Politics as Hope: Towards the Elpidology of the Oppressed from Paulo Freire's Political Realism

by

Juan E. Marcano

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Political Science)
in the University of Michigan
2017

Doctoral Committee

Professor Donald Herzorg, Chair
Professor Pamela Brandwein
Professor Mika LaVaque-Manty
Professor Elizabeth S. Anderson

Juan E. Marcano

enrq@umich.edu

ORCID iD: 0000-0001-8437-834X

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my children, María Fernanda and Sergio Enrique.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Prof. Donald Herzog, for taking my project back and for the patient guidance, encouragement and advice he has provided throughout all this time. I would also like to thank the Department of Political Science, especially the members of my doctoral committee for their help and the department staff for their assistance.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my wife Charo. Her support, encouragement and patience were undeniably the bedrock upon which the past years of my life have been built. I would also want to thank my children Marife and Sergio for their patience and understanding for the time his dad was not able to be with them.

Table of Contents

Abstract

This dissertation problematizes hope from Paulo Freire's political realistic perspective. It delivers the basic principles of what I have named the Elpidology of the Oppressed. Domination, oppression and power asymmetry are concrete realities. They all play a role in shaping our sense of hope. In my opinion, hope is perhaps one of the most suitable human attitudes to be either controlled or obliterated by political regimes seeking domination. An oppressive regime seeks to domesticate hope through a system of organized hopelessness; a scheme that negates a group of people the opportunity of desiring, imagining and seeking a feasible path towards a future or a futurity different from the oppressive circumstances they experience in the here and now. Problematizing hope is about grasping temporality and futurity as realities that humans create and re-create collectively and not as things that are pre-determined. Thus, I aim at demonstrating how crucial is for all people, but especially for the oppressed, to understand, to apprehend, to take care and to cultivate the human sense of hope from a political realistic point of view, a key perspective given that some people are excluded from history, and, therefore, also excluded from freely creating their own futures. Nonetheless, in exploring these matters, I inevitably collide with a longstanding polemic regarding the nature and value of hope. While some may argue that hope is illusory and dangerous, others see it as a strong and positive asset in human life. I elucidate this issue by putting this notion through a deep process of demystification, which includes acknowledging its illusory nature, while working a theoretical stance that reconstructs its value as a crucial, but paradoxical political asset. Hope is a multidimensional human faculty that tends to create illusions. It is a complex force associated to what I term the human elpidic mind—our persistent, inescapable and anxious preoccupation with the future. It is a sort of an illusion characterized by a confident, yet uncertain expectation of achieving a good future that is meaningful and thought to be realistically possible by the thinking individual. Now, from the standpoint of oppressed people, whose concrete resources of hope are limited, and whose sense of hope is distorted through fear, among other mechanisms, hoping realistically becomes a practice of political resistance against oppression. Realistic hope is about desiring futurity and

also about concretely planning for, and actually trying to attain this future by finding actual pathways toward its consecution, despite possible obstacles. Hoping has a collective dimension that turns politically subversive as soon as people gather together and organizes in order to imagine, plan and strategize about how realistically bring actual social change in the future. Yet, the oppressed realistic practice of hope is meant to clash face on with the hope and visions of the future of their oppressors. The power élite's political project includes freezing time and stopping history from happening as part of their ambition to own and secure perpetually the future for its social class. The politics of resistance as hope is a praxis of freedom within conditions of oppression that seeks emancipation through the creation of concrete conditions that allow oppressed people to become true agents of history and genuine agents of hope.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Towards an Elpidology of the Oppressed

> "Beware how you take away hope from another human being."
>
> Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. (American Poet)

> "It is only right, to my mind, that things so remarkable, which happen to have remained unheard and unseen until now, should be brought to the attention of many and not lie buried in the sepulcher of oblivion."
>
> Anonymous, *Lazarillo de Tormes*

Why would a political regime seek to systematically manipulate and/or suppress a people's sense of hope? The main task of my dissertation is to problematize the category of hope from a critical perspective that assumes domination and oppression as concrete realities of our human experience upon earth. Thus, I use the former question to bring forward one of the most crucial problems regarding hope and to justify why it is necessary to critically understand it as a suitable human attitude to be either controlled or obliterated by political regimes seeking to dominate people. Problematizing hope is about problematizing human life and history from the standpoint of our relation as humans with the issue of temporality in the human world. It is also to grasp time and the future as realities that we create and re-create through collective action and not as things that are pre-given or pre-determined. To understand the world in a critical way is to understand the role that we are supposed to play as makers of the world. Hope is part of this process. Thus, my principal aim is to demonstrate how crucial is for all people, but especially for the oppressed, to understand, apprehend, and cultivate the human sense of hope in a critical way.

Approaching hope critically starts by problematizing hope from a political realistic point of view that recognizes that some people are excluded from history by way of reducing, manipulating or regulating their sense of hope. Yet, if we are going to understand the meaning and role of hope in our lives and our processes of growth in a critical way, we must first make sure to know and to understand the role that domination plays in shaping our sense of hope.

Regulating or reducing hope becomes a political program for any regime that seeks political domination. This sort of program pursues to negate a group of people the opportunity of desiring, imagining and seeking a feasible path towards a socio-political future different from the oppressive circumstances of life they experience in the here and now. Although contemporary liberal-democratic societies are deemed free, more inclusive and non-oppressive, the fact is that these regimes show some oppressive features that also allow to either manipulate or to suppress individual and collective hope.

My efforts in this dissertation are directed to validate the former thesis. Nonetheless, in exploring these matters, I inevitably collide with a longstanding polemic regarding the nature, value and scope of hope, both as a notion and as a human practice. This issue situates this category on very unstable philosophic grounds. Since ancient times hope has been dismissed as mere wishful thinking or as a failure to grasp and adjust, judiciously, to the facts of reality. Aristotle's dictum on the subject, "Hope is the dream of a waking man," reflects this view. In fact, when it comes down to the political realm, hope tends to be characterized as illusory, or as belonging to the land of make-believe, having no practical influence in the realm of the possible. Take for instance, Patrick Henry's representation of hope in his famous speech at the Virginia Convention in 1775. His words convey the traditional view of hope as illusory within the political arena. Henry said, "It is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren."[1] Contemporarily, Barbara Ehrenreich, also calls hope into question by asking, "Why should [we] need to rely on

---

[1] Henry, Patrick. "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death." *Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, Yale Law School*, n.d. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/patrick.asp.

illusions?"[2] She criticizes hope as a naïve form of optimism that people assume in certain situations, because of its deceptive salutary effects, "even at the admitted cost […] of less realism."[3] Hope, according to her is also irrational, because encouraging you to hope is asking you to "establish [hope] as one of the very structure of your mind, whether or not it is justified by actual circumstances."[4] Paradoxically, by negating hope the quality of being reasonable, Kant's famous question on the subject, "what may I hope?"—a question that was originally intended to signify what is reasonably allowed for us to hope—seems to be contradicted *a priori*. In addition, hope is often accused of being dangerous or of being an attitude that makes humans disregard risks.

Then, at first glance the critique on hope seems to leave little room for realistically arguing that it is the number one human attitude that political regimes seek to influence when pursuing to dominate a group of people. Yet, paradoxically, as I intend to demonstrate, it is precisely because of hope's illusory nature (among other things) that this human faculty becomes the most suitable target of certain political systems. Hope is indeed a powerful affective-cognitive human faculty, which, nonetheless, displays illusory features. Hope is a multifaceted human faculty. It manifests itself as an emotional drive for action; yet, it also responds to conative facts, such as the likelihood of future events by forming opinions about them. Nonetheless, since these emotive reactions and opinions are about the future, they are fictive constructions about things that are not here yet. In the political realm, when the highest of social goods—such as, liberty or political hegemony—are at stake, hope becomes the most important emotion, being the human faculty that enables and fuels people's actions. Paradoxically, even when hope shows illusory characteristics, no human movement or action is possible without it. In fact, to believe we can abandon hope is also an illusion.

---

[2] Ehrenreich, B. ''Pathologies of Hope.'' *Harper's Monthly*, 1 Feb. 2007, pp. 9–11.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

As Paulo Freire, Brazilian educator, education and political philosopher, explains in his book, *Pedagogy of Hope*, hope is "a human ontological need". [5] It is "an existential concrete imperative."[6] Hope, Freire asserts, "is not an intruder" in our personal, social or political life.[7] If hope is an ontological need, we cannot accuse it of being an intruder, because it is within us, as an integral part of our emotional/intellectual make-up. And yet, the following question still needs to be answered: is the illusory and dangerous character of hope an impediment in our personal and/or political existence that makes it a persistent but unwelcome presence in our lives?

Presently the category of hope has become a topic of concern in many academic fields. It has also recently re-surfaced as a strong trendy category in the political arena. And yet, hope does not necessarily figure as an important theme in the contemporary debates within the field of political theory. Paradoxically, in fields other than political theory, the discussion on hope as a crucial political category has placed this theme at the center of theoretical debates concerning political matters. This is particularly true in education and most especially in the critical pedagogy field. Paulo Freire is, in fact, commonly considered the inaugural philosopher of critical pedagogy.[8] Critical pedagogy is principally concerned with transforming oppressive relations of power. It aims at empowering oppressed people through an alternative process of education that enables them to transform their life conditions leading them to action. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is not only regarded as the seminal and most popular text of critical pedagogy, but also as an important political philosophical treatise on the role and power of education as a vehicle for emancipatory praxis. In fact, Paulo Freire "captured the political

---

[5] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York, The Continuum Publishing Company, 1996, pp 8.

[6] Ibid. pp 8.

[7] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage.* Maryland: Rowand & Littlefield Publishers, 1998, pp 69.

[8] Breuing, Mary. "Problematizing Critical Pedagogy." *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, vol. 3, 2011, pp. 2-23.

imagination of educators around the world."[9] As Leonardo Boff affirms, his pedagogical project is clearly political; it is one of action in and on the world, "created in order to place…lives inside the classroom and to employ knowledge and transformation as weapons to change the world."[10] Freire fought for recovering and rearticulating hope through an understanding of history as opportunity and not as determinism. For him hope is a practice of political imagination (of dreaming) that enables the oppressed "to think otherwise in order to act otherwise…that demanded an anchoring in transformative practices."[11] For Freire, as Henry Giroux claims, hope is a defining element of politics.[12] Paulo Freire's understanding of hope points towards an ontological outlook of politics and education as grounded in a praxis of hope, as a persistent search born from the human being's consciousness of its own incompleteness.[13] This incompleteness makes us search for the missing piece, for that which completes us. Yet this search cannot go on without a sort of orientation. This orientation is what opens the possibility of the act of knowing through praxis, by which we come to transform reality.[14] The need to orient ourselves brings to the fore "the question of the purpose of action at the level of critical perception of reality […which, demands, according to Freire] humanizing the world by transforming it."[15] It is at the act of creation and re-creation of the human project where education and politics meet each other. It is also at this juncture where hope becomes an imperative of both processes. It is also at this juncture that it becomes an enabling force in the struggle to create and re-create human reality in a contested world. Hope is the basis for planning

[9] McLaren, Peter. "Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the Politics of Hope: Reclaiming Critical Pedagogy." Critical Methodologies, vol. 1, no. 1, 2001, pp. 108-131.

[10] Boff, Leonardo, as quoted by McLaren in Ibid.

[11] Giroux, Henry. "Remembering Paulo Freire." *JAC: Journal of Composition Theory*, vol. 17, issue 3, 1997; pp. 310-313.

[12] Ibid. 311.

[13] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Freedom*, pp. 58.

[14] Freire, Paulo. *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation.* New York: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1985, pp. 44.

[15] Ibid.

action. Without hope, Paulo Freire affirms, "…there is no way we can even start to think about education."[16] And yet, due to its illusory and dangerous nature, to claim that hope is an imperative of political action might look doubtful. At the end, asking ourselves if we do need to carry our socio-political lives (or even our own personal lives) in the light of an unreasonable and vulnerable emotion becomes a legitimate practical preoccupation.

Thus, for the reasons stated above, placing hope at the center of politics requires dealing head on with this category vulnerabilities. Bridging the gap between the human ontological need for hope and the apparent irrational, illusory and dangerous features that characterize this category is imperative if hope is to be described as a precondition of politics and/or as a fundament of political action. Political philosophy has always tried to find rational grounds for practical political actions. Yet, as I advanced above, hope's propensity for creating mental illusions makes us susceptible of being dominated and exploited through methods that employ or manipulate the illusory power of this faculty. Hope may also predispose people to engage in other sort of irrational social and political activities, such as seeking to attain unfeasible hoped-for goals or to engage in utopian crusades.

Paulo Freire's philosophy offers the fundamental theoretical principles for bridging the gulf between hope's vulnerabilities and the political arena's exigencies of practicality and rationality in our actions. As the subtitle of my dissertation suggests, my inquiry into the subject of hope is launched from a very specific political standpoint; namely, that of the oppressed. Accordingly, I shall introduce in this dissertation what I want to name the *elpidology of the oppressed*.[17] In doing so I use Paulo Freire's system of thought and methodologies as a point of

---

[16] Freire, Paulo, *Daring to Dream*. Boulder, Co: Paradigm, 2007, pp. 87.

