in the face of an unexpected setback, she realized that, even when she didn’t feel very hopeful, she could still “choose hope.”

2. Reflection on Personal Experience

The process of habituating hope benefits from a second strategy: reflection on personal experience. We cannot develop the virtue of hope merely by applying an abstract formula, listening to a lecture, or reading a book. We must learn, in part,





through experience—by reflecting on times when hope empowered us to achieve a difficult good or when presumption or despair prevented us from realizing our goals. Reflecting on experience can hone the virtue of practical wisdom, which is needed to determine how to hope in the right ways at the right times.

As educators, we can encourage reflection in various ways, whether through individual journaling or group discussion. In my class, I ask students to reflect individually on personal strategies that help them sustain hope in the face of difficulty and then share them on a pre-class discussion

board. This reflection not only primes a deeper discussion of hope in class, but also helps students see their lived experience as a valid source of knowledge and elevates their classmates as potential exemplars of hope, which connects to a third strategy.

3. Engagement with Virtuous Exemplars

Many philosophical and religious traditions highlight the role of moral exemplars or role models as essential to moral formation. By embodying what a particular virtue or ideal looks like in practice, exemplars can deepen our understanding of a virtue, inspire us to develop it, and provide a model to emulate.

To introduce exemplars of hope, we might highlight role models from the “history of hope,” showing how leaders of social movements—from abolitionism and women’s suffrage to civil rights—have embodied hope in the face of fear and despair.⁸ Or we might introduce students to role models in our contemporary context. For example, I assign commencement speeches by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Barbara Kingsolver, Maria Popova, and Bryan Stevenson, all of whom emphasize and embody hope in our contemporary context.

Exemplars, however, do not need to be famous to be effective. In fact, research suggests that “relevant” and “attainable”




exemplars often influence character development more powerfully than historical or heroic exemplars.⁹ To build on this insight in class, I assign a “Profile in Character” that invites students to interview a relevant and attainable exemplar in their lives and then write a profile of their character. A number emphasize their exemplar’s hope. Such examples—whether famous or familiar—can provide evidence that achieving specific objects of hope might also be possible for us.

4. Dialogue That Increases Virtue Literacy

One aid to developing a virtue is understanding what it is (and what it is not). Knowing what the concept involves, how the virtue differs from its semblances and corresponding vices, and how related virtues support it can inform how we acquire and exercise the virtue.

Such virtue literacy is especially valuable for hope. For example, knowing that the virtue of hope is not the same as optimism can free us from the belief that we must always maintain a positive attitude to exercise hope. Sometimes optimism can blind us to real obstacles or cause us to believe an outcome is more likely than it actually is, which can express the vice of presumption more than the virtue of hope.

Hope literacy can be taught in various ways. For example, we might assign readings that discuss the complexities of hope and consider its relevance to contemporary challenges before engaging students in a discussion of hope, its opposing vices, and related virtues that can help us overcome challenges to it. Course assessments show that students’ understanding of the virtue often shifts significantly as a result of such readings and discussions.



Knowing that the virtue of hope is not the same as optimism can free us from the belief that we must always maintain a positive attitude to exercise hope.

5. Awareness of Situational Variables

Among the obstacles to developing and exercising virtue are the unconscious biases and situational variables that shape our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in ways we might not consciously realize. Over the last few years, educators have recommended “getting the word out” about such influences so we can recognize, correct, and counteract them.¹⁰

Two of the most relevant to hope are the optimism and pessimism biases. According to Tali Sharot, “optimism bias” refers to “the inclination to overestimate the likelihood of encountering positive events in the future and to underestimate the likelihood of experiencing negative events.”¹¹ Sharot traces the sources and effects of this bias, which is common across race, class, and age, including in college students.¹² While a bias toward optimism can lead to positive outcomes, it also has potential perils, sometimes causing us to become overconfident or neglect risks.

If optimism bias can encourage presumption, pessimism bias can induce despair, causing us to assume that negative events

are more likely than they might actually be.¹³ While less common than optimism bias, pessimism bias can cause us to doubt our capacities or underestimate the possibility of positive outcomes.

Perspective-taking exercises can help students recognize the influence of these and other biases and avoid their worst effects. Those inclined toward optimism bias, for example, may benefit from intentionally trying to imagine possible obstacles, while those inclined toward pessimism bias may benefit from envisioning potential positive outcomes in vivid detail or brainstorming multiple pathways to achieve their goals.¹⁴ Inviting students to participate in such prospection—whether in a journal, class discussion, or group project—can nurture hope.

6. Moral Reminders

In light of these biases and influences, we can also use moral reminders to make specific objects of hope more salient, especially when we might be tempted toward presumption or despair. Moral reminders call aspirations and commitments to mind and encourage us to think, feel, and act in line with them.

In relation to hope, for example, students might memorize a quote or mantra to recall in a challenging time, put the image of a hopeful exemplar on their wall, or write a letter to themselves about their aspirations and read it a year later to evaluate their efforts. As Shane Lopez suggests, such small reminders can provide cues that “trigger” action and supply inspiration, motivation, and accountability in times of difficulty.¹⁵

Students might also use moral reminders to cultivate hope indirectly. For example, writing gratitude letters or keeping a gratitude journal has been shown to support the virtue of gratitude, which can bolster both hope and humility.¹⁶ If we remember who and what we are grateful for, we may be less likely to focus only on negative outcomes and more likely to acknowledge those who have assisted us, which can prevent despair. Meanwhile, remembering that we did not achieve progress on our own can foster humility and prevent presumption. The self-proclaimed “pessimist” who attempted to habituate hope in my class reported that keeping a gratitude journal was one of her most helpful practices. She felt more hopeful because she was more grateful.

7. Friendships of Mutual Accountability

The relationship between gratitude and hope points to another aspect of character


development: virtues are nurtured through friendships of mutual support and accountability. Relying on others’ assistance is especially important for the virtue of hope. While discussions of hope typically focus on what we hope *for*, Augustine and Aquinas remind us that achieving objects of hope also depends, in part, on whom we hope *in*.¹⁷ This is why Aquinas says that hope’s twofold object includes both “the good which it intends to obtain, and the help by which that good is obtained.”¹⁸

Friends often provide such help. “[T]hough it is not for one’s own benefit,” Aquinas writes, “friendship . . . has of course many resulting benefits, in the sense that one friend helps another as he helps himself. Hence, when one person loves another, and knows that he is loved by that other, he must get hope from him.”¹⁹

In addition to providing assistance, friends can also help us resist presumption and despair. Friends can provide correction and accountability when we are tempted toward presumption, reminding us of our limits and helping us to recalibrate or redirect our hopes. And they can offer care and support when we are tempted to despair.²⁰ As a result, helping students develop meaningful friendships—for example, by designing classes, cohorts, or assignments to facilitate relationships or setting up structures for peer mentoring or accountability—may be among the best ways to nurture hope.



