

A Guide to Hope

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Summary

In this thesis I analyse the concept of hope through a historical lens, looking at three different authors from different philosophical traditions, and attempting to show how there are elements of hope that are present throughout all of these. I analyse Thomas Aquinas, David Hume, and Kierkegaard, looking at how they characterise hope, and later laying them side by side to see how their accounts compare. My main aim is to show how hope is something that regards a probably future good, which has fear as an opposite, and which tends to have an antithesis that moves us to inaction where hope itself moves us to realize the future good we envision. Ultimately I try to show the possibility for a comprehensive unified notion of hope, which I cannot work out here, but which I hopefully show is worth exploring further.

Table of contents

Introduction... p.4

The Hope of Thomas Aquinas... p.5

Humean Hope... p.7

Kierkegaard's Hope... p.10

A Comparative Account of Hope... p.13

Bibliography... p.17

Introduction

Throughout the history of ethics, there have been many concepts that have been debated and discussed very thoroughly. From the nature of good, to what actions we can undertake, to virtue in itself, there have been books upon books written about these kinds of topics. Not so much for the concept of hope. Hope is a concept that, while prevalent in many traditions and authors, almost never enjoys the same thorough exploration that many other concepts in ethics do.¹ So here I would like to give an account of the notion of hope in a historical context, where I will examine three different authors from roughly different traditions, and their writings on hope, attempting to find the similarities between them so as to work towards the beginnings of a more solid and unified form of hope that we are able to understand and employ today. The authors I will be discussing are, chronologically, Thomas Aquinas, David Hume, and Soren Kierkegaard, who respectively represent the Scholastic Christian tradition, Sceptical Enlightenment philosophy, and early Existentialism.

My main thesis is that there is a unified concept of hope to be found in the through line of different historical traditions, and that there are a number of elements that make this especially clear. In my investigation of Thomas, Hume, and Kierkegaard, I will be focussing on three very prevalent properties of hope that appear in some or other way in all three authors. These are hope and its relation to the nature of probability, the good, and the future. Hope and its connection with fear (or its general opposite). And Hope and its ties to motivating action and inaction. With these three elements in mind I will first start my investigation of the authors separately, in an attempt to relay their stances on hope as accurately as possible, interpreting and only where necessary. And only after that will I make my own interpretations of what I think a unified hope looks like.

Also, for the purpose of keeping the scope of my work in check, I will be attempting to focus myself around a number of core concepts and relations that can be found in hope, without digressing and discussing too much the intricate details that may arise from the examination of any of the authors in isolation. My project is to find commonalities in the concept of hope throughout time and tradition, not to painstakingly pick apart the argumentation of specific authors, which is something that should be saved for another day. The general structure of my work, then, is as follows. I will start off by examining all three authors and their most prominent writings on hope in chronological order, after which I will pick a number of prominent aspects of hope that come forward from all of them. I will lay these elements side by side to distil a more core notion of hope that can be said to come forth from all three of the authors. I will do this for every prominent aspect of hope, after which I will lay out the bare skeleton of those compared aspects, and discuss briefly how this can be seen as a start to a single unified concept of hope.

¹ Bloeser, C. & Stahl, T. (spring 2017). "Hope".

The Hope of Thomas Aquinas

In this first chapter I will look at how Thomas Aquinas treats hope. He starts off by distinguishing proximate and homogenous hope, which represent hope through reason, and hope aimed at God. He follows this up by explaining how hope as a theological virtue comes about as apart from reason based hope. Finally he discusses how fear, and more importantly sloth, are the opposite and antithesis of hope, respectively making us look at evil and making us give up on good entirely.

When Thomas Aquinas speaks of hope, he does so in order to elucidate what its place in the theological hierarchy is. He takes concepts primarily from both Augustine and Aristotle.² He starts by explaining the nature of a virtue, as he desires to gauge whether hope is truly a virtue, or whether it is a passion. For this purpose he takes an Aristotelian definition of virtue, and follows through on it by stating that whenever we see good acts, they must correspond to virtue.³ He then goes on to connect the notion of virtues requiring a proper rule with the notion of human acts. These human acts he distinguishes in proximate and homogeneous, by which he means that there is one mode of human action that regards the reason -a mode of hope that resembles a virtue in the Aristotelean sense-, and one mode of human action that regards God. Because of this distinction, he concludes that hope, regardless of its mode, must regard God, because hope always relates itself to a future good, whether that is a smaller good which we can mediate by reason, or the divine eternal good. To add to this notion he also states that, because it regards God, we hope by means of what he calls the Divine assistance, which is supposed to give us the rule to attain God. And this Divine assistance is the principle pillar of hope, as it is in the Divine assistance that we must trust to obtain the proper rule for hope, and it is impossible to trust in it too much or little.⁴

