

Hope Matters

Introduction

What is it to hope for A? And why does the capacity to have particular hopes matter? There are now two main philosophical accounts of what it is to hope for A, neither one of which yields a satisfactory account of why hope matters. The *belief-desire model* of hope takes hope to be a desire for some state of affairs that one believes is possible. The model is designed to accommodate all possible "I hope..." locutions. But that strength also appears to disable the model from having anything interesting to say about why hope matters. Surely, critics say, many hopes are trivial. In accommodating even trivial hopes, the belief-desire model gives us a deflationary account of hopes mattering.

The *adversity model* takes substantial or significant hopes to be one's experienced under conditions of adversity, where we encounter obstacles to our agency that make it difficult or impossible at present to bring about what we desire. The model is not designed to accommodate all possible "I hope ..." locutions, but instead to get at why *some* hope matters: hope keeps us going under circumstances that invite despair. I have yet to find a critic of the adversity model. But we should, I think, be

suspicious of the *inflationary* account of mattering that the adversity model encourages (for example in its "do or die" tone of talk about hope protecting us from despair).

What we need is an account of hope that does two things: (1) it enables us to see why the capacity to hope, no matter how trivial the hopes are, is an interesting and significant capacity; and (2) it enables us to see why a certain range of hopes that only agents can have are distinctively important, but without inflating the significance of hope.

I. The Belief-Desire Model of Hope

Part of the difficulty of stating why hope matters is that the possible objects of hope are enormously varied. One may hope for what will be brought about, if at all, through one's own efforts, through luck, through God's will, through the laws of nature, or through the forces of social progress, as, for example, one hopes to earn an A, win the lottery, be graced with patience, not be struck by lightning, and that class society will come to an end. Hopes extend from the trivial (that there is pepper jelly in the refrigerator) to the most important (that perpetual peace will be achieved). Hopes may be on behalf of oneself, inanimate objects, animals, other people, nations, all of

humanity. Hope can focus on the past and present as well as the future, as for example, one hopes that deaths reported in the newspaper were painless, or that the class one's colleague is teaching this hour is going well. One may hope for what is nearly certain, as a stellar student may hope she gets another A on her exam, and for what is improbable, such as recovering from advanced stages of cancer. One may hope for outcomes that nothing turns on (that the day lilies will bloom this week) or that everything depends (that a lifetime of struggle and sacrifice will not have been for nought). Hope may enable one to keep going in difficult times, or it may be just an optimistic habit (for example, when one hopes each day to find a good parking space). Hope may be for the immediate future (that one's turn at the traffic light will be next) or for the temporally remote.

In view of this variety, the most promising analysis of hope would appear to be a belief-desire model.ⁱ On this model, hope has two necessary conditions. First, hope necessarily includes a belief that a state of affairs is possible but not inevitable or assured. If the believed probability of A materializing is too low, say by being a mere logical possibility, then one can only wish for A, not hope for it.ⁱⁱ If the believed probability of A

materializing is too high, then one is planning on A not hoping for it.

Second, hope necessarily includes a desire that a possible state of affairs actually materializes in the temporal unfolding of events. The desire constitutive of hope is thus not merely a desire for something imagined to be good in some respect. There is no oddity in desiring something regarded as good in some respect—say, winning at cards—and yet not preferring all things considered that one actually win. Perhaps it would be a better thing if someone else won. In hoping to win, by contrast, the object of desire is not just one's winning but that, among the possible outcomes of playing cards, one's winning is the outcome that actually materializes. As Luc Bovens puts it, "hoping typically involves more of a conscious endorsement of the value of the projected state of the world than mere desiring."ⁱⁱⁱ

In sum, hoping is an emotional attitude directed at a *temporal unfolding of events* that one prefers and believes possible. We can have hopes about how the temporal unfolding of events proceeds only because we assume that there is more than one way in which events could unfold, and some unfoldings match our preference structure better than others.