[17] In Spanish, the term "elpidología" refers to the philosophical studies of hope [*elpis,* in Ancient Greek]. The term in question has been around in the Spanish and Latin America academy for quite some time. It is a term of relatively common use in philosophy and, most especially, in theology, but it has been migrating to other academic fields lately. See for instance, Torres, Andres. "Elpidología: la esperanza como existenciario humano." *Theologica Xaveriana*, 154, 2005; pp. 165-184. I have not found yet the term "elpidology" used or referred to in any Anglo-

departure for approaching this theme and related subjects. The basic elements of this conception are extracted from Freire. Yet it goes beyond him into outlining and articulating the fundamentals of a critical theory of hope from which to launch a full theory of hope of the oppressed later. Here, however, I just merely initiate what I consider to be a full critique of this category with the intention of overcoming the shortcomings of the contemporary discussions on the subject. Most of today's debates address hope superficially and unrealistically without ever considering the issue of power, domination and oppression. Even if the discussions touch upon political matters, the most common approach to hope tends to be very idealistic, and therefore, politically unrealistic. As I shall illustrate along this work, the elpidology of the oppressed is a politically realist theory of hope. Thus, it is attuned to the requirements of contemporary political realism. Political realism demands accounting for the facts of political reality and relations of power as a basic platform to obverse socio-political phenomena without necessarily being tied to *a priori* moral normative commitments. Therefore, here I shall be relying more on epistemic and anthropological assessments of hope and related themes rather than upon idealistic moral committed grounds regarding the subject. The idea is to propose following Freire, taking a deep critical look at the theme of hope from the unusual standpoint of those who are usually kept in silence, motionless, helpless and hopeless socially and politically. I aim at understanding what is about hope that makes it so often appear as a politically neutral category when it is rather a highly politically charged one. Of course, I also aim at demonstrating why we must conceive hope as a politically charged notion and practice.

Freire's methodology recommends interrogating hope without losing sight of the fact that it is susceptible of being politically and pedagogically employed either to liberate or to domesticate the human being. His methods also advise to comprehensively demystify this category. Myths also have detrimental effects upon hope as a notion and as a practice. For instance, mythological irrationality is what has casted-off hope as something to be completely

---

Saxon text. Therefore, I have the intention to introduce the term "elpidology" in this work as one of my contributions to the English Language academy.

abandoned by rational individuals. It is also what has made other people to place hope in a sort of glamorized pedestal, where it is venerated as an intellectual certainty above or beyond the limits of the political and the humanly possible. As a result, hope's true socio-political bearings appear as kind of lost under the rubble of myth-creating cultural processes, ideological discourses and incongruity. From this perspective, the elpidology of the oppressed is, on the one hand, an attempt to present a diagnostic critique of this category, and; on the other hand, it is also an attempt to recuperate hope from under the wreckage of ideological absurdity to point toward a politically action-oriented understanding of it. Accordingly, the elpidology of the oppressed delivers a set of principles to consider the paradoxical nature of hope from the specific standpoint of the oppressed in their (conscious or unconscious) opposition and resistance against those who oppress them. From this political realistic viewpoint, I propose a method for addressing and casting off some of hope's vulnerabilities and perplexities, including casting light upon its illusory and dangerous nature. The elpidology of the oppressed also delivers a way of looking into hope's intrinsic relation to human agency, human freedom and political matters from a realistic viewpoint. Finally, it is a response to the longstanding socio-political and philosophical tradition of systematically asking the oppressed to abandon hope altogether.

As Paulo Freire points out, the oppressed are those who are systematically deprived of their right to take part in the creation and re-creation of their own history. The oppressed are those groups of people who, even when being inside of the social structure, are treated as being in the margin; and yet, they are in a dependent relationship to those who oppress them.[18] They are not "beings outside of [but]; they are being for another."[19] They are representatives "of the dominated strata of society, in conscious or unconscious opposition to those who, in the same structure, treat [them as things].[20] As the oppressed are forced to be silent, they are prevented

---

[18] Freire, Paulo. *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation.* New York: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1985, pp. 48.

[19] Ibid. pp. 49

[20] Ibid.

from consciously participating in the socio-historical transformation of their reality and in the effective construction of their own future.[21] As they are denied the corresponding powers and opportunities to transform their own reality by actively creating and bringing forward their own future, the oppressed people's sense of hope gets distorted. Political immobilism follows.[22] This sort of paralysis is not the cause of these people's political apathy, but a clear symptom of oppression. According to Freire, social and political immobilism, silence and fear of freedom are all but the result of a socio-political program directed to make people hopeless, especially at the collective level.[23] In this work I shall refer to this type of program as an "organized system of hopelessness."[24]

My intellectual preoccupation with the theme of hope and my unapologetic political alignment with the oppressed are not gratuitous. First, they both spring from my own socio-political experience of being part of the people of Puerto Rico, who have been systematically denied the right to freely determine by themselves their socio-political future by the colonial powers that have governed the Puerto Rican archipelago for more than 500 hundred years. When it comes down to the concrete ways in which the future and hopes of the people of Puerto Rico have been historically determined by the powers that be, it becomes clear that Puerto Ricans have had little to say about the most important and determining aspects of their lives. The people of Puerto Rico have been under the spell of a well-orchestrated organized system of hopelessness, which has been put and kept in place with the purpose of keeping them from assuming an effective control over their socio-political and economic lives and their future.

---

[21] Ibid. pp. 50.

[22] Freire, P. *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1996, pp. 8-9.

[23] Ibid. pp. 8-9.

[24] I take the term "system of organized hopelessness" from the "Translator's Notes" of Freire's book *Pedagogy of Freedom*, in which Patrick Clarke introduces it. See Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Freedom*, pp. ix.

Second, my philosophical question on hope comes from an original preoccupation with its nature and its actual relation with politics that first grew in my mind from reading about Jacques Derrida's notion of democracy *à venir* (to-come), which he relates to the notions of hope and promise.[25] The relationship between hope and politics that Derrida suggests fascinated me. Yet, the link between these two categories does not necessarily appear as a straightforward one out of Derrida's thesis on democracy to come. And so, my interest on the topic of hope became an intellectual project. Yet, as my inquiry onto this subject progressed, my question eventually became an examination about the reasons and methods through which oppressed people are kept politically hopeless. It became obvious to me that the category of hope had become the object of ideological abuse and it had fallen victim of myth-creating schemes. Most contemporary debates on this category overlook the possibility of hope being ideologically distorted; in doing so, they treat it as a socio-politically neutral category. I also realize that philosophical discussions on the subject has a huge dose of ideal moralistic and religious overtones that almost absolutely ignores the question of power and oppression at the time of appraising the nature and value of hope. The current debate baffled me as I saw how easy the fact of political domination and power asymmetry were underestimated at the time of judging why and how people concretely hope and consider their future. Hope's own vulnerabilities are, in fact, greatly influenced by these facts.

Appraising and untangling hope's puzzles as a category and as a human practice cannot be done divorced from political reality and its dialectics. Political reality includes power struggle, domination, oppression, power asymmetry and ideological distortion of facts, notions and practices. For obvious reasons, my methodological path made looking into Paulo Freire's philosophy of the oppressed and pedagogy of hope the most suitable resources of wisdom and philosophical clarity regarding these subjects. Further, my own question on hope comes from a concrete situation in which true and effective socio-political hope appears negated to an entire nation by an actual oppressive political condition. In other words, my philosophical question on

---

[25] Fernandez, Elena, "La Democracia como Promesa." Entrevista con Jacques Derrida, *Jornal de Letras, Artes e Ideas*, 12 de octubre, 1994, pp. 9-10. https://redaprenderycambiar.com.ar/derrida/textos/democracia.htm.

hope is not born out of an idealistic or moralistic concern with the subject, but it comes out of a concrete need to understand and to be able to effectively resolve an existing socio-political situation in which my people and I exist. As Paulo Freire suggests, the predicament of the oppressed, in relation to hope, is living within a limit-situation characterized by hopelessness. In Freire's view, hopelessness is not only the opposite of hope, but also a distorted form that hope assumes within conditions in which hope as such is systematically denied. Thus, the methodology of the elpidology of the oppressed begins by critically addressing the theme of hope from the very contradictions that result from its distortion under the pressure of socio-political and economic domination. I shall present below a substantial description of the fundamentals and methods of the elpidology of the oppressed. But, before moving into it, I would like to pay some attention to Freire's political philosophy to give to my approach on hope some methodological scope from the standpoint of contemporary political theory.

Paulo Freire's political realism and political conceptualization of hope

The political nature of Paulo Freire's pedagogical philosophy is so evident that it could be categorized as a political theory of education. It is not by coincidence that he has been described as "a political-educator"[26] and as "an organic intellectual."[27] His assertion, "education is politics"[28] and the emphasis he places upon distinct political categories, such as political conscientization, empowerment and political action for emancipation fully drop Freire in the terrain of political theory. Since its insertion in the educational academic realm—and other academic and non-academic scenarios—Freire's educational philosophy has been either priced

---

[26] Ana Mami Yamaguchi. "Paulo Freire's Theory of Education in the 1990s: From a Political Struggle to a Social Struggle." *The Annual Report of Education Science* 80, 2000, pp.133-149.

[27] Cornell, West. Preface. *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter*. Edited by Leonard, Peter and Peter McLaren. London and New York: Routledge, 1993, pp. 14.

[28] Shor, P., and Pablo Freire. *A Pedagogy of Liberation*. Wesport, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey, 1987, pp. 46.

or attacked because of its political implications. His educational emancipatory project aims at freeing (adult) learners from the forces that limit their hopes and opportunities to move them into acting to bring about socio-political transformation.

Given the patent radical political nature of Freire's educational philosophy, his opponents have even refused to ascribe him the standing of educator. [29] He answers these objections by insisting that education has never been a politically neutral activity. As he claims, his detractors fail "to perceive that, in denying [him] the status of educator for being too political they were being as political as [him].[30] Yet they mistakenly think they are politically neutral by assuming a neutral political stance. From Freire's theoretical point of view, education has what he calls, "politicity". This means that "education is simultaneously and act of knowing [and a] political act."[31] In fact, in his view, all educable things show politicity.[32] In other words, education has a political side and performs political functions. Education, Freire insisted throughout his entire carrier, is a socio-political praxis, which always will be "in the service either of the domestication of [humans beings] or of their liberation."[33] The domesticating role of education, he always warned his readers, is methodically shaped as a very "powerful instrument of social control" with the intention to reduce "thought to a state of naiveté, anaesthetizing" it.[34] This kind of education, which Freire describes as the banking model, only serves to dehumanize people.[35]

---

[29] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1996, pp. 7.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Freire, P. "Reading the World and Reading the Word: An Interview with Paulo Freire." *Language Arts*, 62:1, 1985, pp.15-21.

[32] Moacir Gadotti, Paulo Freire e Sérgio Guimarães, *Pedagogia: Diólogo e Conflicto*. São Paulo: Cortez, 1995, pp. 25-27.

[33] Freire, Paulo. "*Education: domestication or liberation?*" *Prospects*, vol. II, no. 2, Summer 1972, pp. 173-181.

[34] Ibid. pp. 175-177.

[35] "Banking education" is the term Freire uses in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to refer to the domesticating type of education, which he describes as suffering from "narration sickness", where the teacher characterizes social reality

In fact, Paulo Freire's critique of liberal education starts by accusing it of trying to separate education from politics by claiming that education should be politically neutral. He finds that this vision of education "is not only unreal but dangerous."[36] In his opinion looking at "education in isolation from the power which establishes it, to detach it from the reality which feeds it, reduces education (…) to the realm of abstract ideas and values."[37] For Freire, to advocate the neutrality of education is unrealistic; it is a form of suppressing politics. In his words, the declaration of education as neutral comes "either from those who have a totally naïve view of [education] and history or from those who shrewdly mask a realistic understanding behind a claim of neutrality."[38] According to Freire, both positions are ideological. Insisting in the neutrality of education in relation to history or politics is to take a political stand that inevitably favors the power élites political position, their cultural actions and favoring the status quo.[39] Pretending to remove all political content from education is to try to reduce education to a mere methodological dimension in which social praxis and liberation does not play any part in the process. This position, however, only serves the objectives of the power élites. The neutrality of education is an illusion.[40] In sum, Paulo Freire thinks that looking at education without considering the question of power is dangerously deceptive, because negating its political nature tends to give the superficial appearance that education always serves everyone when in fact it

---

as "motionless, static, compartmentalized and predictable […and completely divorced from] the existential experience of the students." Accordingly, the task of this type of education is to deposit in the minds of the students the contents of a domesticating narrative. "[T]he students are depositories and the teacher is the depositor." This banking education only serves to alienate the students, keeping them as passive recipients of its deposits and in silence. See, Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* pp. 71-75.

[36] *Paulo Freire, "Education for Liberation." One World*, 1975, pp. 16-19.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Freire, Paulo. *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation,* pp. 121.

[39] Ibid. pp.121-122.

[40] Ibid. pp .125.

might serve only a privileged few.[41] It is also, as he implies, a way of depoliticizing education through a process of mystifying it.

Paulo Freire's approach to educational and political things shows obvious political realist features. By this I mean that from a contemporary political theoretical standpoint, his methodology assumes the fundamental postures held by "political realism" as endorsed today by political theorists such as Bernard Williams, Raymond Geuss and Enzo Rossi, among others.[42] Broadly, political realists reject what Geuss calls "ethics first" approach to politics.[43] Political realists have developed a very rich literature that has as one of its common denominator a rejection of what has been labeled "high liberalism", as advanced primarily by John Rawls' political theory. High liberalism—also portrayed as "idealist political theory"—has a tendency of displacing politics and political conflict from the public arena. For political realists, the displacement of politics from political life is unrealistic because trying to escape political conflict is an idealistic way of making moral principles prior to political values. They advocate a political theory that places aside abstract ideals, prioritizing the relevant sources of politics within the actual political realm. As Raymond Geuss suggests, political realism starts from an account of our existing motivations and our political and social institutions.[44] Political realists embrace the belief that political conflict is a fundamental, inescapable, and perennial characteristic of human collective life. Hence, their belief that ideal political theory represents a desire to escape, evade or displace conflict or to depolitize society.