To hope we must lean on the Divine assistance in order to obtain the proper rule to hope, which will mean our acts are good, and aimed at future good. But what exactly the content of that future good entails is important, and any effect must be proportionate to its cause, which produces an interesting result when the object of hope is eternal happiness. As such, since we cannot trust in the Divine assistance too little, and therefore cannot hope too much, if the aim of hope is something good, then it must be infinite good.⁵ And since hope has the character of a virtue, which has as its aim a supreme rule that leads towards something infinite and ungraspable, by extension the object of hope must be God. And although it has to be said that a virtue pertains to the use of reason, as one must follow a mean to make sure not to fall into extremes, the nature of specifically a theological virtue is one that regards a First Rule, which is its true object.⁶ If I attempt to summarize that, it means that hope as a normal virtue can regard everything as its object as long as it is a future good, the content of which we can mediate with our reason, but that the natural finality of hope aims itself at eternal happiness and God by leaning on Divine assistance, turning it into a theological virtue.

Because of this notion that hope shall have its proper object be the immeasurable eternal happiness of God as its future object, Thomas calls it a theological virtue. Essentially this means that although hope is in some regards a virtue where in singular cases we can fall short of it, we do so by not

² Thomas Aquinas. (1920). "The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas". II-II:17:1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Thomas Aquinas. (1920). "The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas". II-II:17:5.

⁵ Thomas Aquinas. (1920). "The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas". II-II:17:2.

⁶ Thomas Aquinas. (1920). "The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas". II-II:17:5.

hoping enough. The point of a theological virtue is understanding the First Rule that it is based on, so that one can trust in that rule and live their life accordingly. For hope this first rule is trusting in the Divine assistance, which will then bring us eternal happiness.⁷ So then, hope, for Thomas, is the notion of trusting in the Divine assistance so that we can obtain eternal happiness. The former is the primary cause, and that which we require to hope, and the latter is the principle object, which, because of its infinity, is also God.

But that is only what concerns the cause and the object of hope. It must also have a relation to a subject. Thomas characterises hope as a movement of the appetite, which he divides into an irascible part and an intellective part, the latter of which is the will. He states that things that are concerned with passion are subject to the irascible appetite, and all other things with reason, which are subject to the will. By this he concludes that hope, being a virtue, must be subject to the will.⁸ The will, being the intellective appetite, concerns itself with what a person desires through their reason. By extension of that, when hope is concerned with the will it is so in a proximate sense, meaning that it at least in part regards persons themselves and their reason, instead of only God and eternal happiness. This does not mean that hope through the will is no longer a theological virtue, but it does signify that in the will alone, hope must always regard a singular future good, instead of eternal happiness, and only when leaning on the Divine assistance does it become a theological virtue. When I try to put it more simply, proximate hope, which functions through the will, expressed through reason, regards all things we hope for that are not necessarily eternal happiness, while homogenous hope regards the ultimate future good by leaning on Divine assistance in addition to the will, leading us to eternal happiness.

After that Thomas tacitly goes into another aspect of hope, namely its relation to the future. He makes the important assertion that hope is well and truly aimed at the future, and that whenever any happiness turns from possible to present, the hope that related to its attainment is no more.⁹ As such he denotes that hope is a fleeting virtue, in the sense that inasmuch as it relates to concrete attainments that are not eternal happiness, the hope we hold for them will always eventually fade when we achieve them. I would say this means that both proximate and homogenous hope are fleeting, but that proximate hope comes and goes often, while homogenous hope lasts until we are either blessed or damned. However, importantly for hope specifically, the opposite is also true. On his account of the damned, Thomas discusses how for someone to be truly damned there must be no possibility for hope, otherwise it would not be a punishment. Therefore he states that when a situation is certain, one must have the knowledge that happiness cannot ever be attained, and as such there can be no hope.¹⁰ These considerations around hope that he makes are very important, because they cast hope in the light of the possible and the probable, which means that it is something that can be said to be very essentially human. The ultimate connection that Thomas makes regarding the possible future good in relation to hope is where he notes that even though we are not entirely certain of the achievement of a future good, when it regards virtues we tend to move and act with an intuitive amount of assumed certainty. Thus it can be said that the possibility of a

⁷ Thomas Aquinas. (1920). "The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas". II-II:17:6.

⁸ Thomas Aquinas. (1920). "The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas". II-II:18:1.

