



Homo Viator: Human Beings as Pilgrims Driven by Hope

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Abstract: *The Jubilee Year of Hope, in which many Christians make a pilgrimage to pass through the Holy Door, is an opportune moment to reflect on the relationship between the existential fact of human beings as homo viator and hope as a virtue that should animate him/her. While in the Christian tradition hope is clearly considered one of the theological virtues, some prominent philosophers have expressed a negative view of hope, arguing that hope promotes passivity and does not lead to action. Christian hope, anchored in the expectation of heavenly bliss, is accused of being a kind of escapism. Through a literary study of several classical and contemporary thinkers, such as Thomas Aquinas, Gabriel Marcel, Victor Frankl, Josef Pieper, and Byung-Chul Han, this paper argues that hope as a passion is indeed ambivalent, insofar as people can hope that evil may befall another. As a theological virtue, however, hope opens the human horizon to future possibility and transcendence, in that hope not only sustains the human spirit in the face of adversities, but also, and more importantly, gives meaning to the human journey on earth. By keeping despair at bay, hope enables man to say “yes” to arduous life and generates forces that move him/her to action.*

Keywords: *homo viator, hope, optimism, Aquinas, Marcel, despair, transcendence.*

Introduction

According to evolutionary theory, humans were initially *homo habilis*, primates who were skilled in the making of stone tools for the cultivation of nature and the preservation of their lives. *Homo habilis* is said to have lived in East Africa. In later developments, *homo sapiens*, humans as intelligent primates, were able not only to make tools for work but also to use their intellect to deal with the natural environment and improve their standard of living, such as by raising livestock and farming. They also developed language and art. *Homo sapiens* are found not only in Africa or Central Asia, but also in Solo (*homo soloensis*) and in Flores (*homo floresiensis*).¹ This proves that the phenomenon of migration has existed since the beginning of human existence. More importantly, this fact further demonstrates that human beings are not only *homo sapiens*, but also *homo viator*.² Human beings are creatures always on the move, on a journey (*viator* = *peregrinus* = wayfarer). The journey is not a wandering one, but a pilgrimage, driven by hope for a clear goal: a better life. If many Palestinians or Ukrainians recently left their homeland and set foot in a new world completely foreign to them, it was because of a hope: to find a life in peace. If there had been no such hope, they would have decided to stay where they were.

¹ Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (London: Vintage Books, 2011), 7-8.

² Pierre Defert, “De l’*homo Sapiens* à l’*homo Viator*, Pourquoi Mille Siècles de Voyages?,” *The Tourist Review* 44, no. 2 (1989): 2, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/eb058015>.

If, driven by hope, people set off on a risky journey for a better life, it is because what they experience at present is not what they long for. Something is lacking or *not yet* fulfilled in their present state. Hope, then, contains a promise, a “not yet” where possibilities are still open. A life without hope is meaningless; it is a life without a future, without possibility. No wonder, Dante Alighieri in his *Divina Comedia*, says that at the gates of hell it is written, “Abandon every hope, you who enter!”³ In hell, hope is of no use because there is no future and, thus, no possibility for betterment any longer. In our daily lives, by contrast, we hear people expressing various hopes, because life still leaves them with possibilities. For instance, a girl hopes to find a boyfriend of the same faith (because now she has not yet found one). A young man who just graduated from college hopes to immediately find a job that suits his education (because now he has not yet found one). A person always hopes for what he/she believes to be good for him-/herself, or for those he/she loves, such as when parents hope that their children will pass the national exam. According to Thomas Aquinas, people never really hope for what is *per se* evil. Even if someone wishes for something evil to happen, such as for his/her enemy having a fatal accident, it is because he/she thinks or believes it will be good for him/her (*sub specie boni*).⁴ Likewise, Augustine argues that hoping in the bad (*male sperantes*) only occurs under the visions of false good.⁵

As the world is facing multiple uncertainties due to ecological crisis, sporadic but prolonged wars, and global economic slowdown because of tariff wars, Pope Francis reminds us of the importance of hope by declaring 2025 as the Jubilee Year of Hope. Obviously, hope is not the solution to every problem, and yet, according to Francis, it “makes us rise above our trials and difficulties, and inspires us to keep pressing forward, never losing sight of the grandeur of the heavenly goal to which we have been called.”⁶ Hope is not a “naïve optimism,” but a virtue that “provides direction and sense of purpose to the life of believers.”⁷ In the tradition of the Church, Augustine points out that hope, rooted in faith, is a virtue that enables us to see some good partially, if not fully. In hope people can see good possibilities in the future so that they do not easily fall into despair.⁸ Later, Thomas Aquinas would state clearly that “the object of hope is a future good, arduous but possible to obtain.”⁹ That arduous future good is possible to obtain either through one’s own effort or through Divine assistance. A hopeful believer rightly leans on God’s help in order to obtain the hoped-for good.

At this point, some thinkers, such as Albert Camus and Baruch Spinoza, criticized Christian hope. Too much hope in divine help makes humans lack decisiveness that can lead to action. Those who hope do not act. They bar their eyes in the face of reality. For Camus hope for another life is a “fatal evasion;” it is a “trickery of those who live not for life itself, but for some great idea that will transcend it, refine it, give

³ “Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch’intrate”. Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*. Canto III, line 9, in *La Divina Commedia* (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 2017).

⁴ “quidquid appetitur, appetitur sub specie boni”. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q.1, a.8 (Lander, Wyoming: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012).

⁵ Matthew Drever, “Augustine on Hope in Times of Suffering,” *Vox Patrum* 82 (June 15, 2022): 145–66, <https://doi.org/10.31743/vp.13048>.

⁶ Francis, *Spes non Confundit* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2024), §25.

⁷ Francis, *Spes non Confundit*, §18.

⁸ Michael Lamb, *A Commonwealth of Hope. Augustine’s Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022), 22.

⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q.17, a.1.

it a meaning.”¹⁰ Interpreting the Greek myth of Pandora’s box, Camus argues that the hope that remains in the box is the most terrible evil compared to all the evils of humanity that have already escaped from the box. This is because, “contrary to the general belief, hope equals resignation; and to live is not to resign oneself.”¹¹ Thus, for Camus, hope would mainly generate illusions, distracting people from the present, from life here and now. Hope will—to borrow Nietzsche’s terminology—prevent people from saying “yes to [this] life,”¹² an earthly life full of suffering and uncertainty. Hope for another life is seen as a kind of escapism, a way of denying the absurdity of human existence on earth, while imagining heavenly bliss.