---

[41] Freire, Paulo. "Interview: Paulo Freire". *Omni, Nova Iorque*, vol. 12, no. 7, abr. 1990, pp. 74-94.

[42] For a concise overview on contemporary "political realism" see William A. Galston, "Realism in Political Theory." *European Journal of Political Theory* 9, no. 4, 2010, pp. 385-411. For a more sophisticated analysis of political realism from contemporary realist political thinkers, see Rossi Enzo and Matt Sleat, "Realism in Normative Political Theory." *Philosophy Compass* 9/10, 2014, pp. 689–701; and, Geuss, Raymond. *Philosophy and Real Politics*. Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008.

[43] Geuss, Raymond. *Philosophy and Real Politics.* Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008, pp. 9.

[44] Ibid.

My claim that Paulo Freire's political thought belongs to the political realist realm should not appear as a surprise. First, his political and educational views are very much influenced by Antonio Gramsci's political thought and outlook of education.[45] Second, Freire is also the first, most important and best-known Latin American interlocutor of the Frankfurt School's critical theoretical approach to the studies of society.[46] Thus, as a critical theorist, Freire advances a political thought that begins by being critical of power and by recognizing domination and oppression as concrete problems of society. His critique is also one of political economy and economic oppression. An oppression-free society, the political demand and fierce political struggle for justice stand as imperatives of Freire's political thought. His pedagogy of the oppressed is but a critique of oppressive political power and of ideology from the standpoint of the concrete contradictions that a system of domination systematically produces in the educational sphere. But to be sure, Paulo Freire's political theory regarding education not only starts from the very fabric of political reality, but it also rejects the idealistic or abstract character of educational philosophies that tries to separate education from the fact of political power. In addition, he also rejects idealistic moralization or ethics first approaches to socio-political matters. In his opinion, idealistic moral precepts cannot be viewed or offered "as magic remedies for healing the hearts of mankind without changing the social structure."[47] In his opinion, ethics first-idealistic approaches to socio-political problems tend to drain important concepts or themes of their dialectical and concrete content, transforming them into a sort of an unrealistic panacea

---

[45] Freire acknowledges the influence that Gramsci had on his thought at several instances throughout his works. See for example, Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Hope*, pp. 18, where he lists several scholars and thinkers that influenced him, in which he includes Gramsci. For a critical assessment of the influence of Antonio Gramsci in Freire's political thought see, Mayo, Peter, "The Gramscian Influence", in *Paulo Freire's Intellectual Roots: Towards Historicity in Praxis*, Robert Lake and Tricia Kress (Eds.) London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2013, pp. 53-64.

[46] See, Morales-Zuñiga, Luis C. "El pensamiento crítico en la teoría educativa contemporánea." *Actualidades Investigativas en Educación*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2014, pp. 1-23.

[47] Freire, Paulo. *The Politics of Education,* pp. 123.

that creates a dialectical gap between reality and concepts.[48] In other words, this sort of methods tends to turn socio-political concepts and the reality that they pretend to address into a myth.[49] As Freire suggests, this mythologizing disfigures concepts such as conscientization, empowerment, education, freedom and hope, among others. Moreover, mythologizing allows the ideological use of these themes by the oppressors for domineering purposes.[50]

In sum, methodologically, Paulo Freire's approach to political matters meets most of the criteria that, according to Raymond Geuss in *Philosophy and Real Politics*, characterize a political realist theory. Correspondingly: 1) Freire's is not primarily concerned with how educators or other political actors ought to behave, but rather with the way educators and the educational system act (politically) within the system and in society in general; 2) For Freire education is not politically neutral (and has never been), but partisan. To advocate the neutrality of education is unrealistic; it is a form of displacing or suppressing politics; 3) Freire not only gives priority to politics by looking first at political domination and power relationships within very concrete human situations (in this case education and educational matters within political parties, political movements and political revolution), but he also prioritizes individual and collective political struggle over other considerations; 4) He conceptualizes politics as praxis (action-reflection), either within the educational system and school or within any other context (educational or otherwise); 5) Freire sees his education political theory as historically located, as grounded in real historical facts and subjected to change or/and to be changed by political actors; 6) He sees the liquid and crafty nature of politics, rejecting any mechanistic or fatalistic understanding of history and political praxis. It is the fluid and changing nature of politics that which, in Paulo Freire's view, allows history to be problematized through our political activities. As a matter of fact, history exists "only where time is problematized and not simply a given."[51];

---

[48] Ibid. pp.124.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Freedom*, pp. 69.

7) Freire understands the role of political theory as a directive one; for him, political theory must advocate political action and social change.

Consequently, Paulo Freire advances a politicized conceptualization of this category. As I shall explain below in much detail, in his view, hope also has politicity. As he explains in *Pedagogy of Hope*, hope "demands an anchoring in practice."[52] In the political scenario it requires action "in order to become historical concreteness."[53] Besides insisting in the practical political dimension of hope, Freire also advances a radical democratic outlook of this faculty. Let me take a moment to expand on this crucial point. First, it is important to highlight that Freire does not understand hope as being something to be crafted and practiced solely at individual or solitary level. Since ontologically he links the praxis of hope with human freedom and agency, we are to suppose that what applies to freedom and agency also applies concomitantly to the category of hope. For Freire "[f]reedom is acquired by conquest, [it is] not a gift […thus, it] must be pursued constantly..."[54] Correspondingly, hope is neither a given nor something to be handed down as a gift to a group of people by someone such as god, or any other authority, such as the state. It is rather something to be gained through praxis. Additionally, Freire understands the praxis of hope as having the future of all members of society as its main aim. The future, Freire claims, is something to be built by men and women in communion through the struggle that characterizes human existence.[55] Accordingly, similarly to the category of freedom, the future is not to be thought as something to be given or received by people. It is rather something to be created by people through fighting side by side and learning together how to transform their reality and how to bring forward a new time to come or futurity.[56] Constructing futurity—and the faculty of hope that assists and enables this process—corresponds to the historical nature of

---

[52] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Hope*, pp. 9.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 47.

[55] Ibid. pp. 38 and 84.

[56] Ibid. pp. 38-39.

humankind. The process, Freire indicates, affirms women and men as beings "who move forward and look ahead, for whom immobility represents a fatal threat…[It] identifies with the movement which engages [them] as beings aware of their incompletion."[57] According to him, the engagement of people in the collective building of futurity occurs through dialogue. "Human existence cannot be in silent […] To exists humanly is to name the world and to change it […through…] word, in work, in [dialogic] action-reflection" or praxis.[58] Dialogue, according to Freire is democratic at least in two important ways. First, it is an act of creation and re-creation that must not serve the purpose of domination. It is not true dialogue if it is used as a crafty authoritarian instrument to impose one's own truths upon others or to name the world on behalf of someone else.[59] One cannot think for others. Yet, authoritarian persons tend to be of the opinion that it is all right to think for other people. Second, this dialogue requires the people's authentic participation in the communicative act that creates and re-creates society and culture through political power. In other words, it cannot fear the people, their expression and their effective participation in power.[60] According to Freire, this sort of communicative process is a radical must of any authentic democratic process of socio-political transformation. For to impede true democratic "communication is to reduce [people] to the status of things."[61] In fact, under conditions of oppression, where the primordial right to speak their word is systematically denied to people, dialogue imposes itself as a radical democratic resource of both, resistance and emancipation, for it "imposes itself as the way by which [the oppressed] achieve significance as human beings."[62] Dialogue becomes then the radical democratic encounter of multiple subjects in search of their own voices, of their freedom and in search of their humanity collectively. Yet

---

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid. pp. 88.

[59] Ibid. pp. 89.

[60] Ibid. pp. 128.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid. pp. 88.

this democratic dialogic encounter, Freire claims, cannot exist without hope.[63] Freire suggests that hope—as an integral part of the dialogic encounter of men and women as formerly described—acquires and requires the very same radical democratic dialogic features of this encounter at its formative level. This means that hope is not to be thought as a given. It requires the people's participation in the communicative act that creates and re-creates hope as a praxis. Therefore, critical thinking, empowerment, education, freedom and agency are all categories that Freire's political philosophy intimately links to the category and praxis of hope; a connection that is subsumed in his category of educated hope.

Paulo Freire advances what I shall call a deep and radical notion of hope from which I distil his theory of hope, which fundaments I use to develop the elpidology of the oppressed. Nonetheless, his delivery of his theory of hope is not without problems. Thus, before I advance any further, some important clarifications regarding Freire's views on this subject and about my procedures in gathering the fundamental premises of his theory are in order. I must start by charging Freire with a lack of philosophical rigor at the time of advancing a distinctive definition of the category of hope. Nowhere through all his work one finds an actual definition of this category. This deficiency proves challenging at the time of exploring, adopting and/or employing his vision of hope for further analysis. One would assume that his *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* contains such a definition. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The book, as its subtitle announces, is a reliving of the origins and a defense of the most important philosophical, political and pedagogical principles of the theory he advanced in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.[64] It is also a celebration of the intellectual journey that this work meant for him throughout his life. Despite its tittle, the number of pages that he dedicates exclusively to the philosophic exploration of the category of hope in this book is very limited. Some of the most crucial, most celebrated and quoted premises of Freire's theory of hope are advanced only in about two pages in the opening words of the work. Later in the book he comes back a couple of

---

[63] Ibid. pp. 90.

[64] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Hope*, pp. 10-11.

times to the subject and related topics, but without going as deep into it as one would expect in a book with such a title. After going through it trying to find the holy grail of hope, one ends up exhausted and sort of disappointed. Let me provide now a very condensed version of the ideas on hope that he puts forward in this book, so my reader gets a sense of what he has to say about the subject, what he does not provide and also of the reasons of my critique. As I said, Freire understands hope as:

> …an existential concrete imperative. [By this] I do not mean that, because I am hopeful, I attribute, to this hope of mine a power to transform reality all by itself. [My] hope is necessary, but is not enough. Alone it does not win. But without it, my struggle will be weak and wobbly. The idea that hope alone will transform the world, an action undertaken in that kind of naïveté, is an excellent route to hopelessness, pessimism and fatalism. But the attempt to do without hope, in the struggle to improve the world, as if that struggle could be reduced to calculated acts alone…it is a frivolous illusion (…) Hope needs practice in order to become historical concreteness. That is why there is no hope in sheer hopefulness. The hoped-for is not attained by dint of raw hoping. Just to hope is to hope in vain. Hope, as it happens, is so important for our existence, individual and social, that we must take care not to experience it in a mistaken form, and thereby allow it to slip towards hopelessness and despair [which are] the consequence and the cause of inaction and immobilism. […W]ithout hope there is little we can do. It will be hard to struggle on, and when we fight as hopeless and despairing persons, our struggle will be suicidal. Hence the need for a kind of education in hope (...) [65]

Later, in the first chapter of the book, Freire ads another two pages on the subject. This time his discussion emphasizes the notion of educated hope. Here he provides an analysis of

---

[65] Ibid. pp. 8-9.

what he calls "concrete hope"—which he links with pessimism and even with depression. At the bottom, he says, he "is seeking for the deepest 'why' of [his suffering and] pain."[66] As Freire seems to suggest, from the standpoint of the oppressed, educating one's hope in a concrete way is an intellectual process that has to do with "unraveling the [socio-economic and political] fabric in which the facts of reality are given, and discovering [the whys]" of one's own hopelessness and helplessness.[67] He clarifies, however, that being critically aware of the whys—an awareness acquired through the unveiling of reality—"does not of itself alone effect a change in reality." Yet, this unmasking and revelation, as he says, "is a step in the right direction. Now the person…can engage in a political struggle for the transformation of the concrete condition in which oppression prevails."[68] Although it is not sufficient for changing the data of the problem, having "the hope of remaking the world is indispensable in the struggle of oppressed men and women." [69] One infers that having a truly critical understanding of the situation of oppression gives people hope. As Freire implies, this is a vital methodological element that empowers people to challenge the concrete situation that oppress them.[70] Being critically conscious of the reasons and whys of oppression and hopelessness leads people to be aware of the actual possibilities for social change. Freire suggests that this critical awareness becomes part of one's educated-concrete hope. But he does not necessarily take the reader in the philosophical journey through this analysis. Again, educated-critical hope remains undefined. Later in the book, he will go back to the subject of hope for a third time and examine it in relation to the notions of dreaming and utopian thinking. In this short but a more philosophically robust discussion, he describes dreaming as a necessary political act and as an integral part of being human, adding that "there is no change without dream and there is no dream without hope."[71] He then defines

---

[66] Ibid. pp. 29.

[67] Ibid. pp. 30.

[68] Ibid. pp. 30-31.

[69] Ibid. pp. 31.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid. pp. 90-91.

utopia or authentic utopian thinking "as a tension between the denunciation of a present becoming more and more intolerable, and the annunciation, announcement of a future to be created, built—politically, esthetically, and ethically—by us, women and men."[72] He proceeds by claiming that the only way hope exists is where the future is not considered as pre-given because this opens the room for "utopia…for the dream, the option, the decision [and for] expectancy in the struggle…"[73] Freire's discussion of these subjects are illuminating as to the effects of pointing towards oppression as a distinct cause of people's deficit in hope, loss of heart and disruption or suppression of their capacity for dreaming and utopian thinking. Pessimism, fatalism and immobilism follow hope's suppression. But, although he suggests a direct nexus between hope and all these other notions, at least in this book, he fails to provide the explanatory linchpin that links them. In sum, his brief discussion on hope simply leaves the philosophically sophisticated reader with many theoretical important questions on the subject unanswered. For instance, what exactly is the cognitive and/or emotional structure of hope at the psychic level so that it can be considered, as Freire claims, as an imperative in our lives?