⁹ Thomas Aquinas. (1920). "The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas". II-II:18:2.

¹⁰ Thomas Aquinas. (1920). "The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas". II-II:18:3.

future good makes us act towards its attainment as though it is certain, which in turn produces that good more readily than if we hold it to be wavering.¹¹

Additionally, because of its very prevalent connection to God and Divine assistance, homogenous hope has a strong connection with another element of God. Thomas notes that “Just as hope has two objects, one of which is the future good itself, that one expects to obtain, while the other is someone’s help, through whom one expects to obtain what one hopes for, so too, fear may have two objects, one of which is the very evil which a man shrinks from, while the other is that from which the evil may come”¹². This is important, because as he speaks of fear as the opposite to hope, along with the vice of sloth, there is a special relationship that it holds to it. “the fact that a man deems an arduous good impossible to obtain, either by himself or by another, is due to his being over downcast, because when this state of mind dominates his affections, it seems to him that he will never be able to rise to any good. And since sloth is a sadness that casts down the spirit, in this way despair is born of sloth.”¹³ Where fear is more related to hope as its opposite, being that which is furthest from it on one end, sloth can be said to be its antithesis. The vice of sloth, which can manifest through either not deeming any good worth labour, or through viewing every good as impossible to attain, shows a type of mindset that is purely inactive, and both arises from sadness, and leads to despair.¹⁴ More specifically, it can be said that while fear is still an active notion, and in some ways still good of itself according to Thomas, sloth is the inactive opposite to hope. For sloth is the ultimate antithesis to the most core principles of hope -that something is possible, and future good can be achieved-, and as such is both a vice and leads to further despair.¹⁵ Ultimately then, one of the major goals of hope is to lead us to eternal happiness by focussing on God, and even in our everyday lives this will help us be better people. While along the way we may struggle with facing evil through fear, and complete inaction through sloth, if we lean on our reason and Divine assistance we can achieve happiness both temporal and eternal.

¹¹ Thomas Aquinas. (1920). “The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas”. II-II:18:4.

¹² Thomas Aquinas. (1920). “The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas”. II-II:19.1.

¹³ Thomas Aquinas. (1920). “The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas”. II-II:20.4.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Humean Hope

With regards given to the substantially developed Christian notions of hope, We can now move on to the tradition of Enlightenment thinking. In this chapter I will look at Hume's, admittedly short, writings on hope. I will analyse how he goes in depth on its relation with fear, how they come about as mixtures of good and evil, and ultimately, partly interpretatively from me, how they affect how we do or do not act. First, however, there ought to be an examination of Hume's writings on hope as such, for they are short but quite meaningful. "None of these passions seem to contain any thing curious or remarkable, except *Hope* and *Fear*, which, being derived from the probability of any good or evil, are mixed passions"¹⁶

It can be immediately gleaned from how Hume introduces the concepts of hope and fear, which, just like with Thomas, are inextricably linked, that they are unique among the passions. Specifically noted can be their relation to probability, as Hume discusses more in detail later in his work, hope and fear relate very uniformly to the notion of how we relate ourselves to future events or actions. Hope and fear, in Hume, can be said to be the passions that arise from our considerations for the future. He shares them under the notion of direct passions, meaning that they relate primarily to pain and pleasure, and good and evil. And these direct passions are also directly subject to the will, which he considers to be "the internal impression we feel and are conscious of, when we knowingly give rise to any new motion of our body, or new perception of our mind"¹⁷. This idea comes to bear when Hume speaks about how the imagination (which I shall choose to call it) allows us in a unique way to consider certain objects of desire or disdain to be either existent or non-existent.¹⁸ This type of consideration then originates from "an opposition of contrary chances or causes"¹⁹, and this opposition in the imagination, depending on what is weighed and how, consequently gives birth to some manner of hope or fear. But the uniqueness of hope and fear in the Humean way of thinking is not limited to their ties to probability and imagination, which we shall speak about more later, as they are also passions which are essentially mixes of the causes of all direct passions, namely joy and grief.²⁰ Seeing hope and fear as primarily mixtures of joy and grief, which have arisen from the considerations of probability in the imagination, puts them into a unique position where it can be said that hope and fear themselves are perhaps more prevalent than joy and grief themselves. After all, there are few cases in which we can claim to be truly certain of anything, and according to Hume, we can only meaningfully speak of hope and fear until we reach a point of certainty.²¹ Hope and fear are then mixtures of grief and joy, and until one or the other of the latter prevails completely we are to speak of the former pair as being more meaningful.