If we aspire to be virtuous exemplars and develop authentic relationships with our students, it is important for us to do the difficult inner work that we expect of them.

This mutuality of such relationships points to a final way to educate hope in our students: by educating hope in ourselves. As Parker Palmer argues in *The Courage to Teach*, “good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.”²¹ If we aspire to be virtuous exemplars and develop authentic relationships with our students, it is important for us to do the difficult inner work that we expect of them. Otherwise, any techniques or strategies, no matter how effective, will only go so far. Given our influence as educators in a moment when despair may be especially tempting, educating hope within ourselves may be one of our most urgent tasks. 

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The Good Lawyer

MARGARET HU

Hope in the Age of AI


On May 30, 2023, the Center for AI Safety (CAIS) released a statement signed by dozens of leading researchers and industry executives, warning that AI posed an unprecedented threat to humanity: “Mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war.”¹

The one-sentence CAIS statement, ambiguous and foreboding, was signed by OpenAI CEO Sam Altman; computer scientist and godfather of AI, Geoffrey Hinton, who publicly departed Google in May 2023, citing concerns about AI risks; Bruce Schneier, cybersecurity pioneer and Chief of Security Architecture at Inrupt; Kevin Scott, Chief Technology Officer at Microsoft; and other prominent technologists. It immediately opened up a flood of criticism. Was it unnecessarily alarmist? Was the statement hyperbolic and exaggerated?

Technological innovation is moving at a lightning pace, bringing with it threats to democracy and our national security, and, for those who took the CAIS statement seriously, possibly a threat to human life and civilization itself.

How do we maintain hope amidst the threat of AI-driven human extinction? To do so, we must first take an honest and clear-eyed look at the threat and resist the impulse to ignore it or despair. Only by looking clearly at the possibility of devastation can we begin the process of reimagination necessary to sustain us. Hope in the face of an





existential threat requires both a courageous alternative vision of the future along with the will to move toward that vision in concrete ways. Through imagining and pursuing technical, legal, institutional, and administrative mitigation, we enact hope.

The Threat

Emerging technologies are being weaponized against U.S. citizens and institutions, compromising critical infrastructure and sowing discord. To give an obviously concerning example, disinformation campaigns undermining faith in free and fair elections culminated in the Capitol attacks of January 6, 2021. Now, disinformation and misinformation can be produced and amplified at an exponential pace using generative AI like ChatGPT. On May 22, 2023, a falsified image purporting to show a Pentagon explosion circulated on social media. Shortly thereafter, the markets dipped and panic momentarily ensued before officials verified that the image was fake and likely AI-generated.²

In 2019, prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, Stanford epidemiologist Stephen Luby predicted the possibility of human extinction or the potential for the collapse of civilization by 2100. Luby thought the collapse could come about in four different ways—climate change, pandemic, nuclear holocaust, and generative AI.³ How did he think we should move

forward? Luby focused his attention on the role of universities, calling for a multidisciplinary approach to long-term problem-solving in order to ensure a thriving human society for generations to come.

Hope in Action

Strengthening our political system requires legal innovation, a point driven home by our Nation's Founding. The Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution represented radical innovation of legal instruments and were manifestations of translational research by the founders.⁴ The U.S. Constitution is the result of extensive research, particularly by James Madison, the architect of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.⁵ It required the translation and integration of a combination of disciplines, such as science, philosophy, history, commerce, and governance. For the founders, the interdisciplinary work of architecting founding legal documents was a manifestation of hope. Their hopeful vision could only become a reality through the work of legal innovation.

Such legal innovations became necessary in part because of the speed of technological innovation. In authoring Federalist Paper #11, Alexander Hamilton argued that adoption of the U.S. Constitution was necessary to protect commercial activity and what he described as the “adventurous spirit, which distinguishes the commercial

character of America[.]”⁶ Protection of the pursuit of science and IP (Intellectual Property) is embedded within the text of the U.S. Constitution: Article I, Section 8: “To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries[.]”⁷


For generations, the United States led the globe in both legal and technological innovation. Indisputably, the U.S. is a global leader in emerging technologies. Although it currently exercises outsized power in tech progress globally, for the past decade, it has faltered in creating the legal innovations necessary to productively harness these advances in technology. The European Union (EU) has repeatedly stated that legal innovation must proceed in tandem with tech innovation to safeguard both economic growth and consumer protection. With the implementation of the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation in 2018 and now the introduction of the proposed AI Act and other forward-looking tech regulations, the EU is outpacing the U.S. in legal innovation.

States such as California, Texas, Illinois, and others are now attempting to fill the void of tech regulations. Most recently, Montana implemented state legislation banning Tik Tok from being downloaded in the state, effective January 1, 2024. This legal

development has been criticized as unenforceable, yet reflects what some assess to be legal innovation by a single state in the U.S., claiming that legal innovation is necessary to protect our national security. Montana and other states contend that the U.S. has been downgraded as a democracy as its technological innovations have been weaponized against itself. Threats to U.S. critical infrastructure and cyberattacks are increasing. Disinformation campaigns, exacerbated by generative AI and deep fakes, undermine confidence in democratic governance and U.S. industry.

Generative AI poses perhaps an unprecedented threat to national security: **(1)** Technological architecture and design; **(2)** Legal architecture and design; and **(3)** What is the relationship between the two? This question has occupied the minds of members of Congress and state legislatures, regulators and policymakers, academics, and industry leaders, especially in light of the transformative potential of ChatGPT.

Upon its introduction, China immediately announced that ChatGPT poses a grave threat to national security and immediately implemented legal methods to block its adoption. Walmart also immediately moved to block ChatGPT, as did Amazon and Microsoft. The companies explained that it posed unprecedented threats to cybersecurity.



One day before the Montana law banning Tik Tok was signed by Montana Governor Greg Gianforte, Sam Altman, founder and CEO of the company that created ChatGPT, was called to testify on the potential benefits and dangers of generative AI. Altman considered the possibility that the government should own and manage ChatGPT. Like the NASA space program, safeguarding important national security objectives would have been extraordinarily challenging if space technology was vested solely in the hands of private corporations. Altman's testimony invited a conversation on the laws needed to place the proper guardrails around OpenAI technologies. Members of Congress posed this question: How do we craft laws that can incentivize socially responsible AI and mitigate the harms of dangerous and discriminatory AI? This is one of the key questions that both lawyers and technologists will try to answer and should try to answer together.

In the face of such existential threats, the hope we need must necessarily be a working hope, in which professionals' expertise is married to a moral and ethical responsibility that compels them to do their particular work in a way that contributes not only to a good society today, but also lays the foundation for good to prevail in the face of the challenges we see on the horizon. To lay the groundwork for reinforcing democracy and national security, technology innovation requires not only insights from


well-trained STEM researchers and technologists, but forward-looking perspectives from researchers and technologists who are engaged in a dialogue with industry, state and federal lawmakers and regulators, academics and researchers, and civil society organizations. Similarly, lawyers and legal scholars must be in dialogue with industry leaders and technologists, cybersecurity researchers, and members of the intelligence community, and the military community.