Freire's book, *Pedagogy of Hope*, is hardly a philosophic treatise on this subject. But does this mean that the scholar exploring Freire's notion of hope is left completely empty handed at the time of trying to access his exact idea on the subject? Fortunately, this is not the case. To be fair, let me emphasize the fact that Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed is indeed an educational theory in which hope plays a crucial role. Thus, as I mentioned earlier, his entire philosophical project and the theory that underlies it contain a very solid set of premises on hope from where to work a robust theory of hope. These ideas, however, are not delivered neither in a full nor in a systematic way anywhere throughout the bulk of his work. Most of his ideas on hope are rather scattered throughout his works, while others must be deduced from the fundaments of his entire philosophical project. Therefore, his theory of hope needs to be dug out and reconstructed from Freire's different published material and interviews. This excavation yields,

---

[72] Ibid. pp. 91.

[73] Ibid.

22

as I advanced earlier, a robust and deep radical notion of hope from which I re-create and develop what I have termed the elpidology of the oppressed. Therefore, the elpidology of the oppressed amounts to a re-interpretation and re-evaluation of Paulo Freire's teachings regarding hope and other related notions. In the very same politically realistic spirit that Freire himself advises his disciples to do, I re-invent and re-create him (his ideas and methods) and also depart from him whenever his methods or insights into the matters at hand look insufficient.[74] Thus, when considered necessary, I shall step outside the Freirian boundaries in order to throw light upon emerging problems. Yet, I stay loyal to Freire's most fundamentals philosophical and political principles.

Now, one last clarification regarding Freire's account of hope is in order. As argued above, he fails to provide a distinctive definition of the category of hope. However, Freire does provide a definition of hopelessness that serves as a solid ground from where to launch our own inquiry into the subject of hope and to develop a definition of this category in a Freirean key. In P*edagogy of the Oppressed* he defines hopelessness as "a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it."[75] Hope, he insists, "does not consist in crossing one's arms and waiting."[76] As stated above, according to Freire, hope requires practice to actualize itself in the world as a concrete fact of history. As long as we struggle, he asserts, "we are moved by hope."[77] Hope moves us. But, what else does hope do or means for us from Freire's perspective? As he claims, ontologically, hope is rooted in our own incompletion as humans, from which we move out in

---

[74] Paulo Freire was famous for assuming a very humble and critical position regarding his own teachings and methods. He constantly encouraged his followers not to follow his views or methods dogmatically or uncritically. Most importantly, he often objected what he calls the importation or exportation of ideas and advised his followers everywhere not to import him, but to re-create and re-write his ideas and adapt them to concrete situations. For a discussion on these matters, see Freire, Paulo. *The Politics of Education*, pp. xviii.

[75] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 91.

[76] Ibid. pp. 92.

[77] Ibid.

constant search for our own humanity.[78] Hope propels and assists human in their encounter in their communal search to be more fully human. Yet, this movement is not possible in a climate of hopelessness.[79] Now, since hopelessness is a form of being muted or of mutism, then we are to infer that, in Freire's view, hope is a form of movement that breaks this silence. We are to suppose then that hope carries us forward towards the concrete actualization of our voices and our acts in time and space as part of our struggle and search in life for our completion. Thus, if hopelessness is to deny the world and flee from it, hope is a way of being concretely in the world.

Moreover, looking at hope as a sort of movement that breaks our silence from the standpoint of Freire's educative philosophy—problem-posing pedagogy—invites us to understand the intellectual process of problematizing and critically questioning our own lives, culture and society and its political and economic structures as a hopeful engagement with the human world and as a way of critically being within it. This way of comprehending hope, in its turn, invites us to think of hope as a sort of questioning or inquiry. It invites us to think of hope as a critical movement of the human intellect. From this perspective, hope becomes not only a sort of intellectual task, but also a method.

The elpidology of the oppressed begins its task by problematizing the very category and practice of hope from the standpoint of the oppressed. And, therefore, it is launched from the very breeding ground on which some of the most crucial contradictions of our human world take shape. Paradoxically, as I shall illustrate below and through this dissertation, the human elpidic mind and our sense of hope stand as the emotive and intellectual faculties through which we humans cope with, and work out the space-time oddities that we experience in our lives. In fact, history making is a very complex and odd way in which men and women experience their lives in the space-time dimension as beings of action. And yet, as Paulo Freire reminds us, oppression distorts this experience. An oppressive social system tends to hinder or suppress people's

---

[78] Ibid. pp. 91.

[79] Ibid.

24

movement towards discovering themselves as temporal beings able of transcending the time dimension of today and emerge from it as free-temporalized historical beings.[80] The elpidology of the oppressed calls attention to the crucial paradoxical role that the human sense of hope plays in this process by critically looking at oppression as a determining element of how people perceive themselves or not as hopeful historical beings.

Let now discuss some curious oddities of the human intellect that I want to bring to light as part of my introduction to the problematization of the theme of hope. As part of this discussion I shall also provide a much-needed definition of hope in order to begin making philosophical sense of this topic.

Hope and the Human Condition: the elpidic structure of all human undertakings

The category of hope has a complex and ambiguous biography. It has been defined in many ways along history. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologica,* examines hope's object and notes four conditions that, according to him, define this category. Let me summarize his insights on the subject as follows: "a good that specifically defers from fear, that regards for the future, that is arduous and difficult, but nevertheless possible to obtain."[81] In another completely different mood, David Hume defines it as, a mixture of pleasure and pain that arises from the imagination of some pleasant but "only probable" future event.[82] Contemporarily, Dufault and Martocchio present a more comprehensive definition that I think captures in a more appropriate

---

[80] Freire, Paulo. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Continuum, 1981, pp. 4.

[81] Aquinas, Thomas, Summa Theologica. trans., in *Fathers of the English Dominician Province*, (Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1947, EWTN Online, Hypertext ed., New Advent staff, Hypertext Version Copyrights 1995, 1996, New Advent, Inc., June 25, 1997), I –II.40.1

[82] Hume, D., *Treatise on Human Nature*, 2nd edn, Edited by P. Nidditch. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 440.

way the complexity, depth and dynamism that this human phenomena entails. They define hope as, "a multidimensional dynamic life force characterized by a confident yet uncertain expectation of achieving a good future which, to the hoping person, is realistically possible and personally significant."[83]

Most contemporary assessments of hope are one-dimensional. This means that they portray hope as having only one specific function in certain specific circumstances of life. Yet, I want to advance a more complex and multidimensional characterization of this category. In fact, a multidimensional characterization of hope grasps in a more precise way the ambivalent nature of what I want to term *the human elpidic mind*. This refers to our persistent, inescapable and anxious preoccupation with the future and the dramatic illusion-creating power of our minds. I develop the term from the ancient meaning that the Greeks assigned to the notion of *elpis* (ἐλπίς)—hope in ancient Greek. As discussed by Spanish philosopher Pedro Laín-Entralgo in his seminal work on the topic of hope, *La espera y la esperanza; historia y teoría del esperar humano,* for the Greeks *elpis* had several meanings; it meant hope, as we understand it today—as expecting something good—but it also meant awaiting, anticipation, conjecture, preoccupation and apprehension regarding the future.[84] The Greeks traced a relation among *elpis*, desire and volition, which suggests a correlation between *it* and the human yearning, emotional impulse and motivation to achieve a future goal. Yet, for the Greeks *elpis* was not necessarily a virtue as for Christians. As F.M. Cornford suggests, there are dangers behind the passion of *elpis*, for it is a deceiving fantasy or illusion.[85] Both Laín-Entralgo and Cornford inform the ambiguous, deceiving and profoundly disappointing nature of *elpis*. Laín-Entralgo also points towards the anxiety that an uncertainty future causes. According to Laín Entralgo for the Greeks *elpis* is something humans cannot necessarily trust. Yet, it is an integral and persistent part of the human condition. *Elpis'* persistence is inescapable. As Thucydides puts it, "hope and desire persist…one

---

[83] Dufault K. and Martocchio B.C. Symposium on compassionate care and the dying experience. "Hope: its spheres and dimensions." *Nurs Clin North Am* 1985, 20: 379-391.

[84] Laín-Entralgo, Pedro. *La espera y la esperanza; historia y teoría del esperar humano,* pp. 27

[85] Cornford, F.M., *Thucydides Mythistoricus.* New York: Greenwood, 1907, pp. 167.

leading and the other following, one conceiving the enterprise and the other suggesting that it will be successful."[86] Nonetheless, *elpis*, Thucydides insists, could be dangerous. And yet, he also suggests in his work, that it "can come in various degrees of strength, ranging from forlorn hopes to reasonable confidence."[87] Yet, *elpis* is also the human emotion and/or attitude that copes with anxiety and fears regarding the future. Of course, as Andrew Chignell highlights, there is a lot of ambivalence in the ancient Greek notion of *elpis*.[88] Yet, this ambivalence reflects the actual dynamic fluctuation or vacillation of our elpidic mind. It is in this sense that the ancient Greek notion of *elpis*, in my view, captures better the complexity and oddity of the human experience of hoping. Ultimately, hoping manifests itself in a very strange dialectical interplay with fear, with which hope is always in a constant struggle. Moreover, approaching hope from the ancient notion of *elpis* also helps to strip this concept from its contemporary religious undertones. For better or for worse the contemporary Western notion of hope is wrapped around Christian theology and meanings. Most of the time Christian thought tends to glamorize too much the human sense of hope by elevating it to the category of an extra-human force, which security and real power lies outside the human body or the human world. I want to advance here a secular notion of hope, which, nonetheless, does not necessarily totally contradict the praxis of hope from a religious standpoint, but that simply transcends it. As I shall illustrate in detail in Chapter III, it is also important to bring to the fore that the Greeks' distrust of *elpis* (and their constant quest for a more rational alternative to it) reveals another paradoxical dimension of our elpidic urges and sense of hope. Humans have always shown a very strong desire to escape (in some way or another) the ambivalence, anxieties and oddities produced by

---

[86] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Translation, M.I. Finley. New York: Penguin Books, 1972, pp. 220.

[87] Schlosser, J.A. "'Hope, Danger's Comforter'': Thucydides, Hope, Politics." *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 75, no. 1, January 2013, pp. 169–182.

[88] Chignell, Andrew. "Expectation and Hope in the Anthropocene." Prepared for the Yale Center for Faith and Culture, consultation on, *Expectation and Human Flourishing*, June 2015. http://faith.yale.edu/sites/default/files/expectation_and_hope_0.pdf.

the interplay between their elpidic minds and concrete reality. Religion, for instance, could be interpreted as a way of giving certainty to the insecurities of our lives. In fact, the human condition is to live within an odd spatio-temporal set of circumstances. Paraphrasing José Ortega y Gasset, if a human being is herself and her circumstances, her peculiar condition of life is one in which her elpidic mind is forced to struggle with the *anxieties* that her relationship with odd spatio-temporal circumstances create. But, this drama is concrete and not only mental. The human condition is one in which the nomenclature of our spatio-temporal reality forces us to live in a forward direction—advocated to the future. Every step that we take forward is mediated by the elpidic structure of our minds even when we are not totally aware of it. If we could break each of our steps as we move forward into a detailed narrative of the conglomerate of different motions that our body makes in trying to navigate its path forward, we could them look as how our elpidic mind intervenes in each of these movements. Paradoxically, it is in fact the obstacles that we find in our path what call attention to the elpidic structure of our movement forward. As we advance forward, we desire to move freely without problems or complications in our way. Yet an obstacle becomes a *contratiempo*—a setback, a misfortune or a delay—to our original problem-free desired future. Any little or big *contretemps* derails our previously desired or planned march forward. This is a fact of human life. Indeed, our movement forward in space and time is often truncated either by fortuitous life events or by obstacles systematically placed in our path by other people or by oppressive social systems. Yet, there are times in which we are the ones designing and deploying the concrete and/or psychological barriers that some other people are going to find in their path forward. Thus, as humans, we are bound to suffer the persistent factum of arriving late to our own desired and/or expected futures or not arriving to them at all. Making history escapes us. We walk into our paths with apprehension, navigating illusions and concrete obstacles that pull us down or backwards. Wanting to escape these paradoxical circumstances, we have invented many other illusions in order to help us flee these oddities that are the concrete cause of our anxieties. Our desire for the future pushes us forward to create illusory certainties. Paradoxically, this elpidic desire becomes the definitive *ratio* of many of the

illusions that populate our human world. Oddly too, hope in the Christian sense is but another illusion, born from these elpidic urges.

Hope has a multitude of sides and expressions. It is a shape shifter. It shows, in my view, a mercurial fluid nature with a volatile conduct. Hope has a conative side, having to do with desire (or probably with something still more primal), but it also comprises a cognitive side. As suggested by Dufault and Martocchio's definition, the cognitive side of hope has to do with a conviction about our future expectations. It is our rational connection with what we imagine as possible or probable and to which we assign a significant value. This positive belief is usually strong enough for us to plan and act upon it. Therefore, hope is not only a driving force, but also a moment and a source of freedom that generates a prospective impetus in us. Nonetheless, hope, as all other human faculties, has its limits and vulnerabilities. Thus, it cannot be thought as a faculty of an unlimited potential. Hope belongs to the human stock of ambiguous human capabilities shaped by flawed human passions and by our limited rationality.