Perhaps because of how hope and fear are so defined as being compositions of more primary passions that are given meaning through their balance and probability, Hume focusses mainly on their relation to probability. This is a concept that, in relation to passions, can become very vague if not properly explored. He starts by defining two distinct types of probability that can give rise to hope and fear, both of which relate to hope differently. The first one he talks about is when

¹⁶ Hume, D. (2007). "A Dissertation on the Passions; The Natural History of Religion". p.3.

¹⁷ Hume, D. (1739). "A Treatise of Human Nature". 2.3.1.

¹⁸ Hume, D. (2007). "A Dissertation on the Passions; The Natural History of Religion". p.3.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Hume, D. (2007). "A Dissertation on the Passions; The Natural History of Religion". p.4.

²¹ Ibid.

probability concerns an uncertain object itself, while the second type of probability concerns the uncertainty of our judgement towards or perception of something.²² Although they can be said to be very different, Hume notes that they are both important elements of probability, as they both influence the direct passions in a similar regard. An interesting turn that Hume takes, however, is that he does not directly connect the measure of probability to the measure of hope or fear. Although he does admit there to be a strong correlation, he also argues that the gravity of the object of our consideration plays a major role in the amount of hope or fear we experience.²³ He even draws this line unto certainty in some exceptionally intense cases, where he gives the example of someone who is certainly sentenced to death who still fears his execution.²⁴ Despite the good or evil being fixed, he states, we can still experience passions similar to hope and fear. Even though we are certain of something our mind can still wander off to 'what if' ideas that would give rise to the opposite of that which is certain, and this still instils hope or fear. Ultimately, he also addresses the, in reality often present, notion of the interaction of mixed passions. He specifically notes in an earlier work when speaking of the same topic how uncertainty, although it is as much a component of hope as it is of fear, often makes us lean to the side of the latter, as uncertainty is uneasy, just as fear is an uneasy passion.²⁵ In that same part he even expresses the pervasiveness of fear as being produced by any doubt whatsoever²⁶, which is a notion that is not present in his later work, but still an interesting thought to entertain when we by contrast try to imagine what contrary impressions can then give rise to hope.

On the notion of wherein the motivation consists which can possibly drive us to turn hope into action, he later expresses how even though passions may not necessarily be originally derived from the reason why we pursue a goal, they nonetheless can fundamentally become intertwined with our pursuit of it.²⁷ In this vein we can see how even though hope may not be an original driving force for any particular action, it can nevertheless become entwined with our personal investment in it, changing the way we view it, and pushing us to undertake action to achieve the outcome that we desire. He makes the connection that through our belief we can positively fix any idea in our imagination, and that this in itself can prevent such things as doubt and uncertainty.²⁸ In a strange way conflicting with the earlier notion of probability, it seems to me that he holds fast to the idea that hoping involves focussing on the positive possible aspects of the future, fixing them in our minds, and through intertwining our passion of hope towards that end take action to achieve it.

Ultimately hope and fear in Hume's framework can be said to be the most important of the direct passions. They are concerned directly with the concepts of good and evil, and joy and grief, being probability based mixtures of them.²⁹ On top of that, he presents a special notion of how our curiosity and our will can intertwine with our passions to give us the motive to take action and achieve our goals. By focussing ourselves on those positive ideas we can keep on tipping our passions in the favour of hope

²² Hume, D. (2007). "A Dissertation on the Passions; The Natural History of Religion". p.4-5.

²³ Hume, D. (2007). "A Dissertation on the Passions; The Natural History of Religion". p.5.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Hume, D. (2007). "A Dissertation on the Passions; The Natural History of Religion". p.lxi.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Hume, D. (1739). "A Treatise of Human Nature". 2.3.10.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Hume, D. (2007). "A Dissertation on the Passions; The Natural History of Religion". p.liii & p.7.

Kierkegaard's Hope

Beyond the notions of early Christian hope and Enlightenment sentiments on hope, we can see a very interesting fusion of sorts emerge from the works of Kierkegaard. In his books *Works on Love*, he divulges how the notion of hope fits into his way of thinking, and how the lover, the paragon of this work, would relate herself to hope.³⁰ While the work is very much written through a Christian lens, it is not as strictly Christian as the work of Thomas Aquinas, and it has some very interesting elements that set it apart from not only that tradition, but also Enlightenment philosophy. Summarily, Kierkegaard's hope is about embracing the eternal possibility of the good, and becoming a lover who always hopes all things for all others.