Hope As a Vocation

Hope as a vocation can be witnessed through a growing interest in Public Interest Technology, also known as PublicTech, a multidisciplinary research effort to interrogate how to incentivize innovation that can best serve public outcomes. The New America's Public Interest Technology—University Network (PIT-UN) is a prominent example. The PIT-UN network is comprised of over 50 colleges and universities globally. PIT-UN combines strategic funding from the Ford Foundation, Hewlett Foundation, MasterCard Impact Fund, The Raikes Foundation, Schmidt Futures and The Siegel Family Endowment. Bruce Schneier, cybersecurity pioneer and one of the co-signers of the CAIS statement explained: "Public-interest technologists are a diverse and interdisciplinary group of people. Their backgrounds are in technology, policy, or

law. This is important, you do not need a computer-science degree to be a public-interest technologist.”⁸

One sign of hope is that universities are increasingly elevating PublicTech leadership. Sylvester Johnson, a leader of PIT-UN, was recently appointed as Virginia Tech’s Associate Vice Provost for Public Interest Technology. Johnson is the former Assistant Vice Provost for the Humanities and a scholar on the intersection of technology, race, religion, and national security. In his new role, he has been tasked to create new methods and forms of collaboration for democracy, social justice, and sustainability in guiding research on our shared technological future. To say the future of humanity may depend upon interdisciplinary research developments and evolutions of university leadership that champion the importance of democracy and sustainability may sound insufficient when faced with ominous warnings about the possibility of human extinction; and yet, true hope is not a lofty ideal, but a choice to work together and work well in pursuit of the common good. Hope manifests in specific interventions and choices,

and becomes larger than the sum as individuals enact their moral and professional responsibilities together. 

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ARTWORK BY DENYS GOLDEN

MARY C. GENTILE

The Practical Uses of Hope

Giving Voice To Values

understand the temptation to despair. After decades of working at top business schools and with corporations, I have followed the litany of public scandals, and know the ugly realities that never make headlines. There is reason for cynicism. And yet, every day I do work that is driven by hope, and I continue to be inspired by how many people are eager to join me. I am convinced that asking different questions and giving people better strategies for pursuing the good can transform our workplaces and corporate cultures.



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Scholars spend a lot of time researching questions such as “Are most of us basically good? Do most of us want to do the right thing? Or do we more often act immorally—or amorally—doing what is most convenient, comfortable, and seemingly in our immediate self-interest?” Perhaps one of the most often cited examples of such a study is Stanley Milgram’s “obedience experiments” from the 1960s¹ that explored whether, and under what conditions, subjects would go along with instructions even when they conflicted with their own—assumed—values. In the ’70s, Philip Zimbardo famously had to discontinue his Stanford Prison Experiments² due to concerns about the ethics of the design and potential impacts on participants who, as in Milgram’s study, seemed able to go along with the roles and pressures of the experiment’s format even when it violated norms of ethical and compassionate behavior. And more recently, behavioral ethicists and psychologists like Daniel Ariely³ have studied the human tendency toward deception, and there is a whole raft of research on the limitations and the impacts—sometimes counter to intention—of various incentive schemes.

As useful and important as it is to understand how and why we tend to behave one way or the other in different circumstances, too often this research seems to simply support the idea

that, left to our own devices, we don’t really have much of a moral compass—at least not one that we act upon. Too often, in the business education and organizational training settings where I have spent most of my career, sharing these insights about behavioral tendencies can be, at best, fruitless, and even worse, they can reinforce the idea that we simply can’t expect ethics and values-driven behaviors in business. Some research suggests that teaching folks about decision-making biases and tendencies can make us more cognizant of these propensities in others, but still leave us unaware of our own vulnerabilities.⁴ And even more troubling, without offering some alternative behavioral strategies, this research can feed a disabling cynicism in individuals who—we hope—might otherwise strive to enact their values. That is, if we cannot expect ethical behavior—or even rational behavior—from others who are driven by cognitive biases and seemingly self-serving, fear-driven, or merely convenient short-term motivations, then what is the point of trying to act ethically ourselves?

These are the kinds of questions that 20 years ago led to what I call my “crisis of

faith.” I had worked in the field of ethics education in graduate business schools for several decades and was feeling that my work was at best, futile, and at worst, hypocritical. You might say that I was losing hope in the potential efficacy of education and training for ethical behavior in business—or in our wider lives. It seemed that the ways that we taught about these issues—by presenting thorny ethical case studies and then asking students and employees to consider “what would you do?”—was at best an exercise in platitudes and at worst, a sort of schooling for sophistry. That is, discussants would find ways to rationalize and justify almost any behavior. It seemed that folks would leave these conversations both more confused and less empowered. That didn’t really feel like the way I wanted to spend my time and efforts.

But around that time, I had a number of experiences that led to the development of Giving Voice To Values (GVV), an innovative approach to values-driven leadership development. I began to see research in a variety of disciplines—psychology, cognitive neurosciences, etc.—that suggested that if you truly want to have an impact on people’s behavior, then pre-scripting, rehearsal, and peer coaching can be effective strategies. Rather than focusing exclusively on when and why people behave badly, I started to focus on how people behaved well. And instead of thinking only about ethical decision-making, I started

to focus on ethical action. I began to ask a new question. Rather than “what is the right thing to do in a particular situation?” (an important question, to be sure, but one that was already an ever present focus in ethics education and training), I started to ask “once I know what I believe is right, how can I get it done, effectively?”

That is, instead of standing in a place of skepticism or even cynicism, I began to stand in a place of hope. This re-framing was supported by behavioral ethics research that suggested that when we confront values conflicts, rather than sitting down to do a pro and con list, or to ask what John Rawls or Aristotle would say, we tend to react emotionally, automatically—doing what feels possible—and then we rationalize post-hoc that it was the right thing to do, or perhaps the only thing we could do.⁵ If this observation is true, then our usual approach to ethics training by presenting ethical dilemmas and asking “what would you do?” would simply trigger this automatic response. But I wanted actually to “re-wire” this automatic response. So, I created a new pedagogical approach—you might call it a pedagogy of hope.





I asked, “How could you get the right thing done? What would you say and do? What data would you need to gather? To whom would you speak, in what sequence and in what context? And what objections or push-back would you face, and then how would you respond to those? And how might you re-frame the issue to more likely influence your target audiences?” And so on.