Coming back to hope's multidimensionality, characterizing hope in such a way corresponds better to the diversity of historical accounts of the phenomena throughout the ages. Further, as I shall demonstrate, this multidimensional account of hope fits better with Paulo Freire's radical democratic outlook of hope. Now, it is also very important to note that hoping never occurs in a socio-political vacuum. Hope is an activity carried within a specific context by human beings that are aware of their activity and aware of the world in which they live. This activity, however, goes on in a dialectical relationship between the determination of limits and the freedom of those who carry it. Hoping is situated within a specific circumstance in which an individual or a collective experience lives in hope or in hopelessness. The specific circumstances and the epoch in which people exist determine the character and scope of their question on hope. To hope entails a movement of the intellect. In hoping, we problematize our spatio-temporal existence regarding the present and the not-yet. Nonetheless, note that our intellectual movement or inquiry about hope develops either from a situation of relatively abundance or moderate availability of resources for hoping or, on the contrary, from a circumstance of hopelessness where the actual resources of hope are scarce. Therefore, the content of a particular person's

29

answer to her question on hope should not be thought as pre-given. It is actually something constituted in history. Paradoxically, the struggle for getting this question effectively answered and the means to accomplish what the actualization of its answer concretely requires are both an integral part of the process of hoping. As I have already explained above, in Freire's view, hope is praxis. Hope brings the future throughout a performance of the human will, always emerging from the present expectation and propelling the individual self or a collective body towards the not-yet.

Further, hope is not necessarily about what to expect, but about how do people give form and meaning to what they are expecting. Hope is a hypothesis. *To hope is to think that our questions have an answer even if the answer is not here yet.* The projection of our inquiry launches us into the future and produces a tension between the now and the time to come regulated by our hypothetical expectation about the future. As Pedro-Laín Entralgo explains, to live as a human in the world is a project that requires projecting ourselves forward through an asking, which is to want to be something that one could be.[89] Every question that a person asks, Laín-Entralgo explains, is a conscious intention of that individual towards becoming what she desires and what she can become, brought forth by asking about a person's hopes and plans to be. And nonetheless, as he clarifies, the very question, as it starts from "a can be", it opens the possibility of conducting the person towards "not-to-be" or towards non-existence.[90] In other words, since an inquiry starts from not having the answer yet—or from "the not-yet"—it is always open to a number of possibilities, including the chance of never realizing itself in the future. Asking entails a risk. Therefore, any human inquiry has what I will call, following Laín-Entralgo's suggestion, an "elpidic structure" or hopeful structure. It does not matter how trivial an inquiry might be it possesses this structure. Laín-Entralgo uses the question, "what time is it?" as a trivial example to illustrate his point. The former question, as he indicates, is a realistic one. Its answer stands in the realm of the humanly possible to attain. But this does not mean that the

---

[89] Laín-Entralgo, P., *La espera y la esperanza*; pp. 512.

[90] Ibid. pp. 512-513.

inquirer will in fact get her answer. It would be enough that the person to whom the question is directed might not know or might not want to give an answer to the person inquiring. Not getting the answer will leave the inquirer without a piece of knowledge that might have conducted her to become something else that now she would not be because she did not get her answer.[91] Laín-Entralgo adds that the inquirer might in fact die before getting her answer or can also be depersonalized by losing her mind. There are then, according to him, three different events that might impede the person becoming through her question: failure, death and depersonalization by mental insanity. Yet, Laín-Entralgo suggests a fourth, but does not discuss it. He also overlooks a fifth. These are; first, the answer can be simply violently denied and the very question suppressed; and second, there is also the possibility that an entire situational context could be designed to make a person partially or entirely irrational or mentally ill. These last two possible scenarios imply oppression. Notice that purposely denying a person answers to certain specific questions or denying certain knowledge or information or entirely suppressing her questions could make someone go insane.

As Paulo Freire argues, oppression and domination are concrete circumstances of human life that violently crush a person movement of inquiry and transformation, suppressing a person's faculty to question and frustrating, thereby, some, most or all the person's possibilities of becoming. Dehumanization (or depersonalization, as Laín-Entralgo calls it) is an outcome of people's actions upon a group of "personas" and not a natural occurrence or an accident. As Paulo Freire's work made extensively clear to millions of people around the world, the successful suppression of a person's capacity to question is followed by his or her silence.[92] Silence, as a cultural characteristic of a person or group of people within a society, can be imposed upon an entire group of people by many means, including education. A culture of silence—of indifference, ignorance and lethargy—signals a socio-political structure of mutism. This kind of silence is one of the outcomes of the overwhelming force that a socio-economic and

---

[91] Ibid. pp. 512.

[92] Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* pp. 88.

political system of domination exercises upon people. This is one of the ways in which the dispossessed are deprived of their persona. By blocking their humanness many possibilities of becoming are blocked too. Becoming is either rendered impossible or manipulated so people only become what it has been pre-established by the people controlling their development within the oppressive system. Through this process the future of the oppressed is also silenced. Under an extreme situation of oppression, nothing good or different is to be expected by the oppressed. This is a condition where the illusion of hopelessness has already been imposed by oppression. As Freire tells us, human beings "are not built in silence, but in word…in action-reflection."[93] How can humanness be built where the question is suppressed, where silence is imposed and action-reflection blocked? Human beings, Paulo Freire says, "are not built in silence."[94] Asking, he suggests, is supposed to be a horizontal relationship; a relationship that only a truly critical democratic dialogical situation can guarantee. Suppressing the question is suppressing dialogue and suppressing dialogue is to suppress democracy.[95] A culture of silence is, by definition, an anti-dialogic and anti-democratic culture. Any inquiry, as Freire suggests, is by its own social nature a communal-collective project because it is a project of searching for that which complete the person: a process that can only be completed in the other, with others and through others. Any question, any inquiry, any search is carried with hope and because of hope.

Now, if hope is expectancy, to hope is also to wait for what you expect. And so, the human being cannot hope without waiting and cannot wait for something without hoping. The human being lives oriented toward the future. Being preoccupied with the future is unavoidable. To live is to live propelled towards the future. To hope is inescapable. It is in this sense that humans are subjects of hope. Therefore, the human temporal displacement through life has an elpidic structure from which men and women cannot escape. Hence, as "everything that is done in this world is done by hope", as Martin Luther said[96], we are to suppose that there is no action

---

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid. pp. 91

[96] Luther, M. *The Table Talk or Familiar Discourse of Martin Luther*. Translated by W. Hazlitt, London, 1848.

and no step forward that an individual takes in order to meet some good (whatever that good might be, little or big) in the near or distant future that it is not ultimately propelled by hope. Without hope, humans will have no reasons to undertake any action at all.

Nonetheless, Luther's notion of hope might sound odd for some. A distinction is usually drawn between authentic, deep or great hope and ordinary, unauthentic, shallow or small hope. The categories are not necessarily entirely clear. The difference between these sorts of "hopes" is described sometimes in terms of degree and other times in qualitative terms. For instance, American medicine philosopher, William Stempsey indicates, "to hope" in a small sense, is no more than a desire, meaning that it might express just a wish, but it does not indicate that an action had or would be taken in order to bring that wish or desire forward.[97] However, he also discuss unrealistic hopes describing these sorts of hopes are shallow, because they can be thwarted, causing disappointment, which serious enough could lead to hopelessness.[98] Unrealistic hopes, he adds, can be counterproductive. As he explains, desire is always necessary for hope. Deep hope, according to Stempsey, "involves a committed stance, which takes effort, of anticipation of some future possibility that is good." [99] For him a shallow hope is to desire an unrealistic good, or regarding a future in a wrong way, or to try to avoid working hard for a hoped-for good, or hoping for improbable goods.[100] Yet, his discussion never makes completely clear if trivial, small or superficial totally realizable desires for which we actually work realistically for are also small, shallow or superficial hopes.

Further, Martin Luther's idea of hope might be also at odds with the notion of authentic or deep hope as a very especial feature of the human psyche, conceived as a unique role under especially demanding situations, in times of trial, when the hoped-for outcome seems very unlikely. A wide variety of contemporary scholars, Christians and non-Christians alike, in diverse fields of the academy, endorse this view of hope. This notion of hope is usually portrayed

---

[97] Stempsey, W. "Hope for Health and Health Care." *Med Health and Philo*, 18, 2015, pp 41-49.

[98] Ibid. pp. 42.

[99] Ibid. pp. 43.

[100] Ibid. pp. 42-43.

under the banner of the biblical Pauline expression, "hoping against hope". Abraham, being promised by God to became the father of many nations, hoped against all evidence to the contrary (as for example, his wife's age, who was too old to bear children), that what was promised to him by his deity would happen sometime in the future. St. Paul suggests that this kind of non-ordinary hope—Christian hope—is hoping for something (an outcome) in the non-immediate future, whose consecution is very difficult, or that could even be considered impossible to attain by common standards. Even so, it is still hoped for because it stems from God's will. In short, the Christian notion of hope sees this force as one that does not necessarily emanate from inside the human being. Its true strength resides outside the human being. It is in the power of God. Hope is a force that goes beyond our own inner capabilities and orbit of action. Since its true strength resides in our faith in God, hope is usually considered superior and more authentic than one based solely on human capabilities and realistic possibilities. As a matter of fact, many contemporary versions of hope are but a secularized interpretation of St. Paul's view on this category. For instance, this is the version of hope that American psychology, Adrienne M. Martin supports in *How We Hope: A Moral Psychology*, in which she advances an account of hope as a human syndrome.[101] In *The Paradox of Hope: Journeys through a Clinical Borderland*, American anthropologist, Cheryl Mattingly also presents this view.[102]

But, is hope activated only under certain specific conditions? Or is hope truly inherent to every volitive act of the human being? As I have been arguing, hope is a multidimensional dynamic life force that assumes different forms in different contexts. Yet, there are things about the phenomenon of hope that usually escape the common eye because of its mystification and glamorization, which contribute to exaggerate certain elements of the phenomenology of hope and to invisibilize others.

---

[101] Martin, Adrienne M. *How We Hope: A Moral Psychology*. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014.

[102] Mattingly, Cheryl, *The Paradox of Hope: Journeys through a Clinical Borderland*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.

Now, let's assume, however, a skeptical view on Luther's notion of hope and consider that he is mistaken and that hope, in its true form—being a special kind of attitude for special kind of moments in life—is not necessarily in every human deed, but only in certain exceptional ones. Let me propose the following thought exercise about a shake of hands to greet a friend that goes awry to try to locate the practice of hope even in small trivial everyday life activities. My thought experiment begins with my morning arrival to work. Once there, as every morning, I move toward my coworkers to say hello. Now, when I move toward them I might not necessarily feel or know myself to be emotionally-cognitively actively, robustly, greatly, deeply, substantially or genuinely engaged in any authentic "hopeful" act. Do I? After all, this happening is a casual one. Is it not? Saying good morning every day to other people is just that, an inconsequential regular act. Saying hello and shaking hands with friends in the morning is something, for which I have not necessarily made any special plans or designed any pre-conceived strategy, since it is a routine activity that I perform every day. Only this time something goes wrong. And as I move towards one of my co-workers, who happens also to be a very good and old friend of mine, I extend my hand to greet him, but he purposely evades our usual hand shake and ignores me in front of our co-workers. I felt something was very wrong. And the rest of my co-workers know it. I keep walking toward my office. This is a peculiar situation. Now what? Well, now, I feel odd. Do I despair? I surely do, at least a little. As a matter of fact, thinking through it, suddenly, I feel that my expectations were shattered. My friend and the rest of my co-workers matter to me. Not knowing what is the reason of my friend's unusual and unexpected behavior makes me feel a little anxious. Moreover, my confidence has been somewhat shaken. Does this little unanticipated disaster make me feel hopeless as well? Now, here is the thing. If it was not hope what motivated or drove my customary morning salutation to my friend in the first place, why do I despair after the incident? I despair because I was expecting. I despair because I was hoping, even when it was not a completely conscious act. Maybe I was too certain about the future. Maybe I should have known better. Perhaps a little pessimism or cynicism would have helped me to prevent and ameliorate this sudden and unexpected shocking alteration of events. But, it seems I was too confident. Was I? Perhaps this

is only the way society is designed so we can all go around ours daily business. Yet, it could also be said that I was living in a little circle of certainty that caused in my mind a sort of an illusion that allowed me to think that today would be as good as usual or even better. Did I deceive myself? What is for certain is the fact that I did not anticipate anything bad to happen nor did I experience any bad omen. Was I too hopeful or did I simply orient myself naively toward the future? Was I unrealistic? Could I have prevented this misfortune? What motivated me not to be worried? Hope either has everything to do with the whole experience—including with all my questions *a posteriori*—or has nothing to do at all with it and with nothing that we do. However, I think that it does. Hope is the human faculty that carried on the whole phenomena, including two different but intricately connected moments of the little catastrophe that I described above, namely; a) me trying to make sense of the immediate past events in order to explain my despairing present sense of disconnection with the facts of the immediate disturbing reality regarding the apparent failure of my relation with my friend, and; b) my own (confusing and insecure) internal willful being trying to reconnect and regain some sense of agency in order to propel myself into the future in search of meaning and in search of opening the possibility of understanding what went wrong and the possibility of restoring my friendship or at least knowing why that possibility is no longer feasible. My expectation and the action that motivated my hope in the first place were blocked. Now I feel compelled to plan and strategize to hopefully solve the issue with my friend. My first hope disappointed me. Maybe now my sense of hope needs to be more concrete and realistic or assume a more conscious, but less confident, corrective path to try to make sense and effectively resolve the issue at hand. This situation calls for me to re-educate my hope.