I emphasize here that hope is an attitude toward the *temporal unfolding of events* in order to forestall a common objection to the belief-desire model of hope. That objection is that this model fails to capture what is significant about the capacity to hope, because the belief-desire model is non-selective. It applies equally to our most significant hopes— (for survival, for escape from hardship, for the betterment of our lives) and the most trivial. It includes both hopes that sustain agency and provide a bulwark against despair as well as hopes whose realization is in no way up to us and hopes whose dashing would only be a minor disappointment. The belief-desire model of hope has thus been regarded as a “deflationary account,”^{iv} or a “lowest common denominator” analysis,^v that is designed to capture only “lower order” hopes.^{vi}

It is true that if one begins from the assumption that hopes are significant only to the extent they are for important things, or enhance agency, or keep us from despair, the belief-desire model of hope does not give us an account of hope that makes *those* values of hope perspicuous.^{vii} But there may be more than one reasonable account of why hope matters. Here is what the belief-desire model enables us to say about the significance of hope:

Hoping—even for the most trivial of things-- is a relatively sophisticated cognitive capacity. It requires the ability to imaginatively entertain a possible future and to recognize it as not the only possible future. Entertaining possible futures means both entertaining hypotheses about *what* the options might be, as well as entertaining those options as *developing from the present*—that is, hoping requires some sense that events proceed from here (now) to there (then).

Hoping also requires the capacity to appreciate the fact that enduring objects have not only present states, but future states as well, and to have desires about what those future states will be. My hopes, for example, for myself, my pets, and this paper I am writing, are hopes for their future state. If my dogs have hopes, that's an interesting and significant fact about their psychology: They have (at least some proto-type of) the capacity to understand of objects' temporal endurance, to imagine their possible future states, and to take future possibilities seriously.

Most importantly, having hopes for ourselves involves the capacity to take our own future seriously. In having hopes for myself—for example, that my shoes will last the summer--the future possibilities from which I pick are

desirable, or not, because of the qualities they have as *my* future state. It is some version of me, of my life, that I am picking when I hope for one future rather than another. In hoping that my shoes will last the summer, I am alive to the fact that it will be me up ahead there, later in the summer; it will be me wearing those increasingly worn shoes; and it will be me who will have to buy new ones if they don't last. By the end of the summer, what is now the future will no longer be an imaginative prospect, a mere possibility; it will be actual; and I will be the one who has to deal with it. Hopes one might say are *both* a preference about one's *future possibilities* as well as a preference about *the real present* experienced by oneself—just in the future.^{viii}

The capacity to take seriously that it will be *oneself* up there in the future enjoying or suffering the consequences of one's present intending, planning, and project formation, is surely at the root of our taking an *interest* in the business of intending, planning, and project formation and to framing intentions, plans and projects that one won't later regret. Thus, hoping is connected to the same capacities that give us an interest in making use of our agency.

Hope is by no means the only emotional attitude in which we entertain and take seriously alternate temporal unfoldings of events. Hope is one of a category of emotional attitudes that might be described as *reactions to the plurality of temporal possibilities*. Regret, for example, is a reactive attitude to the plurality of possibilities in the past. In regret, one imaginatively entertains possibilities for how events might have unfolded in the past and how things would stand now had they so unfolded. Anxiety, not surprisingly, often accompanies hope because it involves taking seriously undesirable future possibilities. Finally, though less obviously attuned to the *plurality* of possibilities remorse, guilt, and fear at least share a temporal orientation. Fearers, like hopers, have a future-directed concern for themselves or others. And the remorseful and guilty take seriously their own pasts, and the thought, "Had I only done otherwise!"

The significance of hope, then, is that the capacity to hope signals the presence of a being with fairly sophisticated cognitive and attitudinal capacities. They are capacities for appreciating ourselves as temporally enduring beings and for having concerns about—taking seriously—our own future states. The capacities involved in hoping enable us not only to appreciate our own temporal

endurance and to experience future-oriented *self*-concern, they also enable us appreciate the temporality of others and to experience future-oriented *other*-concern. In hoping on other's behalf, we take seriously what it will be like for them, up ahead there in the future, how the temporal unfolding of events may possibly proceed, and we prefer one of those unfoldings to others. Such future-oriented other-concern is at the heart of both malice and benevolence. Finally, hoping also signals the presence of cognitive capacities that are closely tied to agency (and proto-agency). Framing simple intentions, complex plans, or overarching projects for one's life depends on capacities to imagine one's future, to take seriously the fact that what one does now will bring about *one's own* future, and to select our possible future trajectories.