In his elaborate explanations, Kierkegaard speaks of how Christian hope must be eternal, and aimed at pure concepts, which is contrasted with earthly hope, which is akin to desiring a worldly increase in means.³¹ However, "love, which is greater than faith and hope, takes upon itself the work of hope or takes hope upon itself as the work of hoping for others. It is itself built up and nourished by this hope of the eternal and then acts lovingly in this hope towards others"³². He goes on to characterise specifically how hope works in relation to love, as this is a true hope that cannot be put to shame. He categorizes two specific elements of hope that ought to be united, an eternal and a temporal element, which respectively correspond to hoping all things, and hoping always. The most important part of defining these as separate for him is to show how they ought to be united, claiming that when separated they will prove themselves to be untrue in light of the other, making the true nature of hope to always hope all things.³³ Kierkegaard then goes on to look at how hope relates itself to time. He notes how hope, being aimed at the eternal, which seems to be some infinitely durable thing in itself, is always related to possibility, and to the good. He goes into how the present is ungraspable, becoming the past too quickly. He speaks of the present as transient, and the past as actuality, but of how the future represents possibility, and how the eternal, when placed in time, becomes that possibility.³⁴ The important part that follows after this is that hope is specifically when one relates themselves to the possibility of the good, that being the good as the eternal. To this point he states that while relating oneself to the possibility of the good is to hope, to relate oneself to the possibility of the evil is to fear, and that we ought to choose hope to make the possibility of the good eternal.³⁵ He contrasts the choice to hope with different ways of living. He speaks of how the eternal is akin to youthfulness, as opposed to moroseness, but he also speaks of how hope cannot be assigned to a specific part of life, as it is eternal. He discusses how those who dismiss the possibility of the good live ultimately in despair, breaking with the eternal, and he elaborates on how hope, being eternal, always is near enough for us to see, yet far enough away that we keep striving onward in a good way.³⁶ Lastly, when speaking of hope in itself, he talks about how it relates to the possibility of fear, and how, although the eternal ever draws us forth by being close yet far, hope and possibility are not the same, and we can fall into fear if we do not heed the eternal and consciously choose to hope.³⁷

³⁰ Kierkegaard, S. (1847). "Works of Love". p.231-246.

³¹ Kierkegaard, S. (1847). "Works of Love". p.233.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Kierkegaard, S. (1847). "Works of Love". p.233-234.

³⁵ Kierkegaard, S. (1847). "Works of Love". p.234.

³⁶ Kierkegaard, S. (1847). "Works of Love". p.236-237.

³⁷ Kierkegaard, S. (1847). "Works of Love". p.237.

This is roughly all that Kierkegaard says on hope in itself. But hope in itself does not mean awfully much in the context of what he is trying to achieve, as his ultimate purpose is to discuss how:

“Love hopes all things-and is never put to shame”³⁸

In the passages afterwards, then, he goes into great detail about the relationship of hope and love, and in what ways being a lover both makes it so we hope all things for ourselves and others, and how not doing so diminishes the love we have in many different ways.³⁹ To elaborate more on this, as this is where Kierkegaard’s most prominent thoughts on the effects and opposites of hope are found, he states that “the lover is right in holding possibility to be present at every moment”⁴⁰, which is heavily contrasted with the notion of despair. For despair, akin to sloth, is the disposition that someone has when they suppose the impossibility of the good, and as such despair takes away the very notion of possibility itself.⁴¹ It is evident that despair is the antithesis of hope, it calls into question the notion of possibility, it encourages to give up hope for the good, to wallow in nothingness and to always think of what can be wrong with the world. By contrast it is the hallmark of the lover to say that things are possible. This tension, between those who despair and the lover is an interesting notion, as Kierkegaard himself, for instance, summarizes roughly by saying that for the lover “the possibility of the good exists at every moment for the other person: then to give up the other person as hopelessly lost, as if there were no hope for him, is a proof that one himself is not a lover and consequently that he is indeed in despair, having given up hope”⁴². As such then, it is the lover who hopes for all things, both by always hoping all things for others signifies their love and hope, and their steadfastness in the good of possibility and the future.

In addition to the hurdle of despair, however, there is also worldliness. More so than despair, worldliness encompasses a vast array of different evils that gnaw at the integrity of hope and love. From the prideful knowledge of shrewdness, to the resentment of anger and bitterness, to the unfaithfulness of envy, cowardliness and small-mindedness, and a worldly, vain mentality.⁴³ All of these worldly things that plague us, and keep us from hope and love in their own ways, are, according to Kierkegaard, all essentially wrongful rejections of the eternal. They all diminish the love we can have in relation to their own presence, directly siphoning our potential for hope and the eternal. And this is why we must hold fast to the eternal, to hope, to possibility, and to love, he says. For every moment hope renews itself, and even when we manage no classic great feats, by virtue of our love we bring hope to others.⁴⁴ As an extension of that, he claims, that by understanding the eternal, we can come to see that hoping for oneself, hoping for another, and love, are in fact all the same, and all connected in each other.⁴⁵ The purpose of the lover then, is evidently not so complicated when contrasted with such classic evils as worldliness and despair. To accept the

³⁸ Kierkegaard, S. (1847). “Works of Love”. p.231.