In a similar vein, Spinoza has previously criticized hope. While discussing the strength of emotions, he says that hope will exist when there is fear. There is no hope without fear. Hence, hope and fear cannot be good in themselves. For Spinoza hope is unreasonable. Those who act according to ‘the guidance of reason’ need neither hope nor fear. Reason and hope are mutually exclusive. Instead of making use of their reason to get out of trouble, people easily abandon their fate to hope. This is certainly far from the good. Spinoza believes, “the more we endeavor to live by the command of reason, all the more we endeavor to be less dependent on hope.”¹³ In short, for Spinoza, humans must direct their actions on settled reason, rather than relying on hope as a way of freeing themselves from fear and of ruling uncontrollable *fortuna*. However, in this way, Spinoza excludes the possibility that hope can open a field of action to which reason has no access. In fact, as will be argued later in the paper, Spinoza should have distinguished between optimism and hope. For, while optimism is based on the certainty of reason, hope—to use Byung-Chul Han’s words—“builds a bridge over the abyss, across which reason is unable to look.”¹⁴

There have been many publications on hope as a theological virtue.¹⁵ Therefore, this paper will not discuss the virtue of hope as a theological virtue as such, but rather will focus on answering the question of whether it is true that hope does not encourage people to act and strive in this earthly journey of life. If “human life is,” as the Javanese saying goes, “just a stop to drink” (*Urip iku mung mampir ngombé*), given that we are only pilgrims living temporarily in this world, while expecting true life (Jw. *urip sejati*) in another world as our ultimate goal, does this mean that hope is incompatible with human striving for a better life on earth? Through a literary study of several thinkers who have reflected on hope, namely Thomas Aquinas, Gabriel Marcel, Victor Frankl, Josef Pieper, and Byung-Chul Han, this paper aims to highlight two interrelated points. First, hope gives meaning to the pilgrimage of *homo viator* in this world, by opening the human horizons to transcendence. Second, opening the human horizon to the transcendence does not mean that hope as a theological virtue promotes passivity and does not lead to creative action or that it has nothing to contribute to human resilience in the face of hardship and suffering in the world.

¹⁰ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 15.

¹¹ Camus, 137.

¹² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), x.5, 80.

¹³ Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics: Proved in Geometrical Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 195 (proposition 47).

¹⁴ Byung Chul-Han, *The Spirit of Hope* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2024), chap. 2, Kindle.

¹⁵ For recent studies, see: Charles Pines, “On Hope,” in *Virtues and Their Vices*, ed. Kevin Timpe and Craig A. Boyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 349–68; Michael Lamb, “Aquinas and the Virtues of Hope: Theological and Democratic,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 44, no. 2 (June 19, 2016): 300–332, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jore.12143>.

To this end, in the first section we will consider the notion of human as *homo viator* and hope as his/her appropriate attitude. What does it mean to say that human beings are pilgrims (*viator*) on earth? The second part will examine the difference between hope and optimism and will question the relationship between hope and pessimism. In the third section we will consider the value of hope as a passion and as a theological virtue, particularly by contrasting hope with despair. The fourth section will address the criticism that hope promotes passivity and does not lead to action.

***Status Viatoris*: Human Beings as Existential Pilgrims**

Viator literally means “wayfarer” (Lat. *via* = way). *Status viatoris* means “the state of being on the way or on a journey.” If one is still on a journey, it means that one has *not yet* arrived at the desired destination. Thomas Aquinas distinguished *status viatoris* from *status comprehensoris*. A *comprehensor* is one who has “embraced, understood, attained, possessed” (already), so one is no longer a *viator*.¹⁶ To still be a *viator*, in Aquinas understanding, is to still be on the way to eternal beatitude. A *comprehensor*, on the other hand, has already attained and embraced eternal beatitude (*beatitudo*). On earth, human is a *viator*, a *peregrinus* (pilgrim; stranger), since he is still on the arduous journey to reach his/her true homeland (*patria*), where he/she will be fully happy. The “state of being on a journey,” however, is not merely a locative category. *Status viatoris* refers rather to the existential condition of human as a creature. *Status viatoris* refers to the existential condition of “unfulfillment” or “transience” that inherently characterizes humans as finite beings. The term *homo viator* expresses the self-awareness of human who lives the transience of his/her existence as a journey toward his/her fullness of being, as a pilgrimage (*peregrinatio*).¹⁷ This awareness makes him/her no longer *homo erro*, a wanderer without a goal, but *homo viator*, a pilgrim with a clear goal in mind.

According to Josef Pieper, the notion of ‘not yet’ in the *status viatoris* contains both negative and positive elements. Negative because it indicates ‘the absence of fulfillment.’ Positive because it indicates the ‘orientation towards fulfillment.’¹⁸ The negative element constitutively brings humans close to nothingness, reminding them that they were created out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*). The ‘not yet’ as a negative element is characterized by the dark side of human freedom, namely its possibility to sin, where sinning means turning to nothingness. By sinning human is heading toward nothingness, or emptiness. Hell means a condition of emptiness, meaninglessness, where hope is in vain. Its inhabitants have lost their *status viatoris*. Meanwhile, the positive element of ‘not yet’ expresses humans’ ability to reach, by their efforts and in their freedom, the final goal of their pilgrimage that will make them enjoy the ‘fulfillment of their being.’ The *status viatoris*, characterized by uncertainty, that is, by possibility, will end with certainty when the pilgrim (*homo viator*) has reached the fulfillment of his/her being in the *status comprehensoris*. In this condition, the human will be fastened on the highest being; his/her heart is no longer restless but enjoys infinite goodness. In other words, the pilgrim has received confirmation in goodness (*confirmatio in*

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, q.11, a.2; q.15, a.10; Cf. Josef Pieper, *On Hope* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 8-9.

¹⁷ Josef Pieper, *On Hope*, 8-9.

¹⁸ Pieper, 13.

bono).¹⁹ Here, it is no longer time to hope, but rather time to enjoy (*fruitio*) because what was expected has now been fulfilled.