II. The Adversity Model

Even if the belief-desire model of hope has *something* to say about the significance of hope, one might nevertheless think that this model fails to hit upon the main reason agents value both the capacity to hope and the having of particular hopes. While all hopes are about the temporal unfolding of events, in some hopes we actively *take ourselves* into the hoped for future rather than

passively wait for it. As agents, the hopes that matter most to us are what we might call *practical hopes*—hopes for the success of our time-extended pursuits that are aimed at realizing ends to which we attach relatively high importance.^{ix} Practical pursuits involve some use of one's agency, though just how much may vary a good deal. One may attempt to get rich by buying a lottery ticket and finding out the results of the draw each week—a minimal use of agency. Or one may attempt to get rich by going to school, working hard, and investing wisely. Pure reliance on luck—for example, hoping to get rich by having an inheritance drop in one's lap—is not a practical pursuit. The pursuits that involve the greatest use of our agency are significantly time-extended ones that include a series of intentions and sub-plans (sub-pursuits, if you like) on whose success the overall success of the pursuit depends. Hoping for the success of one's pursuit, then, will also entail hoping for the success of a complex set of intentions and plans. We might call these latter hopes "constitutive hopes."^x In the course of one's pursuit, many constitutive hopes may be disappointed, and sometimes it may even be unclear what one should constitutively hope for, since it may be unclear what steps should be taken in pursuit of one's end. Continuing to pursue one's ends

under these conditions typically depends on sustaining hope in the possibility of succeeding in one's pursuit rather than giving up hope and falling into despair.

And *here* we have the kind of hope that looks truly significant for beings like ourselves who are agents. The kind of hope that agents need most is hope for the success of their pursuits under conditions in which constitutive hopes have failed or are lacking, and thus under the very conditions that invite despair. If there is anything that counts as a distinctively human kind of hoping, this looks like it. Maintaining and pursuing practical hopes is intimately tied to our agency. And given the extent to which we define who we are in terms of what we attempt to do, maintaining and pursuing practical hopes also will play a significant constitutive role in personal identity. As Marcel says, practical hopes "have their roots in the very depths of what I am" and thus their dashing is an occasion for alienation and loss of integrity.^{xi}

Models of hope for the success of one's endeavor under conditions of adversity now dominate the literature on hope.^{xii} Aquinas is an oft acknowledged progenitor of what I am calling the adversity model of hope. In his view, hope is directed at "a future good that is arduous and difficult—but nevertheless possible—to obtain."^{xiii}

Hope on this model has three distinctive features. First, such hope is at least typically what we might call, following Patrick Shade "salvific" hope--hope for a better future and for a break with the past. In Shade's words, "[t]he ends for which we hope are never merely future *possibilities*, nor even merely *meaningful* future goods, but rather future goods *promising improvement* relative to our present state" and "the goodness of hope's ends tends to be salvific or extensional."^{xiv} The idea here is that the objects of hope that are most significant to agents are those that improve their lives in particularly important ways.

Second, the adversity model of hope proposes that not just any uncertainty about the future provides the logically necessary pre-requisite for hope. Only uncertainty generated by the fact that our pursuits have hit obstacles, setbacks, or the absence of a viable plan, can ground a hopeful response. On the adversity model, it is precisely this fact that distinguishes hoping from planning: When there is no obstacle to the effective use of our agency in achieving our ends, good planning is what's needed to reach our ends. When effective agency is impeded, we must rely on hope for the successful realization of our ends rather than a plan for it.^{xv} Thus, so long as our

pursuits are proceeding smoothly, there is no occasion for hope.

Third, hope arises only in contexts where despair—if not general despair, at least despair about the particular endeavor—would be a tempting response. “The truth is,” Marcel observes, “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.”^{xvi}

The significance of hope, on the adversity model, lies in the power of hope to motivate and enable agency under conditions that impose severe constraints on agency. Hope motivates agents to continue developing strategies and to acquiring new information and skills that would help them surmount obstacles to success. In their cross-cultural study of hope, for example, Averill and Sundararajan observed that both Koreans and Americans said that they “worked harder” and “became better organized” because of their hopes.^{xvii} Because hoping supports a commitment to continued endeavoring, hope increases the likelihood of a successful endeavor. Thus, hope is *instrumentally* valuable.

The adversity model obviously does not fit all instances of hoping, and thus doesn’t have the scope that the belief-desire model does. What the adversity model *does*

aim to do is to capture the kind of hope that matters to agents, namely, practical hopes—hopes for the realization of time-extended agential endeavors.^{xviii}

But if what we want is a model of practical hopes, there are good reasons not to settle for the adversity model. The adversity model makes two critical assumptions, both of which are false, and both of which severely limit this model's ability to capture the full range of practical hopes. Those assumptions are: (1) that a necessary condition of hoping is the presence of some agency-limiting obstacle to one's endeavor, and (2) that hope has instrumental value only insofar as it motivates us to (try to) surmount that obstacle. Hoping thus enhances agency only by motivating us to reduce the limitations on our agency or to patiently wait for a time when that limitation will be removed.