At the outset of this chapter I brought forward Barbara Ehrenreich's critique on hope. She accuses hope of being a naïve irrational and illusory attitude on which we should not rely upon. She concludes that those who encourage hope ask us to establish it "as one of the very structure of your mind, whether is it justified by actual circumstances."[103] Nonetheless, what I had

---

[103] Ehrenreich, B. ''Pathologies of Hope'', pp.10.

attempted to convey in this section is that hope is precisely part of the affective-cognitive structure of the human mind that together with our anxiety and fears about the things to come belong to what I have described as our elpidic mind. Our elpidic worries and the hopeful nomenclature of our march forward in time is part of the odd way in which we humans experience our lives. This entire process is inescapable and unavoidable. However, humans have historically deluded themselves since ancient times in believing there is a concrete rational and practical way of escaping hope and stop worrying about the future to come. Let me now finish this chapter with a short analytical presentation of the methods and fundamentals of the elpidology of the oppressed that shall guide my inquiry in the rest of this dissertation.

A note on the fundamentals of the elpidology of the oppressed and its methods

The elpidology of the oppressed, which I derive from Paulo Freire, fully embraces the political realist and radical democratic spirit of his political philosophy. Indeed, Freire's politically realist perspective on hope offers a distinct way of looking into the intricate paradoxical nature of this category in its relation to human existence, human agency, human freedom and political matters. This perspective proposes a method of addressing and casting off some of hope's vulnerabilities and perplexities, including casting light upon its illusory and dangerous nature. Since it is a political realistic approach to hope, the elpidology of the oppressed aims at giving account of the practice of hope from within the way society concretely operates at the socio-political and economic level.

Hope "derives its impetus from [our inescapable] preoccupation with the future."[104] It is supposed to be a compass in our move forward—towards the opportunities and goods that lie ahead in time as we envision them and create a path towards them. Yet neither our preoccupation

---

[104] Capps, W.H. "Mapping the Hope Movement." *The Future of Hope*. Edited by Walter Capps. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970, pp.1.

with, nor our actual movement towards the future goes on in a socio-political and cultural vacuum. This is why the elpidology of the oppressed starts from oppression; this is, it starts from the specific socio-economic conditions that a system of political domination creates to effectively control, diminish, suppressing or denying hope to oppressed people. It offers an account of hope from the standpoint of the oppressed and for the oppressed. Therefore, a crucial aspect that my analysis of hope highlights is the fact that the praxis of hope of the oppressed is the life of people existing across a permanent catastrophic, but somehow, invisible history. As we learned from Paulo Freire, the oppressed people are excluded not only physically, from a specific space in the structure of society and reality, but also excluded from history, as historical beings.[105] Catastrophe, Freire suggests, is almost a given in the life of the oppressed. Tragedy and misfortunes are part of the concrete facts in the life of people who have been the excluded and forgotten victims of the world history. Their lives embody the effects of politico-social unfairness in their experiential physical and mental suffering. Therefore, the oppressed people's hopelessness is not an exception, but the rule. Consequently, as a critical political theory of hope, the elpidology of the oppressed derives its normative vantage point from understanding hope as a path seeking human attitude that tends to radically break away from the status quo by criticizing it and envisioning a different better one within conditions of oppression. Yet, paradoxically, this hoping occurs when to be critically hopeful is not necessarily realistic or totally possible. Oppression means systematically denying both, hope and the resources of hope. Therefore, for the oppressed, hoping realistically or unrealistically is primarily an act of resistance.

Thus, my exploration of hope in this dissertation can be succinctly described through the following set of questions: How are the oppressed people of the world kept hopeless? How exactly is hopelessness associated with oppression? What sorts of mechanisms intervene or are used to render people hopeless? Other questions are also of important concern. Assuming hope exhibits illusory features, is hopelessness illusory too? What sense are the despairing oppressed people of the world to make of their feeling of hopelessness if hope is an illusion? And, if hope is

---

[105] Freire, Paulo, *The Politics of Education*. New York: Bergin and Garvey, 1985, pp. 47.

an illusion, then, what sort of illusion is hopelessness and how could the oppressed deal with it? Thus, from the standpoint of the oppressed the inquiry into the suspected illusory nature of hope is not only a philosophical request established by the traditional debate on this category, but an existential imperative that demands elucidation for existential and political reasons.

Consequentially, when considering the traditional tension between hope and human action—usually delivered in a series of accusations against the category, which includes portraying it as irrational or illusory—it is absolutely necessary not to ignore the fact that these allegations are not and have never been launched within a political vacuum. Accusing hope of being irrational is often a premeditated attack delivered within actual historical socio-political situations of power tensions and struggles. Regardless of the objective fact that hope could be both, illusory and irrational, accusing it of being crazy or illusory within certain specific situation could be interpreted as an attack on someone's hope intended to take hope away from that person. This is a crucial point that should not be left out of any evaluation of this category, because ignoring this fact is also to ignore how socio-political and economic circumstances concretely affect our understandings and our practices of hope. How can we ignore the socio-economic and political conditions, which are usually characterized by asymmetric power relations and an unequal distribution of material economic resources, when these circumstances often yield a very unjust and unequal distribution of concrete resources of hope?

Paulo Freire recognizes the paradoxical nature of hope. He also acknowledges the traditional accusations against it. Yet, he problematizes these accusations by completely inverting the axis of the paradox. In Freire's view, it is hopelessness (and not hope) what is illusory, deceptive and inactive. Apathy and immobilism are features of hopelessness not of hope. Additionally, going through life in absolute hopelessness also proves to be extremely dangerous, especially for the oppressed. Then, while true and concrete hope is critical, active and the most fundamental mainstay of men and women's struggle to improve and re-create their world, hopelessness paralyses and immobilizes people.[106] As mentioned above, for Freire,

---

[106] Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of Hope*. pp. 8

abandoning hope "in the struggle to improve the world (…) is a frivolous illusion."[107] Hopelessness is but a distortion of hope.[108] Precisely, reversing the values assigned to hope by its detractors begins to reveal Paulo Freire's strong critique of the ideology, myths, and the asymmetric exercise of power behind the traditional assault upon this category.

Reality indeed gets mystified, mythicized or bewitched by the bending of the human understanding of it throughout a variety of complex cultural mechanisms. By mystification I mean, following Freire, a process by which oppressive and alienating features of society are disguised, either by deliberate means or by a subtle accidental series of cultural events. This process ends up concealing the facts that would explain in a much clear and tangible form how human beings concretely exist in the world.[109] Social mystifications are perceived social realities with no empirical data supporting the perception in question. A social myth could also be defined as explanatory constructions for certain social phenomena that does not contemplate the available empirical facts—sometimes not even the most evident ones. Yet, myth creating cultural practices, as well as other sort of fantasies, dreams and illusions are all products of the human imaginative-creative mind. This is the very human faculty of the mind that in its paradoxical dialectics, as Freire suggests, also makes people lose perspective of why they suffer or where are their problems really coming from. By turning socio-cultural-political and economic phenomena into a myth, human reality gets enclosed within the borders of a distorted ideological system. Ideology, as Terry Eagleton reminds us, is among other things, "the way in which the people may come to invest in their own unhappiness."[110] Mystical, fatalistic and naïve interpretations of social reality contribute to this ideological distortion preventing people from clearly appreciating reality and its contradictions.[111] The purpose of this process, when put into effect intentionally, is

---

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid.

[109] See Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* pp. 101-102.

[110] Eagleton, Terry, *Ideology: An Introduction*. New York: Verso, 1991, pp. xiii.

[111] Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. pp. 179.

always domination. Banking education, Freire tells us, is one of the main social mechanisms used to put into effect this mythification process. Problem-posing education opposes these mythicizing practices and seeks to unmask the world.[112] Yet, while education is a social process that goes way beyond formal schooling, the banking-domesticating pedagogical model can be found wherever there exists a principle, a notion, a social value or any other piece of knowledge in which a person or a group of people need to be educated at.

In addition, according to the English philosopher John Paley, hope has not only gotten mystified or "bewitched" but it has also been "…amplified…dramatized [and] glamorized."[113] Glamorizing hope elevates hope to the romanticized and idealized dimension. This phenomenon drains the practicality out of hope. Hope's true bearings and concrete substance become blunt and its historicity masked. Thus, when we read or hear that hope is eternal or that it never dies we must not suspend our criticalness regarding these descriptions for they form part of the mystical glamorization of hope. Popular poetic or lyrical expression regarding of hope, such as those that describe it as "a thing with feathers" or "a sort of food" or "a balm that sooths our heart" belong to the realm of the magical understanding of it.

Therefore, the elpidology of the oppressed is also an effort to profoundly criticize the ideological and mythological cocoons in which hope as a category and as practice is enveloped. Nonetheless, approaching hope from the category of ideology faces a monumental challenge because of the following reasons. The elpidology of the oppressed aspire to be a politically realistic approach to the category of hope and related topics. As such is an effort to fight and counter ideology as a form of illusion. Yet, if hope is an illusion and a realist political theory should counter ideologies, and ideologies are illusory, then suggesting a theory of hope as a form of criticizing ideological illusions could be objected as a colossal contradiction in terms. Am I suggesting confronting and fighting illusions with an illusion?

---

[112] Ibid. pp. 168-169.

[113] Paley, John. "Hope, positive illusions and palliative rehabilitation". *Progress in Palliative Care,* 2014, vol. 22 no. 6, pp. 358-362.

This is certainly one of the most perplexing obstacles that the elpidology of the oppressed confronts as a political realistic theory. This contradiction forces me to work out a theoretical response that not only addresses and explains the illusory nature of hope, but that also somehow validates this illusory nature without taking strength away from the fundaments of my theory. This theoretical challenge surfaces at every stage of this dissertation. Yet, I specifically confront the issue head on in Chapter III by fully recognizing and accepting hope's illusory character and working my way out of this conundrum to save hope as real, but inescapable and vital human faculty and force in our lives. For now, I shall only emphasize that hope is a very powerful illusion-creating human faculty. And, consequently hope's illusion-creating power needs to be rigorously addressed in a critical way to conquer it at the praxiological level.

Now, with the elpidology of the oppressed I want to bring to light at least eight fundamental methodological principles—which are Freirean in essence—that I find particularly relevant to the contemporary ongoing discussion of the category. These Freirean principles are in fact my main contribution to today's debate on hope. I am convinced that this methodological approach will significantly contribute to the demystification and clarification of our shared notions of hope. It shall also throw light upon some of the most paradoxical elements and vulnerabilities of the human faculty and practice of hope. The eight fundamentals of elpidology of the oppressed are as follow:

1. ***Suspicion of Power:*** The elpidology of the oppressed begins with being suspicious and highly critical of power and power relations in all their forms and at all levels. The key is to be aware and vigilant of all the ways in which power relations are concealed and/or mystified. It attempts to deliver an explanatory framework of the social complexity in which power relations and the mystification of these relations and other facts of the political and economic reality directly or indirectly affect our perceptions and practices of hope. As Paulo Freire suggests, this methodology demands taking the concrete reality of existence, desires and most simple expectations and hopes of people seriously, particularly those of the oppressed. The elpidology of the oppressed avoids idealizing

hope by looking at this human practice as one constituted in history. Therefore, from a political realistic perspective we are obliged to approach the human elpidic reality without excluding, misunderstanding, downplaying or mystifying the desires, expectations and very sense of hope that drive the lives and political projects of the power élites. Ignoring or underestimating the sense of hope and hoped-for goals of the powerful is not only intellectually naïve, but also politically dangerous. Nonetheless, as I shall show in this dissertation, if there is something that most contemporary theoretical approaches to hope actually do is downplaying the role that hope plays in the lives and projects of the powerful and specifically on the practice of domination and political hegemony. As a consequence of disregarding this fact, hope is usually portrayed as something that is only put in motion within distressful and/or powerless situations. Therefore, hope ends up being conceived as something that power holders or people with plenty of resources at hand might not need to practice at all (as a method) at the time of advancing their projects in the political arena or in any other sphere. This conceptualization of hope contradicts other shared notions of it and also tends to obscure a number of crucial facts regarding the actual practice of hope in our concrete world. First, it contradicts the ubiquity of hope as a human faculty (and the universality of the human elpidic mind). Second, it tends to obscure the reality of the monopolization, expropriation, control, manipulation or concealment of the authentic and concrete resources of hope. Third, it also obscures the fact that there are diverse forms in which hope manifests itself in the human mind and that these manifestations are dialectically interconnected with concrete socio-political and economic circumstances. Fourth, idealizing hope also obscures the fact that if a group of people is hopeless, their hopelessness might be the concrete consequence of a social arrangement especially designed to keep them excluded and marginalized from the most important and concrete resources of hope. Finally, idealizing hope conceals the fact that certain practices of hope, such as those that are often accused as irrational, are in fact the only escaping route from oppression that makes sense to an individual or group of oppressed people.

2. ***The oppressed permanent crisis of hope***: The oppressed go throughout all or most of their lives in an almost permanent tragic condition of existence that makes them experience life in an accrued deficit of hope. This deficit of hope includes the fears, anxieties and suffering related to a situation where they do not see themselves as having control over their own lives and their future. They might also experience fear of assuming the risks of being able to dictate how their future should look like and of assuming the risk of deciding upon that. Freire calls this fear of freedom. Yet, despite the fact of their catastrophic situation being the result of oppression, this condition is usually treated as an endemic disease that belongs to the moral character or personality of the individual beings living within marginal conditions.