I called this sort of case study the “Giving Voice To Values Thought Experiment.” I wanted to give learners the permission, even the requirement, to place themselves in the position of one who has decided to act on their values and then to apply all their skills and insights to crafting action plans and scripts that could be successful. By framing the question this way, we reduce the stress, enabling learners to more freely tap their creativity. Rather than worrying that their values-based responses may seem naïve, now they are invited to share how sophisticated they are by coming up with promising strategies for doing the things that otherwise may feel impractical or even impossible. And importantly, learners then share these plans and scripts with their peers and collaborate to make them even more likely to be effective. The idea is that, by working together to plan and voice these approaches, they create a new habit, a sort of “Moral Muscle Memory.” And the many case examples that we developed as part of this curriculum illustrate the many different

strategies that individuals might use, depending on the situation as well as the abilities, personality, and comfort levels of the individual facing the challenge.

Once this approach was published and shared via books, curriculum, MOOCs, online programs, and so on, it has been stunning to see the wide and rapid adoption of GVV⁶ internationally, across professions, and in organizational practice as well as educational settings. This reception—and the responses of the many audiences when they hear about GVV—illustrates the wide and deep hunger for such a hopeful approach. And increasingly, faculty are also following and writing about the positive impacts of this pedagogy.⁷ I have found that most people want to believe that values-driven action is possible, but we don’t want to be naïve or foolish, or even to place ourselves at a systematic disadvantage. GVV offers an approach and a framing that can work against these concerns and fears, and that can also help us to develop the skills and confidence to enact our values effectively. That is, GVV is about more than being “righteous;” it is about righteous actions that are also effective.

In his very influential article on “Small Wins: Redefining the Scale of Social Problems,” the organizational theorist Karl Weick counters this fear of naivete when he writes: “. . . to be naïve is to start with fewer preconceptions.” He goes on

to argue that optimism is not necessarily naïve when he writes: “We justify what we do, not by belief in its efficacy but by an acceptance of its necessity. . . . To view optimism as a duty rather than as something tied to unsteady expectations of success is to position oneself in sufficient variety of places with sufficient confidence that events may be set in motion that provide substance for that hope.”⁸

I find this an inspiring framing of our work toward a more ethical world: that is, that our duty is to be hopeful enough to drive creativity, commitment, and action toward values-driven choices. Too often, the conversations I see in organizations are driven by a too narrowly drawn vision of what is possible or permissible. My fondest hope is that the “Giving Voice To Values Thought Experiment”—what if I were to act on my values? How could I be effective?—will engender the hope and the confidence that we have more choices than we may have feared and that values-driven choices are both necessary and possible. 



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Our duty is to be hopeful enough to drive creativity, commitment, and action toward values-driven choices.



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ANIKA PRATHER

HOPE FOR RACIAL HEALING

The Power of Love

The evening following Martin Luther King, Jr.'s murder, my father was trying to drive home through the riots and chaos in Washington, D.C. My dad had been active in the civil rights movement as a college student and was not allowed to walk in his graduation because of his involvement. He graduated anyway and went on to dental school at Howard University. That night as he was driving home, he may have been reflecting on his time in the movement, and he was certainly hurting as he thought about the violent passing of his hero. That's when he saw a mob chasing a white man down the street. To his surprise, the man ran up to my father's car and jumped in. I can picture my father—a Black man deep in anger and grief—as he sat at a stoplight looking at this strange white man in his car. That white man could have been viewed a representative of the hate that killed his hero; however, when I asked my dad how he responded, he simply said, "I drove him home."



The background is a vibrant, abstract composition of geometric shapes. The top portion features a bright red sky with a jagged, white lightning bolt striking down from the left. Below the sky, the scene is filled with various colored polygons in shades of teal, yellow, green, orange, blue, and purple, creating a dynamic and colorful pattern.

The Good Teacher

This is love. Love was the choice to drive the man to safety even though he looked like the enemy. Whenever the weight of racism becomes too much for me, I think of this story. It gives me hope. If there is any hope for racism in this country to heal, that hope relies on the power of love.

Racial Healing vs. Racial Reconciliation

I don't like to use the phrase "racial reconciliation." Reconciliation implies that there was a previous relationship that is now being restored. But so far as I can tell, the relationship between Black people and white people has been poor from the beginning. There has never been anything worth restoring. Instead, I see this process as one of racial healing. The wounds caused by racism throughout the centuries are still there, and only through acting out of hope and love can we hope to heal them. Love covers a multitude of sins.¹ Love keeps no records of wrongs.² Love could be the healing balm for those open wounds.

Love for humanity fuels my efforts to write about racial healing in a way that I hope gives readers a new perspective. I am tired of reading books riddled with curse words to express the anguish of centuries long pain. I have read most of them. and even enjoy many of them, but when

I get to the end of such books, I am left wondering, "What next?" In most cases, texts about racism detail the many forms that racism has taken and how it continues to shape our society. The constant barrage of "There's racism over here! There's racism over there!" only seems to be feeding the cancer of bitterness that is permeating our society. This listing of racism past and present often makes it seem too daunting to address; or if we try, our activism becomes another place where political polarization draws battle lines and new divisions are erected. I have felt, and still feel, the burden to fight racism. However, I decided one day that I was not going to take on the role of activist, but instead just love those around me as much as I could. I chose to love from a place of grace and truth. I did not turn a blind eye to my racist experiences, but I spoke the truth in love while also loving unconditionally, regardless of the response.

Choosing to Love

Martin Luther King said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."³ In some ways, it is easier to remember the many times we have experienced racism. It can be easier to stay in that place, letting the memories wash over our heart, mind, and soul, feeling paralyzed and unable to move forward. Yet,



releasing ourselves from these experiences in order to embrace the freedom of loving unconditionally is ultimately less painful. Bitterness hurts. Bitterness can prolong the pain of our traumatic experiences, allowing them to injure us over and over again. Love, on the other hand, takes us to a much higher place, where we can float above the burden of the pain.

Choosing to love is really for myself, and if you choose this path of love, then it is for you. It appears to be in service to the one receiving the love, but I find that as I chose to love, I am the one who is healed. I am the one who benefits. Bitterness is a burden we carry. Loving is a weight off our shoulders. Loving frees us from waiting for the person to deserve our love. We can simply choose to love, even while remembering

Love is freedom
Love breaks the chains of memory
that bind us
Love is here to remind us
That its power is greater than any
other
It can make our enemy our brother
All we have to do is choose
To love instead of hate one another
One simple choice
No matter who's worthy or not
Without love any good deeds will
rot
And come to nothing, but with love
Our works are a sweet aroma that
reach Heaven above
Love is like a sweet song
That serenades humanity
So no need to list the wrongs
Or hold the anger long
Because this is bondage and not of
God's Kingdom
Love is freedom
Hate is bondage
Be free

—ANIKA PRATHER

our past hurt and recognizing still present racism. We must know our past in order to understand ourselves and be able to chart our path forward. The work of hope is to move us to love even *while* remembering and while waiting for progress that is still



in process. Loving frees us from waiting until things get better and all white people are no longer racist. When we choose to love no matter what, we are finally free, because we are not depending on anything to conjure up that emotion.