Human's "way" (*via*) does lead him/her to death, but not to meaninglessness, because the meaning of *homo viator* lies in the *status comprehensoris*. The *status viatoris* is experienced by humans as long as they are alive in the body, and it ends when the material body dies. In this sense, the human path is bound and limited by time (temporality). Existence is indeed existence-toward-death (*sein-zum-Tode*), but the *status comprehensoris* keeps the *viator* from falling prey to what Heidegger calls *Angst* (existential anxiety). Death is the *terminus* (end) but not the *finis* (goal) of human existence. The human spirit alone transcends time. When one dies, he/she leaves the *status viatoris*, and at the same time he/she steps out of time and into eternity. Idealism, which believes that true reality is spiritual reality and regards the material world as merely an illusion, fails to understand the very nature of human existence, because idealism omits the *status viatoris*.

Likewise, existentialism, which emphasizes that human beings are free to be themselves and to live their existence uniquely, fails, according to Pieper, to fully understand the nature of human existence. This is because existentialism stops at the facticity of human's being-thrown-in-the-world (*Geworfenheit*) and ignores the *pilgrimatical* nature of the *status viatoris*, namely human's orientation toward fulfillment that transcends time.²⁰ The essence of human beings as *viator*, their being, lies in the 'process of becoming'. In the *status viatoris*: humans 'have not yet reached the fullness of their being,' and, thus, insofar as they are still on the 'way' they are still in the process of becoming. The tendency of human nature is not toward nothingness and meaninglessness, but on the contrary, toward goodness, toward the fullness of being and meaning. Humans' "way" leads them not to nothingness, but to the fulfillment of their being [existence], despite the very *status viatoris* as a condition of 'not yet arrived' always implies the possibility of falling into nothingness/emptiness. In this sense, the path of *homo viator* is essentially the path of possibility.

As a pilgrim who has "not yet arrived," the most appropriate attitude for a *viator* is, of course, hope. The hope of fulfillment is what motivates a person to continue his/her journey, no matter how arduous it may be. A person without hope is already dead while his/her body is still alive. It is very common for people who have run out of hope to think about ending their lives. French philosopher Gabriel Marcel said,

Hope is for the soul what breathing is for the living organism. Where hope is lacking, the soul dries up and withers; it is no more than a function; it is merely fit to serve as an object of study to a psychology ... It is precisely the soul that is the pilgrim; it is of the soul and of the soul alone that we can say with supreme truth that 'being' necessarily means 'being on the way (*en route*)'.²¹

Just as a living organism cannot survive without breath, the human soul as *viator* (pilgrim) cannot continue living without hope. But how should hope be understood? How is it different from optimism or from a wish?

¹⁹ Pieper, 15.

²⁰ Pieper, 12.

²¹ Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator. Introduction to the Metaphysics of Hope* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951), 10-11.

Optimism, Pessimism, and Hope

In general, hope is often considered the same as or synonymous with optimism. However, there is a difference between the two. Optimism (*optimum* = best) is a mental attitude that expresses the belief that something good that is desired and attempted will succeed. Based on rational calculations and assessments of existing conditions, optimistic people believe that it is very likely that what they want will be realized. Meanwhile, pessimism (*pessimum* = worst) is a mental attitude that expresses the belief that something bad, undesirable, and to be avoided will happen. Optimism and pessimism are different ways of looking at the same reality. A classic expression states “An optimist sees the glass as half full, while a pessimist sees the glass as half empty.” Or, “An optimist believes to have seen the light at the end of the tunnel, while a pessimist fears that the light is the headlights of a train coming from the opposite direction.” As Winston Churchill said, “A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity, while an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”²²

It is said that the word crisis in Chinese consists of two characters. One character represents “danger,” while the other represents “opportunity.” Similarly, the Greek term *pharmakon* according to Plato can mean both “medicine” and “poison” (*Phaedrus*, 274e). Optimism and pessimism are two ways of perceiving and thus interpreting reality. The glass is de facto half full, but people can interpret it differently. Why do some people see it as “half full” and others see it as “half empty”? Why can the same measure (or reality) affect people differently? The way we see reality is greatly influenced by our thoughts. How we think determines who we are. Marcus Aurelius, a Stoic philosopher, said that happiness depends on the quality of our thoughts, i.e. how we think in the face of reality.²³ What we think about and how we think about it affects who we become. If we start our day, for instance, by reading news about a war, a plane crash, a rapist mutilating the victim, and then move on to obituaries, it’s no wonder that we start off depressed or lethargic. Marcus Aurelius, then, reminds us to be vigilant and careful about what we think. The quality of our lives is affected by what we pay attention to and what we think about.²⁴ Optimism and pessimism are our mental attitudes. Pessimism makes people see reality negatively, which can rob us of meaning, crush our spirit and erode our hope. Pessimism can be toxic, insofar as it makes people reactive and only see problems everywhere. Optimism, on the other hand, makes people proactive, believing that all possibilities and opportunities can be maximized.

So again, optimism is a mental attitude or perspective through which people view situations or events as something that contains something positive or that will end well. An optimistic person waits and believes that a good outcome will come out of the situation. An optimistic attitude is something that can be learned and practiced. Pessimism, on the other hand, is a mental attitude or perspective through which people view situations or events that (will) occur negatively and will have bad consequences. Nihilist philosophers, such as Nietzsche or Camus, believe that life has no intrinsic meaning or value and that one must accept the absurdity of one’s existence.²⁵ Both optimism and pessimism can go to extremes. The person who believes that everything will work out well is unrealistically optimistic; he/she falls into naïve

²² Cited by Stephen J. Costello, *Beyond Hope: Philosophical Reflections* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), 1.

²³ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*. Books 1-6 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Book 2, chapter 1.

²⁴ Aurelius, *Meditations*. Book 2, Chapter 7-8.

²⁵ Claudia Bloeser and Titus Stahl, “Hope,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2022, Edward N. Zalta (ed.) <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/hope/>>.

optimism. This person is caught up in arrogance that can harm him/her. At the other extreme, one can be pessimistic about the situation at hand and think that everything will end in destruction, failure, or defeat. Extreme pessimism often leads people to depression, acute despair, or paralyzing fatalism.