3. ***A program of organized hopelessness***: This crisis of hope is not brought upon the oppressed by bad luck, fortuitously or by any fatalistic divine design, but by the oppressors (the élites) or by the structural deficiencies of a socio-political and economic system. A system of organized hopelessness tends to exclude people from the crucial benefits of society: a) by denying them an active participation in the creation and re-creation of their own future; b) by negating them their condition as historical beings or agents; c) by monopolizing certain material as well as intangible resources (such as important security nets produced by society); these resources are supposed to function as a shared concrete social basis upon which human beings meaningfully and optimistically locate themselves within a coherent narrative—which includes an assessment of their practical possibilities—in order to imagine, design and see their future lives as a project in time. But a system of organized hopelessness sometimes negates even the most basic practices of hope, such as optimism. As a result, looking forward in life with any kind of positive expectation is overshadowed by pessimism and fear. Optimism, as I shall explain later, is a basic manifestation of hope. It could be described as a daring-courageous outlook of life that propels a human being to act upon the idea that his or her action would yield the hoped-for positive outcomes. "Elementary" here does not mean instinctive or pre-cognitive, but only that it is the most basic manifestation of hope as the

most "elementary level". Optimism is the first thing that a person loses when she perceives to be in a hopeless situation. Thus, when a system of organized hopelessness is put to work, the first thing that it is going to be subtracted from a group of people are the concrete powers and material resources that were originally available to them on which their optimism was founded. Last, but not least, if a system of organized hopelessness exists, it does because it is suitable for a specific purpose. Consequently, such a system must be thought as useful and advantageous as an instrument to accomplish a particular mission or operation devised by a person or a group of persons with a particular objective in mind. The overall purpose of an oppressive organized scheme in which hope becomes a target is domination.

4. *Ideology and the conventional petition to abandon hope:* One of the main thesis of my critique on the contemporary debates on hope is that the attacks on this category, which come from all sorts of realms, including philosophy, are up to certain extend ideological and/or partisan in nature. As suggested above, I use the term "ideological" to mean that these arguments come from a set of "ideas that reflect, and contribute to perpetuating, illicit group privilege."[114] Undeniably, if we are to accept the hypothesis that a system of organized hopelessness may exist, then it would be reasonable to think that certain discourses that undervalue and disqualify hope as illusory and politically irrelevant may be a way of suppressing, censoring, depoliticizing or even killing a fundamental asset in the struggle of actual human beings for transforming their socio-political reality. The fundamental but obvious question is, of course, who benefits from such a discourse? In fact, a common traditional advice to the general public made by some scholars, politicians and common people alike is "to abandon hope", partially or totally for cautionary reasons.[115] Some scholars, such as Francis Fukuyama, have gone further and

---

[114] Mills, Charles W. "Ideal Theory as Ideology." *Hypatia*, vol. 20, no. 3, Summer 2005, pp. 165-184.

[115] See for example, Scruton, Roger. *The Uses of Pessimism*. London: Atlantic Books, 2012. iBooks. See also Critchley, Simon. "Abandon (Nearly) all Illusions." *The New York Times*, April 19, 2014. (Recuperated April 4, 2016) http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/04/19/abandon-nearly-all-hope/?_r=0.

declare the end of history and announced that hoping and/or dreaming to change today's socio political and economic reality is not feasible or realistic.[116] The general millenarian warning to the hopefuls been that acting upon the illusory idea of a better future to come concocted in the people's minds out of hope might turn out to be a foolish move and may even bring damnation. Yet, what it is usually overlooked is the fact that the petition to abandon hope might be part of a programmatic advice coming from a particular political position. These types of discourses against hope tend to mystify hope, turning it into a sort of absurd figment of imagination, a fictional tale, a pipe dream or a delusion fabricated by the human mind. Hope ends up been portrayed as a sort of dangerous device that people should not play with.[117] But should the oppressed abandon all their hopes, including their most simple ones, such as those of a better world and a less unjust life? As Paulo Freire claims, "the attempt to do without hope, in the struggle to improve the world…it is a frivolous illusion."[118] Nonetheless, transforming reality is not the only role that hope has. Those who want to keep the world just as it is now are agents who also "hope" to preserve the status quo. The power élites hope and work to extend their power and hopes into the time to come by trying to own and secure the future. Making the future look as similar as possible as the present is a form of taking ownership of the not yet. Domination is impossible without a plan to domesticate the future. The political project of certain group of people or nations to domesticate the future implies to force other people to modify or abandon their own hope and to adopt and/or adapt to the hopes and expectations of those seeking domination. Consequently, domination implies the domestication of other people's sense of hope. It also implies to stop history from

[116] See Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, 1989, pp. 1-18.

[117] This is what Roger Scruton argues about the category of hope in the book cited above. In his book, Scruton argues that "hope (…) is a dangerous asset, and one that threatens not only those who embrace it, but all those within range of their illusions." Scruton, Roger. *The Uses of Pessimism*, pp. 9.

[118] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Hope*, pp. 10.

happening or to create the illusion that history has ended; a goal, which is impossible to achieve without domesticating and controlling other people's hopes and dreams.

5. **Humans are history makers and inventors of opportunities**: As Paulo Freire argues, we humans have invented "the opportunity of setting ourselves free to the extent that we become able to perceive ourselves as unconcluded, limited, conditioned historical beings."[119] Yet, as he reminds us, inventing our own opportunity for freedom requires not only to be conscious of our capacity to do so and of the limitations surrounding us, but also to effectively act to transform the world into a freer one for us. As I explained, humans cannot exist without wondering about tomorrow. This inescapable anxiety about what the future might bring inclines humans to be in a constant intellectual search regarding what they might or could become tomorrow. The future becomes a question. Becoming develops into an issue because, as I claimed earlier, obstacles appear in our path forward. Freedom is indispensable for the human process of becoming. And yet, oppression, as Freire explains, curtails this process by hampering the development of men and women as humans. Dehumanization follows. Paradoxically, dehumanization not only distorts human life, but it is also what makes the human struggle for emancipation and humanization a concrete historical need of the human being. According to Freire, the element of "dreaming"—or envisioning the future—plays a crucial role in this struggle because it is what opens the human imagination to utopian thinking.[120] Humanization becomes a dream, which is a demand that becomes an ongoing process in the "history that we make and that makes and remakes us."[121] Hope, as I shall demonstrate, is fundamental in this process. Yet, oppressed people are denied hope as well as freedom, and thereby they are also denied their status not only as agents of hope, but also as agents of history.

---

[119] Ibid. pp. 99-100.

[120] Ibid. pp. 99.

[121] Ibid.

6. ***Hope's educability and politicity:*** The main reason why hope is susceptible of being distorted, anesthetized, suppressed, and rendered almost completely ineffective by way of an array of methods capable of being systematized is because, as Freire suggests, hope has educability. This means that hope is susceptible of being taught. In a nutshell, in Freire's view, when looking at all things educable from their specific teachable elements, it can be observed that they also have a specific political nature, i.e. politicity.[122] Hope has politicity. Hope is not a politically neutral category. This is why hope can assume a critical political form, as well as it could also be depoliticized. The human sense of hope and our elpidic urges can be used either to domesticate humans or to emancipate them. For instance, when the human faculty of hope gets distorted through different educative methods, such as cultural myths, the powers of this disposition could be harvested for keeping people politically dominated. Every human practice or dimension that needs that something taught to another human demands a method of teaching. This method can be either a pedagogy of hope or a domesticating sets of teaching devices. While a pedagogy of hope seeks to emancipate the learner, domesticating pedagogical methods seeks to make the learner conform to certain standards of living uncritically and in silence. Accepting the given norms without questioning is a form of adapting to pre-imposed circumstances and not an act of freedom. Methodologically, domesticating pedagogies do not belong to emancipatory practices, but rather they belong to a system of oppression and therefore of hopelessness. In sum, some attacks upon hope are but political ideological assaults upon this category in disguise, which belong to the pedagogical cultural actions for domestication of those who seek to politically dominate upon others. Yet, Paulo Freire invites us to think about hope as a praxiological learning experience and as a method of emancipation that he names, "educated-critical hope" to counter oppression and domination.

---

[122] Moacir Gadotti, Paulo Freire e Sérgio Guimarães, *Pedagogia: Diólogo e Conflicto*, 4. ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 1995, pp. 25-27.

7. ***Educated-Critical Hope***: Paulo Freire asks us to think of hope as a sort of praxis constituted in history and as a critical methodology for the emancipation of the oppressed. As a praxis, it should not be thought as a given. Hope is not an a priori either. It is rather something constituted in history. Thus, hope becomes historical concreteness within a context and within very tangible socio-political conditions. As a method or instrument of emancipation, hope is a process, whose elements and techniques can be taught and therefore be turned into part of our critical consciousness. In Freirean terms, hope becomes part of the process of *conscientização* and empowerment. Dreaming and utopian thinking—denunciation and annunciation—and envisioning and planning for the future or futurization and what Freire calls cultural action for socio-political freedom becomes all part of the practice of hope as a method for emancipation. Hope as a method of emancipation becomes necessary and possible because of oppression; this is, it becomes a responsive act of resistance against the systematic cultural actions for domestication associated with the political project of the power élites. The oppressed praxis of hope signals a politics of resistance or *a politics of resistance as hope*. Because of its nature as a politics of resistance, this process tends to demand radical democratic practices.

8. ***The demand to demystify hope:*** The demythologization of hope is a main requirement of any political realistic approach to this category. In fact, each of the seven former principles is a method that helps in the task of demystifying, demythologizing and deglamorizing the notion and the practice of hope. The main objective of my dissertation is laying down the basis for a radical reconstruction of the category and the practice of hope for the oppressed. Dismantling the category of hope from the inside out through a deep process of demystification becomes essential for this task. At the end, the demystification method I propose should yield a robust impression of the true bearings of hope as a human practice. With this robust outlook of hope in hand, I hope we will be able to look at it as a human faculty and as a practice grounded on our true human experience upon earth.

Chapter II constitutes a prelude to the discussion that follows in the rest of the dissertation regarding the process of demystifying the category and the practice of hope as a fundamental objective of the elpidology of the oppressed as a method. In this chapter, I also consider the underlying tension between the categories of optimism and hope. Demystifying hope includes critically assessing these two rubrics, aiming to expose the weakness in the contemporary philosophic treatment of these key theoretical elements. This feebleness paves the way for misconstruing optimism and idealizing hope. My preliminary discussion on the subject of optimism sets the stage for a closer look upon this category and its intrinsic relation to hope later in Chapter IV. In addition, Chapter II establishes the general critical atmosphere of my approach to the tradition of the oppressed in its relation to the general understanding and practices of hope, including its pedagogies.

In Chapter III I take upon the task of assessing the limitations of our sense of hope for orienting our actions and our general mistrust of this faculty as a self-deceptive mechanism. As I shall explain, in these conditions, humans feel intellectually inclined to find an alternative faculty to ground their opinions about the future, but fail to appreciate the impossibility of escaping hope. I use Plato's allegory of the cave and idealism, as well as Machiavelli's realistic methodology to political matters, to illustrate my arguments. In general, Chapter III aims at establishing the foundations of my arguments concerning the illusory nature of hope and the ideological underpinnings of the traditional request for abandoning hope, which I analyze later in the dissertation.

Chapter IV introduces the human faculty of hope both, as a human vocation and as a political problem. This chapter's main objective is to identify the true bearings of hope as a human faculty and to look with more precision at the paradoxical nature of the tension that arises out of hoping as a political praxis. Hope has a dangerous side. Paradoxically, the true bearings of hope include courage as a main feature of this disposition—which plays a crucial role in fighting

fear—and, yet, it is precisely its boldness that which makes hope hazardous. Politically, hope shows a rebellious nature and, therefore, reveals itself not only as a transformational energy, but also as a transgressive and disruptive socio-political force, which tends to interrupt or even abolish the temporal reality of the here and now. Chapter IV portrays optimism and hubris as a continuum of the human sense of hope in order to illustrate the complexity of this faculty and the intricate ways in which those in power could see it as a socio-political problem. Chapter IV finalizes with a critical analysis of Thomas Hobbes' valuation of the problematic of hope in the political arena and the need, according to him, to institute a political program to counter the negative side of hope in order to achieve immortal peace. Hobbes' political program, as I shall illustrate, includes a pedagogic program of fear designed to counter hope.

Chapter V brings to the fore and analyses in depth the oppressive reality of a system of organized hopelessness with theoretical and concrete examples. It also describes the way in which oppressed people practice hope as a way of resisting oppression and transforming their reality. The praxis of hope of the oppressed is a politics of resistance, which I name "politics of resistance as hope". First, I take a critical look at Plato's idealism and political theory of the perfect city in order to bring forward the theoretical fundaments of a socio-political system organized to take hope away from a group of people. Plato's theoretical blueprint of the Ideal City represents the archetype of a closed society that exhibits a closed notion of temporarily and the perception of the future as something pre-ordained, well-behaved and perfectly identical to the present. What I call Plato's geometry of power does not only domesticate the present, but also demands domesticating the future in order to keep society flawless. Keeping in place such a perfect society, a well-ordered future, demands the suppression of hope; this is, it requires for the citizenry not hoping to transform society into anything different from perfection. In Plato, the future is closed, and so is hope. This is the main reason why Plato's blueprint of society is deemed utopian and totalitarian. The second part of Chapter V illustrates how a system of organized hopelessness works through an analysis of slavery in the Antebellum America. The Chapter also details and analyses how the slaves coped with such a system by hoping to escape it

in a concrete way. Politics as hope transpires from my description of the historical phenomena of the runaway slaves and Underground Railroad.

The elpidology of the oppressed throws light upon the paradoxical intricacies of the praxis of hope under condition of oppression. Dismantling and re-constructing back the contemporary understanding of this notion is a crucial step towards achieving the former objective. This reconstruction must start, as I already pointed out above, by taking both, the notion and the human practice of hope through a deep process of demystification. Let's start this task now.