³⁹ Kierkegaard, S. (1847). “Works of Love”. p.237-246.

⁴⁰ Kierkegaard, S. (1847). “Works of Love”. p.237.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Kierkegaard, S. (1847). “Works of Love”. p.239.

⁴³ Kierkegaard, S. (1847). “Works of Love”. p.240-241.

⁴⁴ Kierkegaard, S. (1847). “Works of Love”. p.241-242.

⁴⁵ Kierkegaard, S. (1847). “Works of Love”. p.243.

possibility of the good, to always hope all things, for oneself, and for all others. “Even if the lover did not succeed in doing the slightest additional thing for another, did not succeed in bringing any other gift at all- he still brings the best gift, he brings hope”⁴⁶. In the end then, Kierkegaard speaks of the lover who, through struggling against despair and worldliness, holds fast to the possibility of the good, and as such can hope all things for themselves and others.

⁴⁶ Kierkegaard, S. (1847). “Works of Love”. p.242.

A comparative account of Hope

Now that we have looked at three prominent historical authors and most of their thoughts on hope, although summarized, we can now deign to properly surmise the primary features of hope that are shared among them. When going through my summaries of Thomas Aquinas, Hume, and Kierkegaard, it is immediately obvious that there are at least some major connections and similarities between the way in which they discuss hope. As before, it can be noted that there are three major areas of possible similarity that we can explore. These are: Hope and its relation to the nature of probability, the good, and the future. Hope and its connection with fear or its general opposite. And Hope and its ties to motivating action and inaction. All three of these points are visible to at least some extent in the works of all three authors, and although they are all discussed in differing contexts we can definitely incur an exploration between them.

The first notion, hope's relation to the nature of probability, the good, and the future, seems in many cases to touch upon what the relevant author sees as the nature of hope as a concept. For Thomas, hope is a theological virtue, where its object of reason transitions to having God for its object when we switch our mode of hoping from hoping for contingent things to leaning on the Divine assistance to achieve eternal happiness. He notes the 'principle object of hope', which is either a future good, eternal happiness, the Divine assistance, or God. Ultimately for Thomas, it can be concluded, these four concepts are all essentially the same, as the future good we ought to desire is eternal happiness, which simultaneously only exists in God and can only be achieved by leaning on His Divine assistance.⁴⁷ Furthermore it has to be said that hope for Thomas is ultimately rooted in that which is uncertain, and that which we may yet achieve. It is neither for the blessed nor the damned, and only those who trust in future good can move towards it.⁴⁸ In Hume's work, hope and fear are mixed passions of joy and grief that derive their existence quite directly from how we relate ourselves to the concepts of good and evil. They are mixed in the sense that through our impressions of a certain situation, and the amount of good or evil we perceive to be probable in the future outcome of it, we experience some amount of joy or grief. But inasmuch as that joy or grief is neither overwhelming nor certain, we can only truly experience hope and fear, as those are their indeterminate state. Hope occurs when we perceive a certain probability in a situation happening, which causes in us some amount of grief, but a majority of joy, thus resulting in us having hope.⁴⁹ Thirdly, for Kierkegaard, the nature of hope is set in the notion that we acknowledge the concept of possibility, specifically the possibility for the good. When we acknowledge the possibility of the good we find that we are able to hope, and Kierkegaard says that we ought to always hope all things, for only in doing that can we truly accept the possibility of the good, and move towards becoming a lover.⁵⁰ From this distillation we can see that there are definitively connections between the three. Hope unilaterally thrives in uncertainty, and it relies on us holding on that there is the possibility or probability that something good can occur. Furthermore hope seems to only be able to exist in some manner of uncertainty, as when there is absolutely no possibility for good, or eternal happiness has been achieved, there can be no more hope. Even though this last point may not seem entirely present in Kierkegaard and Thomas, As in their conceptions of the notion of hope we can see how we could hope forever even when there would be no uncertainty. But in another interpretation, when it comes to the eternal,

⁴⁷ Thomas Aquinas. (1920). "The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas". II-II:17.