As the Irish writer James Joyce said, in life one can have “two thinks at the same time.”²⁶ That is, one can have up to a certain amount of optimism and up to a certain amount of pessimism. Excessive optimism can be more harmful than realistic pessimism. Stuart Sim says, “Pessimism and optimism are not necessarily mutually exclusive positions, however; pessimists can be optimists about some things, optimists pessimistic about others in their turn.”²⁷ In other words, people need to be optimistic in a rational, realistic sense. Victor Frankl, a Jewish psychiatrist and philosopher, who survived the Auschwitz concentration camp, used the term “tragic optimism” to describe an attitude that combines pessimism and optimism. By tragic optimism, Frankl means remaining optimistic even in the face of the three tragedies that characterize human existence, namely: (1) suffering, (2) sinfulness, and (3) death. Tragic optimism means “saying yes to life in spite of everything”. Frankl writes,

[Tragic optimism] presupposes the human capacity to creatively turn life’s negative aspects into something positive or constructive. In other words, what matters is to make the best of any given situation. “The best,” however, is that which in Latin is called *optimum* – hence the reason I speak of a tragic optimism, that is, an optimism in the face of tragedy and in view of the human potential which at its best always allows for: (1) turning suffering into a human achievement and accomplishment; (2) deriving from guilt the opportunity to change oneself for the better; and (3) deriving from life’s transitoriness an incentive to take responsible action.²⁸

Frankl is not saying that tragic optimism guarantees happiness. For him, happiness is not something to be sought, but something that comes naturally if one has the right attitude toward life. A meaningful life is more important than a happy life. Rather than focusing and devoting energy to the pursuit of happiness, it is better to give oneself to life. “Once an individual’s search for a meaning is successful, it not only renders him happy but also gives him the capability to cope with suffering.”²⁹ Everyone wants his/her life to be meaningful. According to Frankl, when we see many people suffering from neurotic syndromes such as depression, aggression, and addiction, it is because of an existential vacuum, an inner emptiness or meaninglessness. Suicidal tendencies can be overcome when people become aware that there are “some meaning and purpose worth living for.”³⁰ The meaning of life does not come from naive optimism, but from tragic optimism, which is the willingness to accept a bitter or sad reality and then use all human potential to change it into a more positive and constructive one. What is positive sometimes emerges and is meaningful amid negative experiences.

Optimism in the midst of tragedy is what enabled Victor Frankl to survive the horrors of being a Nazi prisoner in Auschwitz. While experiencing brutal dehumanization in the concentration camps, Frankl

²⁶ James Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*, as cited by Costello, *Beyond Hope: Philosophical Reflections*, xii.

²⁷ Stuart Sim, *A Philosophy of Pessimism* (Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 2015), 11.

²⁸ Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992 [1959]), 162.

²⁹ Frankl, 141.

³⁰ Frankl, 143.

maintained his human dignity, did not embrace artificial optimism, and did not succumb to illusions and false hopes. He did not shrink from inhuman conditions. He said yes to a life of suffering and humiliation. He maintained his inner freedom under physical and psychological stress. For example, although Frankl himself was starving because he never received enough rations in the camp, he chose to give the last bread he had to others. For him, it was a free choice, made out of love for others, that he could not give up. He knew that this kind of heroic act could only be asked of him, not of others. It is precisely in this act that he finds meaning in his existence, in his life. Thus, tragic optimism includes (1) belief in the existence of meaning in life regardless of circumstances, (2) acceptance of what cannot be changed, (3) courage and fortitude in the face of adversity. In short, tragic optimism invites humans to be brave and resilient without turning a blind eye to human ugliness and fragility.³¹

Optimism, especially tragic optimism as conceived by Frankl, leads people to hope. When people move from optimism to hope, they do not abandon optimism, but they go beyond it. Hope is not the same as optimism, for while hope presupposes belief, optimism does not.³² In general, optimism consists in the confidence that the desired good is very likely to be realized; the probability is high. On the other hand, the good that is desired in hope seems very unlikely to be realized, although it is by no means impossible. Patients with malignant cancer who show signs of improvement after chemotherapy are optimistic that they will be cured. Meanwhile, a malignant cancer patient whose condition worsened after chemotherapy said, “Although I am not optimistic, I am not without hope. I hope there will be a miracle.” In this sense, hope goes beyond optimism. Hope requires faith, which is not necessarily present in optimism. Hope contains a greater amount of resilience and courage than optimism. Vaclav Havel, former president of the Czech Republic, said, “Hope is not the belief that something will turn out well [that is optimism], but the certainty that something will remain meaningful regardless of how it turns out.”³³ If optimism is the belief in one’s abilities and in a good ending, hope is the belief that the seemingly impossible is not impossible. Hope is the belief in possibility, no matter how small. Let’s now take a closer look at the concept of hope.

The Virtue of Hope and Despair

Gabriel Marcel stated, “The truth is that there can strictly speaking be no hope except when the temptation to despair exists. Hope is the act by which this temptation is actively or victoriously overcome”.³⁴ Despair is the opposite of hope. In contrast to hope, despair is an attitude of surrender to the blows of fate (*fatum*). In hope one accepts the situation and continues to persevere, holding on to the belief that change for the better, however difficult, is still possible. In despair, on the other hand, one gives up and does not see or believe that there is any possibility of a better way. So, hope strengthens while despair paralyzes. According to Marcel, hope is more than simply accepting or embracing the situation but is a kind of ‘non-acceptance’ of the situation—as distinguished from revolt—³⁵ because it believes that improvement is still possible. Hope makes people accept but at the same time refuse to give up. That is why, according

³¹ Stephen J. Costello, *Beyond Hope: Philosophical Reflections*, 27.

³² Costello, xvi.

³³ Havel and Hvizdala, *Disturbing the Peace*, 181.

³⁴ Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 36.