Agape as DEI Work

The desire to love the white community unconditionally grew in me when I was in elementary school. I attended a

predominately white Christian school with a few Black students. The racial lines were thick—Black and white students refused to play with one another, but for my 9th birthday, I decided to invite both Black and white girls to my slumber party. I distinctly remember wanting to do something to build a bridge. Only a few white girls came, and I remember those who could not come, sad that their parents wouldn't allow it. I had no idea how powerful just the invitation would be. To this day, almost 40 years later, those same classmates have shared

how that one act changed their perspective on race.

I do not believe in waiting for “the other side” to be sorry. I do not believe in waiting for anyone to apologize and amend their ways. I will not sit here, twiddling my thumbs, waiting for the other side to have a revelation about systemic racism. I actually have no hope of racism getting better, at least not directly, but I believe human beings can change, one at a time, and slowly but surely that can transform society. Changing the world, however, is not my goal. My effort to show love to others is deeply connected to my faith, inspired by the initiative that Christ took in loving me. At the same time, even if you have a different faith or no faith at all, love is universally powerful. So hopefully, I can inspire others to let *agape* (unconditional love), be the foundation of their DEI work.

Agape as DEI effort is so much simpler than fighting “the system.” Love is something you can do right where you are and with whatever is in your hand. Love gives birth to grace, which opens us all up to listening to and empathizing with others, no matter what their stories may be. In this exchange of love, relationships are formed that allow each person to reveal their deepest hurts and pains. These relationships can also lead to listening to stories you may not have been

open to hearing before. I love how Cornel West calls himself a “Love Warrior.”⁴ Love is that powerful. Love gives you a supernatural strength to fight through your own wounds to touch another heart. Walls are torn down and replaced with bridges built with the bricks of our common human experiences.

Loving through Conversation

Loving others opens us to hear the common human experiences shared through conversations. Not too long ago, a new friend of mine and I read the book of poetry *Olio* by Tyehimba Jess. In fact, we did not become friends until we read the book together. I was so drawn to Tyehimba’s use of Black music, poetically telling the story of the Black experience. My new friend found a portal into the Black experience through her love of poetry. I am a poet and she is a poet. I love reading and writing poetry. She loves reading and writing poetry. We ended up talking about the book for hours. From that moment, a friendship was formed. Even though we engaged in reading and

Love gives birth to grace, which opens us all up to listening to and empathizing with others, no matter what their stories may be.




discussing the book for our careers, something more came from the experience, a truly loving friendship.

Later on, she and I were at the same conference, and over dinner I began to share about my negative experiences with police. After I shared, she then shared about her negative experiences with police. I was shocked, because I just did not think that a white woman would have a negative experience with police. She went on to say, “I do not understand why, but something about my personality really rubs police the wrong way.” These words opened my mind up to a much larger issue with regards to police reform. Even though I know about the racist history of America’s policing system, her story caused me to realize that it’s not just Black people who struggle, but anyone could fall victim to a policeman or woman who mishandles power. I listened to her. She listened to me. We left the restaurant and headed back to the hotel and then she turned to me and said, “Anika, I have always been afraid to share my story with people. I thought that maybe sharing my

pain would be disrespectful to the pain Black people have endured.” Starting with discussing a masterful book of poetry, a love relationship formed that opened both of us to hearing one another’s stories.

What I found beautiful about us sharing our experiences with police is that I did not have to “prove” that I actually had those experiences. She did not ask me questions to see if I somehow deserved how I had been mistreated. Neither did I give her the “side eye,” as if a white woman could never go through being mistreated by police. We believed and respected one another’s stories of our life experiences. Together, we created a safe space to talk to one another without fear of judgment or dismissal. How did we come to be in that space? The ground for this was made fertile months prior when we discussed *Olio*. Love was formed through that moment and it removed any hindrances to us sharing pieces of ourselves with one another. Perfect love casts out fear.⁵ In me loving her and she loving me, we were no longer afraid to open up this part of ourselves.



Understanding our interconnectedness reveals an inescapable truth: Loving is the key to our healing.

Interconnectedness and Love

Martin Luther King says “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”⁶

Racism has torn us apart and it has also forged us together. In many cases, our DNA is intermingled and so is our history, because through this painful history, we created a people, a country. When we segregate ourselves from one another, we sever a piece of ourselves and leave a hole in our human story. Understanding our interconnectedness reveals an inescapable truth: loving is the key to our healing.

When my father drove a white stranger home on the evening of Martin Luther King's murder, he made a simple choice of love instead of leaving the man at the mercy of an angry mob. Whether the anger was justified or not is not the point. This man was a human, and in treating him in a way that dignified and protected his humanity, my father sought a world in which every person's humanity would be dignified and respected. As we reckon with our hard history and present pain, it is this kind of commitment to love in everyday and extraordinary ways that can



As we reckon with our hard history and present pain, it is this kind of commitment to love in everyday and extraordinary ways that can provide a foretaste of the future we hope to conceive.

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NOTES

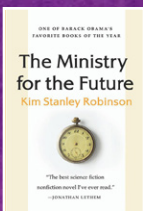
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Good Reads

We asked our authors to recommend a book they had read over the past couple of years. Here is what they said:



Ministry for the Future

BY STANLEY ROBINSON

This novel is wide ranging in scope and insights and perhaps most surprisingly, it offers a positive vision for dealing with climate change.

—MARY C. GENTILE

Algorithms of Oppression How Search Engines Reinforce Racism

BY SAFIYA UMOJA NOBLE

This book is not only brilliant research, but it includes a critically important research method: the expert's narrative.

—MARGARET HU



How to Be Perfect The Correct Guide to Every Moral Question

BY MICHAEL SCHUR

Written by the creator of *The Good Place* and co-creator of *Parks and Recreation*, *How to Be Perfect* offers an illuminating, accessible, and hilarious introduction to ethical theory. Drawing on insights from famous philosophers and examples from his own experience (along with his immensely creative imagination), Schur breathes life and humor into philosophy. Organized around questions such as “Should I punch my friend in the face for no reason?” or “Do I have to return my shopping cart to the shopping cart rack thingy?,” Schur provides not only a much-needed occasion for laughter but vital wisdom on how to live. —MICHAEL LAMB



Death and the Afterlife

BY SAMUEL SCHEFFLER

Death and the Afterlife explores how our current sense of well-being, our happiness in the deep sense, depends on our confidence that projects and ideals that matter to us will continue to be carried out and realized by others, long after we are gone. Many of us have an inchoate sense that this is true, but Scheffler, with great sensitivity and penetrating thought, illuminates how it could be that life later, without us in it, could matter so much to us now, in our present everyday lives. —JONATHAN LEAR

The Impossible Will Take a Little While A Citizen's Guide to Hope in a Time of Fear

BY PAUL ROGAT LOEB

This is a collection of essays and stories of what ordinary people did to make a difference at a time when they could not see that their actions would lead to ultimately successful movements told by those people. Through action, these regular people, not the larger-than-life characters that are the protagonists of our mythologies of change, made hope for themselves and others.