Now, there is no doubt that we are most aware of our hopes when they are most at risk of being dashed. And there is no doubt that the instrumental value of hoping is most salient when hope buoys us against the temptation to give up in the face of persistent or enormous obstacles. But why think that we aren't also hoping when our pursuits are going along smoothly, and that hope has no instrumental value in non-adverse conditions?

The main reason for insisting that one cannot hope for ends where there aren't obstacles to achieving them, is the thought that there would then be no way of distinguishing *hoping* from *planning*: if there were no obstacles, we wouldn't hope to achieve our ends, we would just plan to do so and act on that plan^{xix} But why must planning how to achieve, and acting for the purpose of achieving, one's end rule out hoping to in fact achieve it? There is, of course, an important difference between *planning on* realizing one's end and *hoping to* realize it. To *plan on* realizing one's end is to take it as a more or less sure thing that one is going to do so. To *hope to* realize one's end is to take it that there are significant contingencies that, while not ruling out the possibility of success, nevertheless make success uncertain.

So *planning-on* and *hoping-for* are two different things. But it does not follow that *hoping to* realize one's end and *acting on a plan for* realizing one's end are incompatible. That is because having a *plan for* realizing one's end is not at all the same thing as *planning on* realizing it, i.e., assuming that one's plan is so fully adequate as to virtually guarantee success.

Many of the ends that we hope for are the object of hope not because there is some known obstacle to achieving

those ends but simply because there is *some* factor that renders achieving the end uncertain. Consider, for example, the fact that in planning our lives we often set ends that we plan to achieve and leave working out the details of the plan for later.^{xx} The uncertainty of achieving one's ends results not from any obstacle, but simply from one's not having bothered yet to consider the means and thus to confirm the possibility of a workable plan. Not having worked out a plan introduces two sources of uncertainty: 1) the possibility there isn't in fact a workable plan, and 2) the possibility that the hoped-for end will conflict with some of one's other ends that have higher priority. So, for example, I may hope to show my horse this summer, but not having determined the dates of the shows and compared them to my calendar of other commitments, it's possible that showing is incompatible with my other summer plans. Finally, because hoped-for ends are something we hope to attain in the future, it is always possible that means that we presently have at our disposal may not be available at a later date. My horse may pull up lame, I might later have unexpected expenses and be unable to pay entry fees, or I might fall and break a leg. Given the temporal remoteness of the ends of, and the complex activity involved in, many practical pursuits, we will quite often have reason to

think our end is merely possible but not assured. Hope will be in order.

So it looks as though we can hope to achieve our ends even when there are no obstacles in sight. Hope does not arise, as Marcel claimed it did, only where we also have reason to despair. Even absent obstacles or setbacks, all sorts of contingencies can still hedge one's practical pursuits. Given that one might have reasons, other than the presence of obstacles, to be daunted by the contingencies hedging one's practical pursuits, we can see how hope in these (as yet) untroubled pursuits would be just as instrumentally valuable as hope in stalled endeavors. Hope may keep us from dwelling on the fact that we don't yet have a plan and perhaps never will have a workable one, or from entertaining pessimistic thoughts about everything that could go wrong along the way. *Sometimes* hope buoys us against despair. But *sometimes* hope matters because it stops us from fretting.

In sum, the adversity model of hope underestimates the instrumental value of hope for agents by imagining that we hope only in the face of obstacles. It also tends to inflate the value of hope by imagining that the only options are hope or despair. One might also question the stipulation that practical hopes must be "salvific." This

seems to arbitrarily limit what agents may have practical hopes for, and contributes to an inflationary account of why hope matters. What the adversity model *does* correctly draw attention to is the fact that, from an agent's perspective the hope that matters most is practical hope and hope matters because it sustains our practical pursuits. It is time to take a closer look at practical hope and its instrumental value.

III. The Work of Practical Hope^{xxi}

Practical hope covers a large terrain. Practical hope may be for ends realizable in the immediate future via very simple plans. My cat and I, for example, have simple practical hopes—I, when I walk to the refrigerator and reach for the door hoping to find pepper jelly; he, when he meows for me to follow him to the closed study door, hoping I will open it and he will find food left in the other cat's bowl.