³⁵ Marcel, 38.

to Marcel, hope arises when people experience darkness, whether it is due to illness, separation, alienation, slavery, etc. Hope is the longing to come out of the darkness, the longing for salvation.³⁶

G. Marcel also sees hope as different from optimism. Optimism centers on one's abilities and on certain specific difficulties. The optimist believes that with all the abilities at his/her disposal, he/she will be able to overcome the difficulties at hand. "[Optimism] remains strictly in the province of the 'I myself'."³⁷ In this sense, optimism does not presuppose faith. In contrast, hope is inseparable from faith. For Marcel, hope—especially in the absolute sense—is the availability of the soul to open itself to transcendent reality. Hope is the response of a *finite being* to its *infinite* Creator, as human realizes that he/she owes everything to the *infinite Being*, who has created him/her from nothingness.³⁸ In this sense hope presupposes an attitude of humility. Despair, on the other hand, is an expression of the negative belief that the Ground of Being has abandoned him/her. In contrast to egocentric optimism (or pessimism), hope is relational, and all relationships are a participation in being. When I hope, according to Marcel, I enter the *realm of Being* and not the *realm of Having*. In the realm of Having, I am bound to desire and mastery; whereas in the realm of Being I am bound to love. Hope is more bound up with love than with desire. Hope transcends desire, because hope is not centered on the subject himself. "To hope in" is "to expect from", rather than "to have due to me."³⁹

Marcel distinguishes between "I hope that..." and "I hope...".⁴⁰ "I hope *that* it won't rain today," for example, can be irrational (= illusion) if the current state of nature shows the opposite (cloudy). "I hope *that*" has a specific object and a clear time span. The discourse of whether a hope is rational or not (= illusive or not) according to Marcel applies to "I hope that...". Meanwhile, "I hope..." is absolute hope. It is this absolute hope that transcends desire and imagination. Absolute hope is not a hope for a specific object, such as that X or Y will happen. If, for instance, I hope *that* at the age of 80, I will still be healthy enough to drive a car, but then if that is not the case, I will be disappointed. The "hope that" here is less rational or reasonable. Without a specific object, absolute hope goes beyond desire and imagination. It is a hope that presupposes faith in an infinite Creator. In this sense, a patient has true hope if he realizes that "everything is not necessarily lost if there is no cure."⁴¹ This is the hope that keeps people faithful in times of darkness. Marcel does not see God as an object to be proven. Faith need not be associated with objectivity. Likewise, hope, which is inseparable from faith, is not a *problem* for scientific investigation, but a process and *mystery* in *viator's* journey. In contrast to Enlightenment thinkers who arrogantly placed their trust in the "unlimited power of reason," for Marcel hope as trust in uncertain possibilities is an expression of *viator's* humility, rather than *hubris* (Greek: excessive self-confidence).⁴²

³⁶ Marcel, 30.

³⁷ Marcel, 34.

³⁸ Marcel, 47.

³⁹ Marcel, 56.

⁴⁰ Marcel, 32.

⁴¹ Marcel, 40.

⁴² Ronald T. Michener, "Post-Kantian to Postmodern Considerations of (Theological) Hope," in *Historical and Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Hope*, ed. Steven C. van den Heuvel (Cham: Springer, 2020), 85.

According to Thomas Aquinas, hope can be passion or emotion (*passio*) but it can also be a theological virtue (*virtus theologica*). Hope is a passion when what the soul longs for is what it perceives to be good but very difficult to obtain, though still possible (*bonum futurum arduum possibile adipisci*).⁴³ An athlete hopes to win an Olympic gold medal one day, because the medal is very valuable but difficult to obtain, although possible. For something that is easy to obtain, one does not need hope. One does not need to hope to breathe, because one does this all the time without realizing it. One will only hope one can breathe, if, for example, one gets Covid-19, and breathing becomes a struggle. Hope is a theological virtue when the object of the longing is eternal happiness (*beatitudo aeterna*), namely union with God (*visio beatifica*). “God is the principal object of hope, considered as a virtue.”⁴⁴ As a passion, hope presupposes desire, insofar as one only hopes for what one really wants. Like hope, its opposite, despair (*desperatio*) also presupposes desire, because despair arises when one realizes that what one wants is impossible to obtain.

As both a passion and a virtue, hope has four main characteristics as follows:⁴⁵ (1) the object of hope is something that is perceived as good (*bonum*); (2) it is future-oriented, given that the object is something good that is desired; meaning that it is currently not yet obtained (*not yet*); (3) the desired good is very difficult to obtain (*arduous*); (4) despite being difficult, the object of hope is believed to be possible to obtain.

So, hope is a desire or longing for something valuable (= good), but very difficult to obtain though still possible. If the object of hope were completely unattainable, one would not hope for it at all. If characteristics (1) through (3) above are fulfilled, but characteristic (4) is not, in the sense that the desired good that is difficult to obtain is *impossible* to obtain even though one really desires it, then the person will feel hopeless (*despair*). Despair arises because the person still considers the object of hope to be good for him/her, and he/she continues to want it, but the possibility of obtaining it is closed to him/her. It may not be that the object is unattainable, but that the person perceives it to be so. People who are lazy or who tend to think negatively that they are incapable will easily see the object of hope as impossible, and so they easily fall into despair.

As a passion, according to Aquinas, we can find hope in animals. This is because animals also have a desire for what is good for them, even if it is difficult for them to obtain. “If a dog see a hare, or a hawk see a bird, too far off, it makes no movement towards it, as having no hope to catch it: whereas, if it be near, it makes a movement towards it, as being in hopes of catching it.”⁴⁶ By virtue of their estimative power, animals know what is difficult but possible to obtain and what is difficult and impossible to obtain. According to Aquinas, although “animals have no concept of the future, they are moved by instinct so that they can see [what is good in] the future.”⁴⁷ In its most basic form, then, there are similarities between human and animal hope. However, human hope is not based on instinct alone, but on rational consideration. Thus, as a passion, hope is common to animals and humans. The passion of hope is in the sensory appetite. As a virtue, however—as we shall see shortly—hope is in the human will or in the intellectual appetite.

⁴³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q.40, a.5.

⁴⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q.17, a.5.

⁴⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q.40, a.1 and II-II, q.17, a.1.

⁴⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q.40, a.3.

⁴⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q.40, a.3.

Aquinas gives at least two reasons why the passion of hope can arise. First, because of experience (*experientia*), i.e., the experience of doing something repeatedly creates in a person the ability to do that something. “Through experience, people acquire the ability to do things easily; therefore, hope arises.”⁴⁸ Through experience, for instance, Joko was able to improve his German language skills. If before he despaired because he had difficulty reading German texts, now that despair has turned into hope. At some point, Joko no longer needs hope to speak German because he is now proficient, and German is no longer perceived as difficult. Second, hope grows through education and persuasion (*doctrina et persuasio*). For example, parents always tell their children that they can be a doctor or a president when they grow up. Now, this can be carried over into adulthood, so that the “child” hopes to become a doctor (or president). Just as the teaching and persuasion of parents, teachers, coaches, priests can foster hope, so their teaching or persuasion can foster despair. Thus, somehow hope and despair are learned.