—VICTOR M. MONTORI



Kindred

BY OCTAVIA BUTLER

It is a beautiful book that truthfully tells the pain of slavery but also how we are all connected. This revelation was so prominent in the book that it inspires me even more to fight for all of us to come together somehow.

—ANIKA PRATHER

Biting the Hand Growing up Asian in Black and White America

BY JULIA LEE

Not only did this memoir help me understand the struggles of my immigrant father, it illuminated for me the ways in which white supremacy is perpetuated through norms in higher education. This book gave me much more compassion for students of color and has caused me to be a more mindful person. —LINDA VANASUPA





LINDA VANASUPA

The Case for Hope

The Whole Awaits Us, Here and Now

**“The kind of attention we bring to bear on the world
changes the nature of the world we attend to . . .”**

—Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary:
The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*



here is a scene in a campy film classic where a main character is about to die in a hand-to-hand duel with swords. His demise seems certain, and yet he is smiling, compelling his opponent to ask why. His response, “Because I know something you don’t know . . . I am not left-handed!”

Switching his sword to his other hand, he overtakes his opponent. This scene is a playful illustration of a profound truth that keeps me hopeful as an engineering educator. To me, it is an allegory that unimaginable results become possible when we operate from our strength rather than our weakness. In practice, I’ve substituted the phrase, “I am not left-brained” to remind me to act from my full neurological intelligence. Let me explain.



In the U.S., the engineering profession, like those of medicine and law, are practices that profess a firm moral commitment to prioritize the well-being of society.¹ My efforts to understand the frequent gaps between our profession's espoused values and systemic outcomes took me on a boundary-crossing adventure through all manner of academic disciplines. I learned that my discipline can be traced to Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274), who conflated the philosophy of understanding with a quest for truth, producing an apparently God-authorized political tool of “science”²—to be sure, knowledge is power. Descartes later (ca. 1620) “adjusted everything to the level of reason . . . separating the intellect from intuition,”³ subjugating somatic wisdom. The “Western scientific method”⁴—on which present-day U.S. engineering and medicine rely—further suppressed holistic approaches and planted the seeds of inhumane logics with the primacy of aristocratic European male appetites⁵; the method itself does not include any ethical questions. The supreme power of this “Western science”

revealed itself via the industrial revolution, which also created a cornucopia of weapons of mass destruction. As documented by cognitive psychologist Iain McGilchrist,⁶ our “left brain,” a term that McGilchrist himself confesses is not literally accurate, is the source of Western science logics. Modern-day westerners’ left hemispheres are literally larger than their right hemispheres.⁷ As predicted by Habermas,⁸ our present world has become dominated by this left-brained science and technology, ubiquitously and detrimentally applied when social, moral, and liberatory logics would be better fit for the purpose. And so, like the main character in the campy film classic, here we are, seemingly facing our collective demise because dominating powers have been operating out of their weakness, that is to say—out of the “left brain.”

The hope for transformational human and planetary outcomes lies in shifting the source of our action to our “right brain.” McGilchrist documents the science⁹ that shows our “right brain” is superior in almost every respect, including scientific reasoning; the “right brain” is collaborative with the “left,” it gives us access to intuition and empathy, and enables us to reason beyond our present-moment impulses. As an engineering educator, this understanding means I can consciously create learning environments that foster holistic development for my students and myself. Rather

than approaching a course as a factory line which produces student “products” of varying qualities that I will “grade”—a left-brained disposition—I approach the classroom as a developmental space where I can support learners’ whole neurological development. A very simple activity is to begin classes with a practice of somatic grounding; slowing down, sitting comfortably, and giving ourselves 30 seconds to breathe slowly together goes a great distance in enabling our nervous system to shift from an activated state to a relaxed one. Those in my courses have expressed unsolicited gratitude for this simple practice, which they experience as helping them to learn and value self-care. The left brain will most certainly read the preceding sentence and cry out “Impossible! I cannot afford to waste 30 seconds of class time!” Our left brains tend to see the world through the straw of its own narrow, self-prioritizing vision, yet doesn’t know it. McGilchrist claims that modern humans in our left-brain dominant world are living in a “simulacrum of their own making” rather than in the world as it is. The left-brain cannot imagine that care of learners’ state of wellness *in* an engineering class enhances rather than depletes learning of technical subjects. It is literally that from our “left brain,” we are not able to apprehend the totality of beauty, complexity, and possibility that reality offers us—we can only recreate the past rather than envision a just and verdant future.



By stepping back and thinking through what is essential to an engineering education, we can create a life-giving curriculum. My colleague and I have offered thoughts on how we might begin, centering energetics, action in fields, flow, measurement and aliveness;¹⁰ I would add beauty.

To be sure, this journey of learning and unlearning the left brain’s undesirable habits is freely available to anyone. Doing so has cost me time and attention I might otherwise devote to a deeper exploration of a mechanistic world view, yet it has paid me back in greater well-being. I find that I am

now more attentive to contextual dynamics along with ethical and moral implications; I am a better engineer. And I am more able and active in divesting my participation in systems that are producing suffering; I am living a more meaningful life.

Turning my attention to that of an interconnected, abundant, social, and alive universe—the strength of the right brain—has required practice and conscious effort. Psychologist Jeremy Clifton describes his experience in this shift in a recent podcast.¹¹ Like him, I discovered that these practices of managing our attention require discipline. However, unlike the discipline of denying one’s whole self in service of profitability—a practice called “seasoning” that is traced to the slave trade of African captives,¹² and arguably still practiced in far milder forms in modern day engineering education, that of tending to the whole self is life-giving rather than life-denying. That is, I have experienced that our attention is alive, with

the self-replicating quality of autopoiesis;¹³ attention begets itself. And as we humans shift to these life-giving, right brain practices, our social systems as living systems¹⁴ will become life-giving in themselves.

What gives me hope is that I am not alone as an educator in my holistic developmental orientation. In engineering, several of my Olin College colleagues also embrace a more holistic education.¹⁵ Even more so, many young adults—those who are unadulterated—embody the vibrancy that wholeness produces, and they inspire me. At Olin, students have worked tirelessly with the mastery of great community organizers to advocate for institutional change for a just and verdant future. And there are models from other professions as well: In law, I see Crenshaw’s transformative work on intersectionality¹⁶ as a fundamental shift from a left-brained, individualistic legal framework to that of a right-brained, contextual understanding of social dynamics. In medical education, Sabena Y. Jameel’s recent article¹⁷ on “Healing the Whole: How Phronesis and Asklepios Can Transform Health Professional Education,” proposes a similar shift toward an education that strengthens our “right-brain.”