⁴⁸ Thomas Aquinas. (1920). "The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas". II-II:18.

⁴⁹ Hume, D. (2007). "A Dissertation on the Passions; The Natural History of Religion". p.3-5.

⁵⁰ Kierkegaard, S. (1847). "Works of Love". p.233-237.

and eternal happiness, there is some manner of uncertainty as long as we have not achieved it or been blessed, which means that as an overarching goal for our lives we can still hope forever no matter how certain the smaller things in our lives are.

The second notion, of hope and its connection to fear or its general opposite, essentially comes about as an extension of thinking about the negation of the assertions made by hope on a conceptual level. Starting off with discussing more strictly the idea of fear, then, which all three authors do discuss to some extent. Thomas speaks of fear in a relatively narrow manner. Although he gives the indication that just as hope aims towards the future good in itself and the help through which someone attains what they hope for, fear has the objects of evil in itself and those actions from which evil may arise.⁵¹ This is the most poignant comparison that Thomas makes, as in his furthered discussion of hope he mostly goes into how it applies to God, and why we should fear Him. But it is not a meaningless comparison, for he does draw a very strong link between them, stating that where hope is aimed at the good, fear is aimed at evil or possible evil, which suggests that in some manner fear is very much a foil to hope, in ways that are alike to how both Hume and Kierkegaard speak of their opposites to hope. Hume, as mentioned before, draws a very strong intrinsic link between hope and fear, to a point where they can be said to not be able to exist without each other. Whenever there is a majority of joy then we experience hope, and whenever there is a majority of grief we experience fear. Above that the gravity of the impending situation can give us fear or hope, if it seems very good or very bad.⁵² This notion, where hope and fear are in an eternal balance, connected, pushing and pulling, seems much more invested than merely being opposites. In Hume's conception we cannot, and should not want to get rid of either, and since they are passions we are unable to do this in the first place. What we ought to do is form a reaction based on what hope or fear we feel. This is an important notion, and I will speak more of this in the third point. Kierkegaard, on his turn, has some very short notions on fear in relation to hope, for most of his other work on fear resides elsewhere. He too speaks of how hope is aimed at the possibility of good, and fear at possibility of evil. He says that we ought to hold fast to the eternal and the possibility of the good lest we start to fear.⁵³ More akin in content to what Hume describes, and more an opposite to hope in that same sense I would say, however, is Worldliness, where fear very directly makes us look at the possibility of the evil. Worldliness can be said to be the actual meaning and execution of that fear. Worldliness, as discussed before, comprises negative emotions and outlooks on life that mire us in a greedy and evil existence. This is what happens when we accept the possibility of the evil. As such it can be said that fear (and to some extent despair) leads to worldliness, which is truly the opposite of hope. To summarize this second point about the properties of hope, hope and fear are unilaterally and respectively aimed at good and evil. Since this notion is present throughout all three authors we can fairly easily see how fear must be an intrinsic foil to hope. This is conceptually most exemplified in Hume, where they are like twins from the get go, but I find the general notion to be present in all of the authors. I hold that hope and fear are intrinsic opposites, which on some level, be that as a passion or a virtue, push and pull on each other to influences our state of mind and which actions we are predisposed to undertake, aiming intermittently at good and evil.

⁵¹ Thomas Aquinas. (1920). "The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas". II-II:18.

⁵² Hume, D. (2007). "A Dissertation on the Passions; The Natural History of Religion". p.3-6.

⁵³ Kierkegaard, S. (1847). "Works of Love". p.237.