More significant from an agent's perspective are practical hopes for ends realizable only in a remoter future, and only via relatively complex time-extended plans containing subordinate ends that are the object of "constitutive hopes." Complex, time-extended plans may afford multiple opportunities for setbacks, obstacles, and

other planning difficulties to arise and thus multiple opportunities for reconsidering whether to go forward with the plan. The practical value of hope lies in its spurring us to continue on. But how, exactly does hope sustain time-extended practical pursuits?

It is tempting to think that hope does *all* the work in sustaining practical pursuits in the face of daunting uncertainties or actual obstacles: hopeful people weather uncertainties and setbacks, resisting the temptation to reconsider plans; people who lose hope let uncertainties and setbacks defeat their planning. But this surely exaggerates hope's instrumental value. Hopeless people can still act--perhaps not easily or happily--but they can persist. Moreover, whatever motivational work hope does in sustaining time-extended practical pursuits is a work that can be done by other motivations as well--for example, by fear of what giving up would mean, or by a conviction that one owes it to others not to give up.

We would do better, then, to seek out a more modest proposal for how hope sustains time-extended practical pursuits and thus for hope's instrumental value. Here, in outline, is what I propose. The principal motivational underpinning to practical pursuits is not hope. It's *commitment* to the practical pursuit. Hope never sustains

practical pursuits all by itself, but always *seconds* a prior commitment. As a result, hope's capacity to keep us going in the face of uncertainties and depends on the nature of the prior commitment. Are we just taking a shot at realizing, are we endeavoring to realize, or are we totally invested in realizing a particular end? Hope can second commitment, because hope is a pattern of *disattention* to evidence suggestive of the pursuit's possible or likely failure; and because hope involves the *imaginative projection of one's self into the future*; and because hope typically is supported by a *hope narrative* that makes sense of one's disattending negative evidence and one's taking seriously the possibility of becoming the hoped-for future self. And now to refine that picture.

Hope & Degrees of Commitment. To commit oneself to a practical pursuit is to set aside the option of continuously re-raising the question, "Is this end really worth the effort?" Only by a commitment that binds oneself across time to realizing an end can one engage in any time-extended practical pursuit.^{xxii} Absent a commitment that settles the question of whether or not to pursue one's end, every setback would be an occasion for revisiting the question of whether or not to take the next step.

Of course, even with a commitment to pursuing one's end, very large or very frequent setbacks provide a reason for revisiting the question of continuing, and potentially provide a reason for terminating the endeavor. Just where the bar for "very large" and "very many," or "too large" and "too many" setbacks is set depends in part on the nature of our commitment to a time-extended practical. In committing ourselves to a practical pursuit, we may see ourselves as doing one of three quite different sorts of things: taking a shot, endeavoring, or totaling investing ourselves.^{xxiii}

Imagine, for example, taking up the practical pursuit of a vocation or career, say, becoming a nun or becoming a philosophy professor. It's often hard to know in advance whether one is made of the right stuff for a particular vocation or career, or whether one will find it as satisfying in fact as it seemed in prospect, or whether one will get through the various hurdles to acquiring such a vocation or career. So one may simply set out to *take a shot at* it. The commitment to actually becoming, say, a nun or philosophy professor is thus provisional. One embarks on the practical pursuit with the intent of discovering whether or not it is worth continuing. Setbacks, obstacles, feelings of disenchantment, and the like, provide *prima*

facie evidence against continuing commitment to this pursuit. Hopeful shot-takers imaginatively project themselves into the future, taking seriously, for example, that their future self may be a nun or a philosophy professor. But because the original commitment is provisional, this imagined future is entertained tentatively as a possibility for one's life. Hope in this case seconds a relatively weak commitment. Those who are merely taking a shot at a pursuit, however hopefully, are nevertheless prepared in advance to give up hope—to stop imagining their future going this particular direction—when the evidence of likely failure begins coming in.