Of course, there is no need to abandon the left-brain; it continues as a companion when it is fit for the purpose, but it is not the source of strength that will enable the 8 billion humans and countless other living





beings to thrive together. I invite anyone reading this to take up the life-giving journey of proceeding from your fullest, right-brained self. As always, we are whole; the task is simply to consciously embody our whole self. [✍️](#)

NOTES

1. National Society of Professional Engineering Code of Ethics, adopted 1957; American Medical Association, Code of Ethics, adopted 1957; American Bar Association, Oath of Admission, pp. 584–585, adopted 1908.
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11. "How Your Beliefs Shape Reality" (2023). The Hidden Brain. hiddenbrain.org/podcast/how-your-beliefs-shape-reality.
12. Kenja McCray, Ph.D., "African Historian Explains Seasoning." Coalition for Life Transformative Education, 2021 Annual Conference, September 22-23, 2021. youtu.be/JqQvQ7SP1sw.
13. Autopoiesis is a distinguishing feature of living systems described in Varela F.G., Maturana, H.R., Uribe R. "Autopoiesis: The Organization of Living Systems, Its Characterization and a Model." *Biosystems*. 1974; 5(4):187–196.
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15. Mark Somerville documented Olin's story in *A Whole New Engineer* (2014). D. E. Golberg, M. Somerville with C. Whitney. ThreeJoy Associates, Douglas, MI.
16. Crenshaw, K. W. (2017). *On Intersectionality: Essential Writings*. The New Press.
17. Jameel, S. "Healing the Whole: How Phronesis and Asklepios Can Transform Health Professional Education," in *Virtues & Vocations* (Winter 2023). socialconcerns.nd.edu/virtues/magazine/healing-the-whole-how-phronesis-and-asklepios-can-transform-health-professional-education.



Linda Vanasupa is a professor of materials engineering at Olin College of Engineering and the author or co-author of numerous articles on holistic engineering education.

EMILY DICKINSON

“Hope” is the thing with feathers

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I’ve heard it in the chilliest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

Reprinted with permission from *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by R. W. Franklin
(Harvard University Press, 1999)

ARTWORK BY JERRY BROWN





Gary Brown

Reflections on Hope

SOUNDBITES FROM PAST VIRTUES & VOCATIONS WEBINARS

“My tension with hope is with the hope that people want that absolves them of accountability and aspiration. There is a pragmatic hope that I think is as foundational to the inception of the western world—and certainly the United States of America—as is the idea of democracy. Because our democracy was founded at the same time that global enslavement was created and shaped, the two go hand in hand—the pragmatic hope of the enslaved and the false promise of the democracy of this country. That kind of pragmatic hope is the kind I traffic in, and it is one that frankly, yes, I think the majority culture should probably get more familiar with, and we would all be better off if they did. **It is the idea that you will not always see the good ends of your good deeds, but you do them anyway.** You do them anyway.”

Tressie McMillan Cottom

Associate Professor, UNC School of Information and Library Science
and author of *Thick* and *Lower Ed*

“Lately I find myself saying I am both optimistic and hopeful, and I’m rarely both of those at the same time. I feel like the Black Lives Matter movement has jostled something very significant in the country and I think it has awakened a language that’s given people a facility to be generous and magnanimous. The idea is how do we widen the container that we previously had locked ourselves in. And the more we do that, **we become spacious and expansive as the God who loves us without measure and without regret.**”

Father Greg Boyle

Founder of Homeboy Industries and author of *Tattoos on the Heart*

Recordings of past webinars
and information about future
conversations can be found at
virtuesvocations.org.





“The thing I’m most hopeful for is a revitalization of all the ways of living—including in institutions—all the things that have made the **American tradition lively, vital, creative, fair, just . . .** Remember I said no person is perfect, and neither is any country. But all of the institutions and ways of living in the American tradition that have given young people, especially, hope—the American dream and all of that—my hope is that will be revitalized. That’s my hope.”

Bill Damon

Stanford University Professor of Education and author of *The Path to Purpose*

“A point of hope or optimism I have: **I’m deeply encouraged by the students I encounter, both at my own university and around the country.** I don’t agree with everything they say and they have their share of problems, but also, I increasingly am thinking that all of the pundits who are talking about Gen Z might actually not get the nuance of who Gen Z is. And in the day-to-day of lived people, these are ambitious, kind, thoughtful students. They are defying the stereotypes that I often read about them. They are diving into hard questions. They are willing to be challenged in their ideas.”

John Inazu

Washington University at St. Louis Professor of Law & Religion and author of *Confident Pluralism*

“I am hopeful about the fact that computing and institutions in general, especially PWIs—predominantly white institutions—are finally acknowledging that white supremacy and racism are a thing and that **Black people and brown people no longer have to be the only people fighting** and saying that these things happen and being gaslit and told that its not.”

Nicki Washington

Duke University Professor of the Practice of Computer Science and Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies and author of *Unapologetically Dope: Lessons for Black Women and Girls on Surviving and Thriving in the Tech Field*

Art credits

COVER ARTIST: JED DORSEY jeddorseyart.com

FRONT/BACK COVER: **Upside** ©2021, acrylic on panel

PAGE 9: **I Will Follow** ©2023, acrylic on panel

PAGE 27: **Snowy Alley** ©2021, acrylic on board

PAGE 67: **Imagine** ©2020, acrylic on canvas

PAGE 84: **Shimmer** ©2021, acrylic on panel

About the cover image, “Upside,” Jed Dorsey writes: “What if there was a reality that was upside down from what we see? What if success was humility? What if power was sacrifice? What if wealth was compassion? What if the poor were esteemed? . . . This painting can be hung right side up or upside down. But which is which?”

Dorsey, a fourth-generation artist who has sold paintings since he was 11 years old, says, “I like how light changes objects, from garbage cans, to buildings, to plants and trees, creating shadows and diverse colors.” He makes his home on Camano Island, Washington, where he grew up.

PAUL BAILEY paulbaileyart.co.uk

PAGE 46: **Blue Flat Winter** ©2019, acrylic on canvas board

PAGE 50: **Llangrannog Primary** ©2022, acrylic on canvas board

Paul Bailey says of his work, “My landscape paintings are based on a recollection of memories: hills I have climbed; coastal paths I have walked; and the perception of an horizon that stretches far into the distance. My work is inspired by the time-worn landscape of Wales, England, and Scotland. My practice explores the process of cognitive storage and interpretation of visual and emotional memory of the landscape: simplification, echoing shapes, distorted spaces, abstraction, color, and dynamics.” He recently released his first book, *Experimental Nature in Acrylics: Our Landscapes* published by Batsford Books.