What about false hope? False hope should not be understood as hope for something that is not certain to be realized. Aquinas gives the example of a drunkard’s hope and a young man’s hope.⁴⁹ A drunkard who hopes to jump from the 10th floor of his apartment and expects to land unharmed has false hope. A young man who hopes to become a rich businessman without any hard work has a false hope. They misjudge their abilities and the obstacles they must overcome. False hope is an unreasonable expectation. It is unreasonable to hope that a person who jumps from the tenth floor will not be harmed. What makes hope reasonable is not the fact that the attainment of the expected good thing (object) is certain or merely possible, but the reasonableness of the belief that it is wise for the person to pursue the object at this time or not. A soldier who continues to fight for his country, hoping to win even though he knows that the chances of victory are slim because the enemy is far more numerous, is not entertaining false hopes. Choosing to fight to the death rather than becoming a deserter is the essence and virtue of a soldier. This is not the case with a general who knows that, given the greater number of enemies, he should choose the strategy of waiting for reinforcements first but instead insists on sending his troops into battle. That is an unreasonable choice.

For Aquinas passions are neither intrinsically good nor intrinsically evil. As movements of the nonrational sensory appetite in response to a sensory cognition, passions can be good or evil only indirectly, insofar as they are ruled by or conflict with reason. Obviously, drunkard’s hope and young man’s hope above are not in accordance with right reason. Their passion of hope is not good hope. A person can hope for something good based on the right reason (e.g., to win Olympic gold medal), or he/she can hope for something contrary to the right reason (e.g., to hurt his former lover). In this way, the passion of hope is ambivalent, and thus cannot be a virtue. Different from passions, virtues are intrinsically good dispositions of character (*habitus*) since they are, by definition, dispositions to act in accordance with right reason. Unlike the movement of passions which is transitory, virtue is a stable disposition of character which enables human beings to feel and act in the right way.⁵⁰ By definition, virtue is good quality of mind directed

⁴⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q.40, a.5.

⁴⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q.40, a.6.

⁵⁰ Christopher A. Bobier, “Why Hope Is Not a Moral Virtue: Aquinas’s Insight,” *Ratio* 31, no. 2 (2018): 214–32, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rati.12161>.

toward the good and cannot be used inordinately. On the other hand, passion, which is not necessarily subject to the right reason, can be directed toward objects that are either good or bad. For instance, a vicious man like Hitler can hope for the immoral, namely the extermination of the Jews.

To be good, hope as a passion according to Aquinas needs to be regulated by other moral virtues, especially by magnanimity and humility. “Magnanimity moves the soul to something great in accordance with right reason.”⁵¹ A man with the virtue of magnanimity believes in his natural abilities and dares to pursue and achieve great things that valuable where he deserves them. A magnanimous man hopes to realize all his potential and is confident that he will be able to achieve what he hopes for. Thus, magnanimity enables one to experience the right amount of hope in a given circumstance. Magnanimity, lest it become *hubris* or *praesumptio* (arrogance, overconfidence), must be accompanied by humility. Humility is a virtue that moderates or restrains hope: “Humility restrains the appetite so that it does not extend to something great apart from what reason prescribes.”⁵² Sometimes one hopes for something that is beyond one’s capacity. Humility is the virtue that makes one aware of the limits of one’s abilities as a creation, aware that there is a gap between the Creator and the creature, aware that one needs divine help (grace) to achieve the fulfillment of one’s being. While magnanimity makes one easy and strong in hope, humility reminds one to hope within the limits of one’s condition as a creature.

The opposite of magnanimity is pusillanimity, which is an attitude of disbelief in one’s own abilities and fear of pursuing great things one deserves. Pusillanimity makes people easily fall into pessimism and eventually despair. Despair makes people unmotivated, no longer trying to realize their potential and pursue the fullness of existence. For believers, according to Aquinas, despair is a sin because despair is an attitude that prevents people from living their lives as a pilgrimage toward the fullness of being.⁵³ By despairing, human rejects the nature of his existence as *homo viator*, ceases to believe, or closes the door to divine help; or in other words, rejects divine goodness (*detestatio boni divini*). Augustine said, “Two things kill the soul: despair and false hope.”⁵⁴

Some interpreters mistakenly assume that the theological virtue of hope elevates and perfects the natural passion of hope.⁵⁵ As we have seen above, the virtue that perfects the passion of hope is not the theological virtue of hope but the moral virtues of magnanimity and humility. Formally, the object of hope as a theological virtue is the same as the object of hope as a passion, namely a future good, difficult but possible. However, materially their objects are different. The object of hope *qua* passion is particular and finite good within one’s natural power to attain (e.g. success, health, victory), a good whose realization does not necessarily require the assistance of another. By contrast the object of hope *qua* theological virtue is universal and infinite good, namely eternal happiness “which consists in the enjoyment of God Himself.”⁵⁶ This infinite good is not within human’s natural power to attain without divine assistance. Hope as a theological virtue expects from God’s hand the eternal life which is God Himself: *sperat Deum a Deo*.

⁵¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q.161, a.1 ad3.

⁵² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q.161, a.1 ad3.

⁵³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q.20, a.1.

⁵⁴ Augustine, *Sermo* 87, 8, col. 535, PL 38, as cited by J. Pieper, *On Hope*, 35.

⁵⁵ Alan Mittleman, *Hope in A Democratic Age. Philosophy, Religion, and Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 51.

⁵⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q.17, a.2.

Hope is the virtue of those who seek the fullness of their being because now, on this earth, on this journey (in *statu viatoris*) they find themselves lacking. Hope, then, no longer exists for the saints in heaven, for they have attained fulfillment, have obtained what they had hoped for during their earthly life. They have achieved the *status comprehensoris*.