Taking a shot at differs from *endeavoring*. In endeavoring to have a particular vocation or career, one commits oneself less provisionally to the pursuit of it. Achieving one's end is entertained not just as a tentative possibility—maybe I will, maybe I won't, we'll see how things go—but as one's present plan for one's future. . To endeavor is to commit oneself to continuing down an agential path *in spite of* setbacks, obstacles, and feelings of disenchantment—though, of course, not in an unlimited way. Because the bar for what counts as too many or too great a setback is set higher than in merely taking a shot, endeavorers resist more disappointments of their

constitutive hopes than shot-takers. Those who hope their endeavors will succeed take more seriously, than do shot-takers, the idea of themselves in the future, having realized the particular end.

Endeavorers, like those who take a shot, act in light of the possibility of failure and of the possible need to re-set one's ends and re-envision one's future. And this separates both taking a shot and endeavoring from *total investment* in realizing an end. Those who merely take a shot remain highly flexible to alternative futures. Those who endeavor, while less flexible, remain open to revising the future they imagine for themselves once too many obstacles, setbacks or daunting uncertainties arise in their current trajectory arise. Those who totally invest themselves in a practical pursuit imagine that there is only one possible self that they could acceptably be in the future, thus are highly inflexible about changing courses. Someone who is totally invested in becoming, say, a nun or a professional philosopher, aims at this end not just as her present plan for her future, but as *the* plan for her future. The commitment is to continuing in the practical pursuit *even should the setbacks, obstacles, and disenchantments be many and great*. Hopeful total investors

can imaginately project themselves into their hoped-for future even under the worst conditions.

Okonkwo, in Chinua Achebe's classic novel *Things Fall Apart*, acts under the idea of a future self that he cannot or will not revise.^{xxiv} Okonkwo's life is "ruled by a great passion—to become one of the lords of the clan. That [is] his life-spring" and what he is totally invested in.^{xxv} This dominant passion springs from an even deeper, and consuming, fear of being like his father who was lazy, improvident, weak, a coward, unable to take care of his family, laughed at by fellow clansman, deeply and inescapably in debt to many, and in short, an unmanly failure.

Okonkwo's total investment in becoming the best among men survives even the greatest obstacles. After, becoming a wealthy farmer, marrying three wives, becoming a great and respected warrior, and earning two honorific titles, Okonkwo inadvertently kills a clansman's son. As punishment, he is required to live in exile for 7 years where he must entirely rebuild his life, including overcoming the disappointment of his eldest son's converting to Christianity. During these seven years of exile, which he regrets as wasted among men who were not bold and warlike,^{xxvi} Okonkwo remains hopeful, imagining a

future where he not only regains his place but achieves even greater honor:

He knew that he had lost his place among the nine masked spirits who administered justice in the clan. He had lost the chance to lead his warlike clan against the new religion...He had lost the years in which he might have taken the highest titles in the clan. But some of these losses were not irreparable. He was determined that his return should be marked by his people. He would return with a flourish, and regain the seven wasted years....[T]he first thing he would do would be to rebuild his compound on a more magnificent scale. He would build a bigger barn than he had had before and he would build huts for two new wives. Then he would show his wealth by initiating his sons into the ozo society. Only the really great men in the clan were able to do this. Okonkwo saw clearly the high esteem in which he would be held, and he saw himself taking the highest title in the land.^{xxvii}

These hopes are almost immediately disappointed. During his exile, the clan itself has undergone considerable change in response to the presence of missionaries; his clansmen pay little attention to his return; his sons must wait two years to be initiated; the once warlike men have

"become soft like women"^{xxviii}; and he gets briefly imprisoned, humiliated and whipped by the white government. Still hoping to live as a manly warrior and leader, Okonkwo kills the white messenger who orders a stop to the clan meeting that Okonkwo hopes will produce a declaration of war. Only then does Okonkwo finally realize that his clansmen will not do the manly thing and go to war, that his world has changed beyond repair, and that the future self he was totally invested in becoming will not materialize in this new world. He hangs himself.

What is important to see here is that hope sustains Okonkwo as long as it does and through quite dramatic reversals of fortune only because he is already totally invested in a certain conception of who he will be in the future. Not to notice this is to risk inflating the instrumental value of hope.