For the third notion, and to some accounts the most important one, hope relates itself to action and inaction. All three authors have something to say about the relation of hope and action, which strangely enough often comes through a concept that is its negation. For Thomas, this is the concept of sloth, which he discusses as the antithesis to hope. Sloth as a concept makes us either deem a future good too arduous to achieve, or blatantly impossible, and as such it drives us to inaction.⁵⁴ Conversely, this implies that seeing any future good as possible, or as worth putting in effort for drives us to action through hope. In this sense, by leaning on the Divine assistance, any and all future good we can think of is possible, and therefore pure hope will drive us actively to do good in the world instead of merely making us wish for a happy afterlife. For Hume this proposition is very different. Because hope and fear are not virtues, but passions, they do not drive action or inaction in the same direct binary way. For Hume, even though we desire to steer away from things that we fear, and towards things that we hope, this does not necessarily come directly from them. The driving force is the evil we detest, or the good we desire, and we come to understand this through the hope or fear we experience, and consequently both hope and fear turn one to action indirectly.⁵⁵ This is changed in some manner with his comments on how passions intertwine with our motivations and goals, meaning that hope does have the possibility to strongly motivate us to move towards good things if it is intertwined with our desires.⁵⁶ Lastly, Kierkegaard notes the concept of despair as a direct negation of the eternal and possibility. If one falls into despair, then they cannot see possibility itself, and as such are not driven to do anything at all, wasting away in contradiction.⁵⁷ On the contrary, as discussed earlier, seeing the possibility of the good and holding on to hope will drive the lover to hope for others, and as an extension of that undertake actions that will crystalize that possibility. But even if the lover does not do anything, according to Kierkegaard, they will still impart the notion of hope on others, which is good in itself. On this notion, the three authors differ quite heavily, it seems. The manner in which hope drives to action seems to essentially come from an inner urge to realize the possibility of the future good that we see when we can hold it as possible. But we are also arguably plagued by something of an antithetical nature to it. Something that instils apathy and nothingness in us, which even hope itself has difficulty overcoming. On my interpretation it can be said that hope drives us as follows. When we believe in the possibility of a future good, or feel that a future good is probable in general, this does not mean that we are driven to make it real. But to hope is an active notion in itself, and if we truly hope, then recognizing that possibility should drive us forward to realize it, for otherwise it is not truly hope, but wishful thinking.

From all this I will now argue that there is definitely a unified notion of hope to be found. If we filter the elements of hope that we have surmised thus far, we can see the following. Although it is not certain whether hope itself is a virtue or passion, in some way this is irrelevant if it produces the same effect and incites the same actions, and perhaps we can also see through this how hope is not something with a singular nature like that. There is hope that regards simple contingent things in our daily lives, when we hope for a relationship to turn out well, or when we hope for the weather to be good. At the same time we are able to hope for something much greater, something that can last for all our lives. That hope holds fast to a near ungraspable notion of the good or eternal happiness, and it is something that pervades our lives completely. Consequently, both these notions of hope

⁵⁴ Thomas Aquinas. (1920). "The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas". II-II:19.

⁵⁵ Hume, D. (2007). "A Dissertation on the Passions; The Natural History of Religion". p.5-6.

⁵⁶ Hume, D. (1739). "A Treatise of Human Nature". 2.3.10.

⁵⁷ Kierkegaard, S. (1847). "Works of Love". p.237.

produce in us motivation to act. Where our contingent hopes can lead us to act directly, our eternal hope challenges us not necessarily to achieve concrete feats, but to nurture the good in all things. And while we are plagued by sloth, despair, and worldly evils throughout our lives, and sometimes those may force us to inaction, or to embrace things that may hurt our happiness in the long run, the possibility of the good is always there, and we need but to truly acknowledge it to come back to it. Our feelings and passions may arouse in us many different things, but they too can incite us to do good, and if we hold on to the right kinds of passions, and react to them in appropriate ways, we can intertwine our feelings of hope with what we desire, and create still more good in the world. Hopefully it is evident by now that the elements of hope that make it what it is can be found present in some shape or form in many different philosophical traditions. And by filtering these elements into what I have presented here I strive to show how hope is a very comprehensive concept. It can be presented as both a virtue, a passion, and something more, all the while having similar effects and properties, and affecting us in similar ways, which is arguably a very curious property in itself. This unified hope, which is at the same time a virtue, a passion, and something more, that makes us look at the possibility of future good, helps us stave off despair, and motivates us to realize that possible good, is obviously something that I have only tried to show the possibility itself for. Working out such a concept requires manifold more thought and care than I have the possibility for here, but I hope to have shown how starkly different traditions, starting points, and ways of reasoning still all hold on to a single core essence of hope. Hope is a concept with myriad elements and many properties, but it always asks us to look at something good, something beautiful, no matter if it is fleeting or durable, if we become truly hopeful people, working on our virtues, embracing our hopeful passions, nurturing our hopeful actions, and dreaming of some far off eternal good, then surely that hope must be something worth studying and striving for.

In this work I have attempted to compare the authors from three different time-periods and traditions in regards to how they view the concept of hope and its properties. I have tried to give an account of how, regardless of tradition, starting point, or how hope is at first sight characterised, there are a number of properties and effects that can be found in any account of hope. While there is still a lot of research needed to see if the attempt I have made here holds up, the fact that three moderately to very disparate thinkers all share properties between each other's accounts of hope gives promise that the unified notion of hope I have presented here can become a reality sometime in the future. One day, by examining and combining these shared elements, I am hopeful that there is the possibility for a unified notion of hope that can help us live better lives and realize the future good that we hold for possible.

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