The theological virtue of hope, in sum, perfects the internal act of the will (intellectual appetite), in this case act of hoping in another's assistance to achieve a future good that is difficult but possible to obtain. Hence, the virtue of hope has twofold objects. The first one is eternal happiness, and this the "final cause" or end for which hope longs. The second "the divine assistance... on whose help [hope] relies." This is the "efficient cause" or means on which hope leans. Thus, the act of hoping consists in a combination of longing and leaning. Unlike natural and acquired moral virtues, which are formed through habituation and effort, hope as a theological virtue is a supernatural and infused virtue through God's grace. A hopeful believer relies upon grace to obtain strength in trials. The virtue of hope helps a believer to "persevere and grow even amid tragedies, injustices, failures, dry spells, aging, decline, and the inevitable approach of death."⁵⁷ Hope is a virtue of the will that precludes undue dejection and despair and so keeps the believer to go on his/her arduous journey.

According to Aquinas, hope cannot be separated from the other theological virtues, namely faith and love (charity). The relationship between the three is as follows: faith precedes hope, and hope precedes love. Faith resides in the intellect and directs people to God as the source of knowledge and truth. The objects of hope, that is eternal happiness and divine assistance... "both of these are proposed to us by faith, whereby we come to know that we are able to obtain eternal life, and for this purpose the divine assistance."⁵⁸ Hope itself makes human focus on God and long for Him as the source of perfect goodness, because human believes God will help him/her to achieve eternal happiness. Thus, from God human expects divine help and eternal happiness; both of which human knows by faith. Meanwhile, love makes human bound and united with God, just as love makes lovers want to be united. Aquinas says, "hope leads man to love, insofar as by expecting divine favor and eternal happiness man is then motivated to love God and obey His commandments."⁵⁹

Hope is a virtue for human pilgrims (*homo viator*) on earth or those in purgatory, who still travel through time and look to the future. "There is no hope either in the blessed or in the damned. On the other hand, hope can be in wayfarers (*viator*), whether of this life or in purgatory, because in either case they apprehend happiness as a future possible thing".⁶⁰ On the one hand, according to Aquinas—as well as Dante Alighieri—hope cannot exist for those in hell, because they have already received eternal punishment and they know they can never get out of there. In eternity there is no past and no future; eternity is an endless present. Since there is no future, the inhabitants of hell cannot hope. The dwellers of heaven, on the other hand, have continuously participated in God's eternal bliss, regardless of time. "The blessed do not [need]

⁵⁷ David Elliot, "Christian as Homo Viator: A Resource in Aquinas for Overcoming 'Worldly Sin and Sorrow,'" *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 34, no. 2 (2014): 104, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sce.2014.0044>.

⁵⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q.17, a.7.

⁵⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q.17, a.8.

⁶⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q.18, a.3.

to hope for the continuation of their happiness, because now they are enjoying it, and for them there is no future [since they are already in eternity].”⁶¹

Does Hope Lead Humans to Action?

If the virtue of hope directs human’s attention to eternal happiness and divine assistance, how does it actually help *homo viator* to endure trials and sufferings? As we have seen in the introduction, Camus criticize Christian hope as a “fatal evasion,” because it offers illusion and thus distracts human from the hardships of the here and now. Spinoza suggests that it is better for human to rely on “the guidance of reason” rather than depending on hope. Similarly, Nietzsche is also very critical of Christian hope and warns, “Do not believe those who speak to you of extraterrestrial hopes.”⁶² Nietzsche emphasizes *amor fati*, that is “saying yes to life,” in the sense of accepting human existence in all its aspects, including suffering and hardships rather than seeking a better or different reality. Accordingly, he opposes all notions of hope “in hidden harmonies, in future blessedness and justice.”⁶³ Interpreting the myth of Pandora’s box he calls hope “the worst of all evils because it prolongs the torments of man.”⁶⁴ Others see hope negatively because it can make people slothful and do nothing but passively wait. Tadeusz Borowski, a Jew imprisoned by the Nazis in Auschwitz, considered hope useless or even harmful, “We never thought to rid ourselves of hope, and that is why we are dying in the gas-chambers.”⁶⁵ In short, some suspect that the hope for eternal happiness only makes one lazy, easily resigned, less resilient, and that hope therefore only prolongs human suffering. If this is the case, hope will not lead *homo viator* to his goal but instead it can become a kind of opium that lulls one into a false sense of security.

Contemporary philosopher, Byung-Chul Han disagrees with these observations. For him, “Hope has an *active core*. The spirit of hope invigorates and spurs us to action.”⁶⁶ Hope turns our attention to the future and anticipates. Hope sharpens our sense for what-is-not-yet and thus gives us “power to act and perceive of which neither reason nor understanding are capable.”⁶⁷ He then cites Erich Fromm who says, “Hope is neither passive waiting nor is it unrealistic forcing of circumstances that cannot occur... To hope means to be ready at every moment for that which is not yet born... Those whose hope is strong see and cherish all signs of new life and are ready every moment to help the birth of that which ready to be born.”⁶⁸ Han criticizes Spinoza for putting too much faith in the guidance of reason and considering hope as irrational. In other words, for Spinoza any ‘hope’—if there is one—should also be based on reason. However, based merely on calculating reason is optimism, not hope. For Han, reason is an organ that detects what is already there. Hope, by contrast, looks to the future and “can hear an undertone to which reason is deaf. Reason does not recognize the signs of what is coming, what is not yet born.”⁶⁹ In a similar vein, Paul

⁶¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q.18, a.2 ad2.

⁶² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 6.

⁶³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human and Beyond Good and Evil* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2008), 562.

⁶⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, §71.

⁶⁵ Cited by Joseph J. Godfrey, *A Philosophy of Human Hope* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), 1.

⁶⁶ Byung Chul-Han, *The Spirit of Hope*, chap.2, Kindle.

⁶⁷ Chul-Han.

⁶⁸ Chul-Han.

⁶⁹ Chul-Han.

Ricoeur once said, “hope opens up what [human] knowledge claims to close.”⁷⁰ Besides *intellectus fidei*, for Ricoeur there is *intellectus spei*; I hope in order to understand (*spero ut intelligam*). Hope enables human to see the world in different light. Hope stimulates the imagination and generates forces that move people to action.