Hope sustains practical pursuits by seconding the degree of commitment we have already made to a practical pursuit. Hope can second commitment, because hope, like other emotional attitudes, consists in part in a distinctive pattern of salience in our perceivings, imaginings, and thinkings-about. In hoping, we spend "mental energy" imagining the realization of the hoped-for,^{xxix} attending to the desirability of the end and to evidence that points

toward success. In hoping we also *disattend* the undesirability of a failed endeavor and evidence pointing toward possible failure. Hope, in short, focuses our imaginative eye on the desirability and possibility of succeeding in our pursuit, in spite of the disappointment of constitutive hopes along the way. Hoping thus seconds our commitment—whether it’s a commitment to taking a shot, or to endeavoring, or to totally investing—by making salient the reasons for keeping to the commitment, and by disattending evidence that would incline us to think that we have reached the bar for what counts as too many or too large obstacles or uncertainties given the kind of commitment we’ve made. Hope thus delays reconsideration of our practical pursuits. As a result, hoppers *imaginatively project* themselves into the hoped-for future in spite of its uncertainty. Both the attitudes of despair and fretfulness, by contrast, make salient the undesirability of wasting time and resources on what may prove a fruitless pursuit, and the possibility that this is exactly what may happen in the temporal unfolding of events. Despair and fretfulness incline us to more readily conclude that the bar for what counts as “too large” or “too many” obstacles has been reached.

Conclusion

Hope matters, but perhaps not in quite the ways or to the extent that we might have imagined. Focusing on dramatic cases where hope sustains efforts to survive under dire conditions or to keep pursuing some admirable dream in the face of seemingly insuperable obstacles invites both overly dramatic descriptions of why hope matters and inattention to the more basic ways that even the most simple and ordinary hopes matter. I have argued that the capacity to have particular hopes matters in two fundamental ways. First, all hoping involves cognitive and imaginative capacities that are unique to higher mammals—capacities to think of objects, including oneself, as having a future, to imagine desirable and possible temporal trajectories for those enduring objects, and to take seriously that temporal trajectory. Even the simplest hopes of humans and higher mammals rely on these cognitive and imaginative capacities. Second, in beings like us who are capable of formulating and acting on temporally extended plans, hoping secures the kinds of commitments that we make to carrying out those plans. The hopeful imagination of the desired future self who has realized her plans, keeps the desirability, and possibility, of success in mind and keeps agents from attending to, and dwelling upon, alternative possible

trajectories in which plans fail and the undesirability of pursuing plans that might fail. Hopeful agents act under an idea of their future self whose realizability they take seriously. To find oneself utterly unable to imagine a desirable, possible future, is to lose the basis for taking an interest in one's own agency.

That hope matters in these ways does not make hope an emotional "good guy—that is, an emotional attitude that is always worth having. The capacity to have hope at all may be one that cognitively sophisticated beings and agents must have. But this does not mean that all hoping is a good thing. Particular hopes may be criticizable as unrealistic, unhealthy, shallow, unbecoming one's role, an expression of some vice, or evidence of unearned privileged. Okonkwo's hopes sustain him in his life's projects through extraordinary adversity, and that may seem a wonderful thing. But his hopes are also tied to an unhealthily inflexible conception of himself, an excessive pride in his powers of self-control and control of others, an irrational fear of appearing unmanly, and a blindness to the costs his hopes impose on others. What we hope for and in the face of what contingencies says a lot about who we are and about the value of our particular hopes. For some things it is

best not to hope at all, and for most things it would be best to remain open to revising one's hopes or exchanging them for different hopes.

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ⁱ R.S. Downie, "Hope," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 24 (1963): 248-251; J.P. Day, "Hope," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 6(1969):89-102.

ⁱⁱ R.S. Downie gives the example of wanting to live to be 3000. While logically possible, this is not biologically possible. One can wish to live to 3000, but not hope to.

ⁱⁱⁱ Luc Bovens, "The Value of Hope," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 59(1999): 667-681, 679.

^{iv} Victoria McGeer, "The Art of Good Hope," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 592(2004): 100-127.

^v Philip Pettit, "Hope and Its Place in Mind," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 592(2004): 152-165.

^{vi} Gabriel Marcel, "Sketch of a Phenomenology and a Metaphysic of Hope," in his *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1962).

^{vii} I'm not entirely convinced that the alternative model—the adversity model—preferred by critics of the belief desire model does either. While proponents of the adversity model aim to avoid a deflationary account of hope, some hopes under adversity *are* fairly trivial. e.g., breaking one's toe but still hoping to win a dance contest in two weeks. Advocates of the adversity model stack the decks by focusing on adversity that invites despair about our *lives* rather than despair about minor plans, and where hope has to do with imagining *one's life* taking a more meaningful shape.