KAREN BLAIR karenblairartist.com

PAGE 69: **In Like a Lion** © 2016, oil on canvas

PAGE 71: **Twilight** ©2020, oil on panel

PAGE 72: **Change of Season** ©2017, mixed media and oil on canvas

PAGE 74: **First Leaves** ©2022, oil on canvas

Karen Blair lives in Charlottesville, Virginia, where the surrounding mountains provide daily inspiration for her work. Her own garden and those of friends inspire the flowers and trees also prevalent in the paintings and collages. There is constant tension between depicting the natural world and finding the essence of things through abstraction. She is known for her joyous use of color and for exuberant mark-making.

SUSANNAH BLEASBY susannahbee.comPAGE 10: **Dawning** ©2021, acrylic on canvasPAGE 13: **Evening Song** ©2021, acrylic on canvasPAGE 14: **Detours—Yellow** ©2022, acrylic on canvas

Born in Toronto, Canada and with a background in classical animation, children's illustration, and 15 years as the Artist-in-Residence at Sick Kids hospital in Toronto, Susannah Bleasby's art has long been submerged in a world of joyful colour and playful storytelling. She now works exclusively out of her Hamilton, Ontario studio, with paintings and prints sold and collected worldwide. Her flowing, stylized brushstrokes are infused with movement, curiosity, and all the colors of life.

JERRY BROWN jerrybrownart.comPAGE 131: **Exhale** ©2021, acrylic and oil pastel on canvas

Jerry Brown is a Diné artist from Mariano Lake in the Navajo Nation and a graduate of the Institute of American Indian Art. When he paints, he releases the turmoil of a tough childhood, his traditional spirituality, and his love of nature on paper and canvas. He loves abstraction, which allows him to paint that space between his traditions and himself, "the place of family, laughter, ceremony." He also strives to use his art to raise awareness about social justice issues and start a conversation that could bring positive change.

ANGELO FRANCO angelofranco.comPAGE 18: **Abstract Landscape** ©2007, oil on canvas

Angelo Franco was born in Ecuador and arrived in the United States when he was 19 years old. He has been painting for more than forty-five years. He studied at the Art Students League of New York (ASLNY), and his work is included in the ASLNY Permanent Collection. He says about his process: "Each new work is a serious search for the essence of a subject in nature. I try to convey the feeling and mood with shapes and bold, contrasting colors, whether the subject is still life, landscape, or figurative."

FRANCIS.CO [Instagram @francis.co](https://www.instagram.com/francis.co)PAGE 124: **Spotlight** ©2021, watercolor and pencil colors on paper and digital work in PhotoshopPAGE 127: **Riding Alone** ©2022, watercolor and pencil colors on paper and digital work in PhotoshopPAGE 128: **Hometown** ©2022, watercolor and pencil colors on paper and digital work in Photoshop

Francis.co is an illustrator born and raised in a small village in Penafiel, Portugal. Since childhood, he has been interested in representation through drawing, always being strongly influenced by the spaces that surrounded him. Francis.co dedicates himself to the investigation of legends and myths, in which he tries to give voice to the inhabitants of his city. Through illustration, he builds bridges between different generations, and seeks to rescue a cultural heritage, which he considers extremely rich, from oblivion. He lives in Porto, Portugal.

DENYS GOLDEN goldengallery.caPAGE 108: **October Confetti** ©2022, acrylic on canvasPAGE 115: **City Center** © 2021 acrylic on wood panel

Denys Golden (Golemenkov) is a Ukrainian-born, Toronto-based visual artist who specializes in bright, abstract paintings, as well as vibrant digital works. He is inspired by the geometrics of everyday things, by Toronto's modern and historical architecture, and by the lights and colors in nature. His abstract pieces are meant to express movements and aspects of modern life. Influenced by his own background in architecture, he developed a painting style that is structured, yet bold and expressive.

MARK GOULD markgouldart.com

PAGE 4: Secret Spring ©2021, acrylic on cradled panel

PAGE 34: Coppice 1847 ©2014, acrylic on panel

Originally from the rural midwest, Mark Gould earned a BFA from the University of Iowa and embarked on his own personally challenging “peregrination of creativity,” moving to Colorado, then to Taos, New Mexico. An eternal student, he continued studying fine art at three state universities, one private university, and two private art institutes. During these years of rough-shod art-making and aesthetic explorations, a personal artistic vision emerged that now occupies walls in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and North America. His studio mantra: “Without painting, I would be drunk, in prison, or dead, so I’ll just keep painting.”

KERRIE SMITH kerriesmithstudio.com

PAGE 103: Freedom Flight ©2019, acrylic on canvas

Kerrie Smith was born in England and now resides in Santa Barbara, California. She is the 2022–23 Artist-in-Residence at the Wildling Museum of Art & Nature where she will exhibit “Portals and Pathways,” an ever changing installation and landscape that is inspired by her daily walks at More Mesa Preserve in Santa Barbara. She also founded the non-profit Art Walk for Kids/Adults, with outreach programs for artists with disabilities, and which creates art curriculums approved and used by the Santa Barbara County Arts Commission for at-risk/developmentally disabled youth and adults and Hope School Art Programs.

SAROJA VAN DER STEGEN sarojasart.com

PAGE 92: Seascape Sunset (ref# 1231-3F) © 2008, oil using palette knife on canvas

Saroja van der Stegen lives in Portugal but has travelled extensively and is inspired by different landscapes and cultures. She lived many years in India, where she started painting full-time with oils and a palette knife on canvas. She has also lived and worked many years in Majorca, where she is called “La Colorista,” due to her inspired color work. She studied art in Holland and India but is largely self-taught. Her paintings are represented in many different private collections around the world.

ANASTASIA TRUSOVA atrusovaartist.com

PAGE 86: Winter Light ©2020, acrylic on canvas

Born in a very small town in Russia, Anastasia Trusova says, “We had not much, like everyone else in that difficult time. However, we had plenty of nature, forests, lakes, and swamps. At the age of five I began to study painting, pencil drawing, and sculpture. In art school we were taught to appreciate every moment, variability, state of nature, and to protect it.” She studied design in Moscow and worked as a shoe designer in China before moving to Belgium. She merged her love of graphics, painting, and sculpture into a style she calls “textured graphic impressionism.”

DIONNE WOODS theturquoiseiris.com

PAGE 65: Kaleidoscope ©2020, acrylic on canvas

Dionne Woods is an artist, business owner, and creative business coach. She offers professional tools, paint workshops, and online communities designed to elevate and amplify artists from all backgrounds. She encourages artists to embrace the things that make them unique and translate that into art. Her podcast, Paint Talks, shares the true, inspiring stories of creatives from all walks of life. She also founded *The Turquoise Iris Journal*, a magazine by and for creatives, filled with tutorials, step-by-step projects, and powerful messages of community and hope. She lives in Oklahoma City.



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