Byung-Chul Han admits that we should distinguish between two kinds of hope: [1] a passive, inactive, and weak hope, and [2] an active and strong hope. The first approximates what he calls a vain wish. A wish is an expectation that is not forceful and relates to an object of inner-worldly event, as when we say to a friend who is about to take his/her final exam, “I wish you luck”. Wishes have no power to change; they simply wait for the objects or the inner-worldly events to satisfy them. The second one, on the other hand, is forceful. Active and strong hope is like a spring that brings enthusiasm and motivation. Han writes, “Inherent in hope is a determination to act... Hope... develops a *narrative* that guides action... Unlike a wish, hope stimulates the narrative imagination. It *actively dreams*... and is not bound up with an object or inner-worldly event.”⁷¹ According to Han, hope is not a night-dream that looks backward, in which the ego is introverted, immersed in itself and does not open itself to others. Hope is more like a daydream that looks forward, because it stimulates the ego to imagine new forms of action. Referring to Ernst Bloch,⁷² Han underscores that, while night-dreams do not lead to collective action because everyone is isolated, daydreams with open eyes have a dimension of “We”, that is ready to work for the betterment of the world.

Speaking about Christian hope, Byung-Chul Han refers to Jürgen Moltmann who underlines the eschatological nature of Christian hope, “The Christian hope is directed toward a *novum ultimum*, toward a new Creation of all things by the God of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”⁷³ This means that the *locus* of Christian hope is not the immanence of action, but the transcendence of faith. This does not imply, however, that Christian hope is not transformative. Moltmann writes, “Christian hope cannot cling rigidly to the past... and ally itself with the utopia of the *status quo*. Rather, it is itself summoned and empowered to creative transformation of reality... Finally, the believing hope will itself provide *inexhaustible resources* for the creative, imagination of love.”⁷⁴ Commenting on this statement, Han concludes that Christian hope does not lead to a passivity devoid of any action. Rather it pushes people to action, precisely because it stimulates them to imagine new ways of acting and awakens the initiative to leave behind the old and adapt to the new. Christian hope is not an escape from the world but rather “it strains after the future.”⁷⁵

In his longing for God as one’s eternal beatitude, the hopeful believers are not aloof from earthly goods and human progress. At the end of his discussion of hope as passion in the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas asks whether hope is a help or an obstacle to action. His answer is clear: *spes operationem adiuvat*. Even as a passion, hope is conducive to action. Because its object is a good, difficult *but still possible*, Aquinas says, “hope of its very nature is a help to action by making it more intense... hope causes delight

⁷⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred. Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, trans. David Pellauer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 216.

⁷¹ Byung Chul-Han, *The Spirit of Hope*, chap.2, Kindle.

⁷² Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 1 (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1986), 91-92.

⁷³ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 34.

⁷⁴ Moltmann, 34.

⁷⁵ Byung-Chul Han, *The Spirit of Hope*, chap.2, Kindle.

and this makes for more effective operation.”⁷⁶ As in the Lord’s Prayer, the believers should pray for temporal goods (i.e., ask for daily bread) but do so “in reference to eternal happiness.” Thus, “whether it is the need for our daily bread or the most pressing concerns of social justice, hope is not a distraction from earthly concerns but ordains them to our eschatological end.”⁷⁷ As a theological virtue, hope longs for God as its ultimate object and as the ultimate agent of assistance. Aquinas recognizes, however, that we may also hope for more proximate or earthly goods (e.g. the goods of our political community) and in more proximate assistance (e.g. the help of our fellow citizens), as long as both are ordered to God (our ultimate good and helper).⁷⁸ Hoping for our country’s well-being and placing hope in our fellow citizens as the proximate and secondary agents “through whom one is helped to obtain any goods that are ordered to happiness,” both are compatible and are not in conflict with our theological hope. Moreover, we cannot hope to enjoy an eternal loving union with God, unless we can build peaceful coexistence with our neighbors. It is not true, therefore, that hope of eternal beatitude does not lead to action.

Conclusion

The concept of *homo viator* reveals, on the one hand, an awareness of the temporality and finitude of human existence on earth, and, on the other hand, a belief in the possibility of the fullness of existence, an existence that is no longer characterized by temporality and finitude. In other words, the very concept of *homo viator* implies the hope of eternal happiness (*beatitudo aeterna*) and, accordingly, an understanding of the present life as a pilgrimage, an arduous journey toward the ultimate good of human beings, which is difficult and yet, with divine assistance, is possible to obtain. For *homo viator*, to live is to hope. This hope is fundamental—or, in G. Marcel’s terminology, absolute—because it constitutes an openness to possibilities that transcend the limits of human reason and therefore hope presupposes faith. This fundamental hope is more than just a passion (feeling or emotion), but a theological virtue because it is the fruit of a decision of the will to attain God as the infinite good by leaning on God’s help. In virtue of hope, *homo viator* is able to accept the realities of the world as they are, instead of rejecting or avoiding them through fear and flight (evasion), while believing that everything will eventually end in an eschatological triumph. With the horizon open to transcendence, *homo viator* stays positive because he/she understands that the meaning of human existence as creature is not to be found in nothingness, but in the fulfillment of his/her being.

Hope is more than optimism. Based on reasonable evidence, optimism is a conviction that the world is changing for the better. Optimism can be quite passive, but hope is proactive. Hope is not just optimism that sees everything will turn out all right, but something rooted in the belief that there is some good worth fighting for. There have been many revolutions in the world in the past, and they happened because people hoped for a better life. If there was no hope, there would be no revolution. At the heart of hope is the will to act. One with hope works; one without hope is desperate and so does not work. Therefore, it is not true that hope promotes passivity and does not lead human to action. False hope is an artificial optimism and is

⁷⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q.40, a.8.

⁷⁷ David Elliot, “The Christian as Homo Viator: A Resource in Aquinas for Overcoming ‘Worldly Sin and Sorrow,’” 105.

⁷⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q.17, a.4; Cf. M. Lamb, “Aquinas and the Virtues of Hope: Theological and Democratic,” 307-308.

a form of self-defense, an escape from reality. True hope, on the other hand, is not an escape from realities but an intense longing for future good which is difficult but possible. A hopeful *homo viator* will not easily succumb to the blows of fate but will persevere through hardship and darkness, believing that even from the midst of darkness light can come (*lux in tenebris lucet*). The theological virtue of hope gives *homo viator* the strength to act and to see, a strength that human reason alone would not be capable of.

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