^{viii} Simply having *desires* for one's future doesn't always involve taking that future seriously. One can, for example, have desires about one's future without taking seriously that it will be oneself in the future experiencing what one presently desires for oneself. Consider procrastination. The procrastinator has desires for her future self, but she does not take her future seriously. Indeed, that's what makes procrastination so attractive.

Procrastination looks like a fine way to avoid unpleasant tasks only because one refuses to see that pawning unpleasantness tasks or experiences off on one's future self doesn't really avoid them.

^{ix} I have found Michael E. Bratman's discussion of the distinction between intending and endeavoring, as well as his general views about agents as planning beings useful in think about the adversity model of hope. *Faces of Intention: Selected Essays on Intention and Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

^x I take the term "constitutive hope" from Luc Bovens, "The Value of Hope."

^{xi} Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 29.

^{xii} See, for example, Patrick Shade, *Habits of Hope: A Pragmatic Theory* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2001); Marcel Gabriel, "Sketch of a Phenomenology and a Metaphysic of Hope," in his *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1962); Victoria McGeer, "The Art of Good Hope," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 592(2004): 100-127, and "Trust, Hope, and Empowerment," unpublished ms.; 152-165; Kathryn Abrams, "Law in the Cultivation of Hope"; Cornel West, *Restoring Hope: Conversations on the Future of Black Americans*, ed.. Kelvin Shawn Sealey (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997); Roman J. Santon, "Richard Rorty's Philosophy of Social Hope," *Philosophy Today* 47 (2003): 431-440.

^{xiii} Quoted in Shade, *Habits of Hope*, 43.

^{xiv} *Ibid.*, 50.

^{xv} Consider McGeer's contrast between planning and hoping: "If our own agency were not so limited, we wouldn't hope for what we desire, we would simply plan or act so as to achieve it. In hoping, we signify our recognition that what we desire is beyond our current (or sole) capacity to bring about—and, in the limiting case, it is beyond our capacity *tout court*" ("The Art of Good Hope," 7-8).

^{xvi} Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 36

^{xvii} Averill and Sundararajan, "The Rhetoric of Hope," 154.

^{xviii} Philip Pettit develops an interestingly different model, about which I will have something to say in section III, that while designed to capture the instrumental value of hoping for the success of an endeavor under conditions of adversity, is not itself an adversity model. He, unlike adversity model proponents, claims that the belief-desire model adequately captures "superficial hopes," while a model that explains hopes instrumental value in endeavoring will capture a more narrow range of hopes that are substantial rather than superficial. ("Hope and Its Place in Mind").

^{xix} McGeer, "The Art of Good Hope," 7-8.

^{xx} Bratman, *Faces of Intention*, 29.

^{xxi} I do not mean for this model to capture *all* of the hopes that matter to us as agents. But there are lots of objects of hopes that *matter* to us as agents—things we hope for only *because* we're agents—that are not ends of the particular endeavors (or sub-endeavors) on which we embark. Sometimes what we hope is *not to be confronted* with states of affairs that one will then have to "deal with." One can hope quite vaguely that nothing went wrong with one's house or at work or with one's pets while one was away on vacation; or one can hope that a holiday dinner with cranky family members will nevertheless go smoothly. Here one hopes that one won't have to deal with "situations";

one hopes not to be put on an *agential path* that might involve cleaning up messes and smoothing ruffled feathers. These are the distinctive hopes of fretters who differ from non-fretters in the quantity of mental energy devoted to the endeavors they *don't* want to undertake, under circumstances they hope *won't* materialize

One can also hope for something just because it sounds wonderful—hoping for a sunny weekend or winning the lottery or that the woman of one's dreams loves one. Such pleasant hopes provide an *occasion* for donning one's agential hat and asking oneself, "What would I do if it's sunny?" "What would I do if I won the lottery?" "What would I do if she loves me back?"^{xxi}

^{xxii} Bratman on not continuously reexamining one's decision

^{xxiii} The choice of *three* levels is for heuristic convenience. A more finely grained analysis might meaningfully distinguish more than three levels of commitment.

^{xxiv} Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959).

^{xxv} *Ibid.*, 131

^{xxvi} *Ibid.*, 162.

^{xxvii} *Ibid.*, 171-172.

^{xxviii} *Ibid.*, p. 183.

^{xxix} Luc Bovens, "The Value of Hope." Bovens argues that mental imaging, in addition to the relevant belief and desire, is a necessary condition for hoping.