Chapter 2

Problematizing Hope and Optimism: A Prelude

The relation between human existence and "hope" is perhaps one of the most intense paradoxes known to humankind. Philosophical and scholarly debates on the topic give account of the paradoxical nature of hope.[123] The general understanding of this phenomenon also offers insight of its odd nature. As I explained in the Introduction, hope is an attitude that "derives its impetus from [our inescapable] preoccupation with the future."[124] As we all are continuously projecting ourselves towards a future timeframe, or "hoping" or fearing the "not yet", our condition becomes one of being continuously anxious about things that are not here yet or that simply are not. This premise raises the following questions: is hoping a delusional way of fleeing from reality and eluding actual objective problems? Or is it a human inner strength that exists precisely to actively meet, cope and deal with and fight against the hardships, sufferings and oppressive realities of some areas of human life?

The registry of these questions includes the political realm, because hope is inherently a political asset intrinsically related to human decision-making, our capacity for action and our desire for freedom. In other words, human agency is impossible without hope. As I shall illustrate in this dissertation, it is especially within the political arena where hope takes a peculiar controversial form, which clearly reflect the political ideological contours of the accusations that are usually pinned against it. The historical charges against hope include not only condemning it

---

[123] See for example, Fromm, Erich *The Revolution of Hope: Toward a Humanized Technology*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers Inc., 1968; See also, Mattingly, C. *The Paradox of Hope: Journeys through a Clinical Borderland*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.

[124] Capps, W.H. "Mapping the Hope Movement." In Walter Capps (Ed.) *The Future of Hope*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970, pp.1.

of being illusory, but also, as Nietzsche claims, of being a sort of evil that "prolongs man's torments."[125] At the opposite side of the debate we find the Brazilian educator, philosopher and political thinker, Paulo Freire, and other scholars, holding a contrasting view regarding the nature and value of hope. Freire's theory of hope includes the conceptualization of humans as historical beings, as agents of change and as subjects of hope.[126] From his perspective, hope is a historical "existential concrete imperative."[127] As Freire claims, he does not "understand human existence, and the struggle needed to improve it, apart from hope."[128] As mentioned earlier, Paulo Freire's politics of liberation and its hopeful possibilities is a topic of pivotal significance in popular education scholarship and practices, participatory action research projects and among political activist throughout the globe today and one to which he has made important and pioneering contributions.[129] Further, although he rarely uses the category of optimism, Freire's critical pedagogy and transformational emancipatory politics has also been interpreted as advancing a political educational theory for transformative optimism.[130]

Contemporary critiques on the category of hope reproduce a traditional pattern of attacks not only on the category itself, but also on the praxis of transformational or emancipatory hope that has been around since antiquity. Hope is not only attacked as unrealistic, but also receives other sorts of condemnations. For instance, for Simon Critchley hope is not only illusory, but it is

---

[125] Nietzsche, F., *Human all too Human*. London: Penguin Books, 1994, pp. 28.

[126] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 2000, pp. 84.

[127] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving the Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 1996, pp. 8.

[128] Ibid.

[129] McLaren, P. "A Pedagogy of Possibility: Reflecting Upon Paulo Freire's Politics of Education: In Memory of Paulo Freire." *Educational Researcher*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1999, pp. 49-54.

[130] See for example, Rossatto, C.A. "Blind Optimism: A Cross-Cultural Study of Students: Temporal Constructs and Their Schooling Engagements." *Taboo*, Fall-Winter 2004: 55.

also "a form moral cowardice."[131] He suggests hope as a sort of a shield that protects people from acknowledging the facts of reality allowing them to escape or fly from it.[132] Hope, it has been traditionally argued, captivates our mind, but does not necessarily deliver any good. Thucydides, also pointed his finger at hope in the middle of the ''Melian Dialogue,'' characterizing it as ''danger's comforter.''[133] According to Thucydides, the nature of hope is to be extravagant, and "…those who go so far as to put there all upon the venture see it in its true colors only when they are ruined."[134] So hope either becomes an illusion that causes emotional pain or it is an exuberant emotional extravaganza that when we humans feel it, or have too much of it we might end up completely ruined.

Now, what about optimism as a future oriented and transformational category? Within certain academic circles the category of optimism seems to confront the very same kind of persistent reproaches that hope does. Yet the criticism on optimism shows an interesting odd twist that is, in my opinion, necessary to analyze with rigor if we are going to make sense of hope at all. First, a substantial number of contemporary scholars tend to make no distinction at all between optimism and the category of hope.[135] Second, as with hope, optimism is accused of being illusory, irrational and unrealistic. Third, in the political arena the attacks upon these two categories tend to be equally harsh. Both are accused of being impractical and self-deceptive. For example, Roger Scruton in *The Uses of Pessimism and the danger of False Hope*, not only equates hope to optimism, but also attacks the later as an "unscrupulous vision"; "…a mistake that is so blindingly obvious that only someone in the grip of self-deception could have

---

[131] Critchley, Simon. "Abandon (Nearly) all Illusions." *The New York Times*, April 19, 2014. (Recuperated April 4, 2016) http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/04/19/abandon-nearly-all-hope/?_r=0

[132] Ibid.

[133] Schlosser, J.A. ''Hope, Danger's Comforter': Thucydides, Hope, Politics." *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 75, no. 1, January 2013, 169–182.

[134] Thucydides' *History (5.103),* as cited by Schlosser. Ibid. pp. 169.

[135] I shall comment extensively on this chapter and the next about this specific issue.

overlooked it."[136] Further, he says that hope, when "detached from faith and untendered by the evidence of history [is] a dangerous assets…one that threatens not only those who embrace it, but all those within range of their illusions."[137]

Nonetheless, the contemporary discussions on hope and optimism spirals into a theoretical puzzle when considering the work of several philosophers, who almost dogmatically establish a qualitative distinction between hope and optimism. The distinction seems peculiar especially in the light of the similarities in the kind of attacks that they both receive. Further, sometimes this distinction is either unsubstantiated or apparently forced. Usually no real substantive explanation is really offered as to why exactly are these two categories different from each other. This divide constitutes, however, a traditional polemic within contemporary debates on hope. Its origins can be traced back to a preference for the Christian notion of hope over other secular approaches to the category. For example, socio-political thinkers such as Cornel West and Philipp Pettit understand hope as a human attitude superior and qualitatively different from optimism. While West renders optimism as "cheap"[138], adding that he is "never optimistic"[139], Pettit thinks of optimism as an "unconscious habit of belief formation."[140] Yet, none of them offer any substantial explanation on why optimism is different from hope. Further, as I shall discuss below, the massive literature on hope and optimism contemporarily developed in the field of positive psychology and related fields present a very ambiguous assessment of both subjects. The discussion, however, does not throw enough light about how exactly these two categories differ from each other or why should we prefer one to the other.

---

[136] Scruton, R. *The Uses of Pessimism and the danger of False Hope* E-Books Ed. London: Verso, 2010, pp. 10.

[137] Ibid. p. 9.

[138] Ibid. pp.16-17 and pp.4

[139] West, Cornel. *Hope on a Tightrope.* New York: Smiley Books, 2008, pp.41.

[140] Pettit, Philip. "Hope and Its Place in Mind." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 592, 2004, pp. 152-165.

This chapter has the main purpose of serving as an analytical prelude to some of the themes and problems that I shall be exploring in a more substantial way in the chapters to come. It also serves as a justification of the elpidology of the oppressed. As I indicated in the introduction, the phenomena of hopelessness or the absence of hope becomes the crucial point of departure of my analysis, and so this chapter I intend to pave down the path into a much deeper understanding of hopelessness from a political realistic point of view. In addition, the chapter also aims at familiarizing the reader with the process of demystification of the category of hope that I propose as a method to recuperate a re-habilitated the category of hope for politics.

I divide this chapter in four sections. In the first section, I problematize hope and optimism from the viewpoint of the tradition of the oppressed; a tradition, which includes an elpidology, which still needs to be unearthed. From this standpoint, I shall be considering the complexity of the themes and controversies at the heart of these two phenomena from a political realistic perspective. As previously mentioned, the elpidology of the oppressed offers a politically realistic vantage point that emphasizes on how asymmetrical relations of power make a crucial impact on people's sense of hope. This realistic point of view, as I shall illustrate here, not only offers a look at the themes from the perspective of oppressed people, but also tries to look at hope from the point of view of power élites. This later perspective is of crucial weight not only if we intend to look into the category of hope from a political realistic standpoint, but also if we want to realistically understand what hope, optimism and especially hopelessness are all about. With this aim in mind, I shall also explore the phenomena of hopelessness in its relationship with actual dehumanizing practices. I shall consider these matters assisted not only by Paulo Freire, but also by Primo Levi, Giorgio Agamben and Hannah Arendt.

In the second section, I shall examine the traditional divide between the category of optimism and the category of hope. As I shall show, at the core of the debate on hope and the controversy between this category and optimism lies the tension between human agency and autonomy, on the one hand, and the concrete praxis of hope within conditions of oppression on the other. Thus, I consider this tension by exploring Philipp Pettit and Victoria McGeer's approaches to the category. Here I shall point towards the idealistic and a-political nature of their

approaches. Both of their unrealistic viewpoints on hope prove to be representative of most of the contemporary approaches to the category. My intention is to contrast their idealistic views on hope with a more political realistic one to set the theoretical tone of my approach to the topic.

In section three, I initiate the task of demystifying hope by taking issue with traditional idealistic cultural, poetic and/or Christian views on hope. As we shall see, the tendency of Christian views on hope is to portray it as something eternal or as something that never dies or as a food for the human soul or as a balm that soothes our pains. I shall approach these notions of hope from the Freirean notions of educated hope and of conscientization or critical awareness; also known as conscientização. From this standpoint, I describe all these views as idealistic and as part of the socio-cultural practices whose tendency is to mystify and glamorize hope with the purpose of helping to solidify actual conditions of oppression. I shall dedicate the fifth and last section of this chapter to describe and analyze in a more concrete fashion some actual examples of ways in which hope is mystified to illustrate how these processes of mystification help to mask the pedagogy or pedagogies of hope. My aim at this last section is to bring forward the tragedy that the mystification and glamorization of hope imply to society and to the socio-political transformational forces struggling within it for change.

Problematizing optimism and hope from the tradition of the oppressed

As we learned from Walter Benjamin, "the tradition of the oppressed" is the tradition of people living throughout a permanent catastrophe. Benjamin's angel of history "sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet."[141] The history of the victorious is the history of the triumph of their desires and hopes upon the desires and hopes of someone else. Successfully attaining his hopes of domination inaugurates the space

---

[141] Benjamin, W. "Theses on the philosophy of history." *Illuminations*. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken, 1968, pp. 255.

where the conqueror's geometrical contours, angles and perspectives will be superimposed. The act of conquest of the victorious establishes his future; a future founded on the tangible-material means with which he gained and sustains his victory in time. Conveniently, the history of his victories and the reassurance of his material means are the concrete sources of his optimism and hope. These are elements that opportunely will also get mystified in his epic—an epic from which the victorious-conqueror can later draw tons of hope when times requires it. As I shall argue below, optimism is, therefore, a daring-winning attitude that, regardless of how humans have referred to it in the past, it has always been part of the emotional-cognitive repertoire of human faculties to deal and cope with the time to come.

Yet, my opening approach should not be interpreted as an attack on optimism. Optimism, I must clarify, is not necessarily an exclusive attitude of the "conqueror"; it is just an attitude that comes out from success. Optimism—a positive expectation about the future to come that is desirable—can be found in every human experience. It is a sort of, and a function of hope. We can find optimism everywhere. For instance, we find it in the innocent experience of a girl that had recently learned to successfully ride her bicycle. She now will be optimistic about the success and enjoyment of her next rides. It is also in the young baseball player who has already mastered the art of hitting a baseball out of the park. Optimism builds up in the human psyche by trial and error within a social milieu that has already secured many goods, conditions, innovations, practices and techniques for all of us to carry the whole social project forward. In this way, we can find optimism built into the most trivial things. It is as if hope, in the form of optimism, is already integrated into our cultural practices, methods and artifacts. For example, there exists a bulletproofed method to run a bicycle. Among other essential elements, this method includes learning the technique of equilibrium that can be successfully taught to a child or to any other person willing and able to learn. Further, the bicycle has been designed to run smoothly once these techniques are mastered. These are empirical grounds for our sources of optimism (and/or hope) built up into the whole technical apparatus belonging to the skills, techniques, methods, assurances and pedagogy associated to that artifact we have come to call bicycle. The same applies to any other human socio-cultural artifact, including society itself.

And yet we have not been necessarily educated to know and to recognize how many certainties in the form of accumulated technical knowledge and methods are already built-up in every space, in every piece and in every corner of our societies. What I will later describe as the mystification of hope and optimism makes us blind to the fact that the resources of hope are already available around us within society. Unfortunately, while the few enjoy the fruits of the certainties, securities and hopeful methods and practices that humankind have dreamed, designed and built since very early times into the social milieu and into its things there are a substantial number of people who are systematically excluded from enjoying these certainties and securities. The hopeful methods are either kept under the control of a few for their exclusive enjoyment or are concealed or mystified so people do not actually understand how concrete hope works. As I shall intend to demonstrate later, oppression is ultimately a method to alienate people from hope.

In short, the method of "hope" and its pedagogy or pedagogies are something already built up inside society itself. Yet they have been made invisible by social conventions and myths designed to conceal the most obvious facts of society. But the most detrimental thing about the existence of ways of concealing hope and optimism is that this is what makes possible that while some people are appropriately taught to be optimists and to remain hopeful agents of history even amid vicissitudes, other people are taught to be helpless and feel hopeless. Hope, as Paulo Freire says, is praxis. Hope is a method and as a method it has, as I discussed in the introductory chapter, educability. Paradoxically, it is this very feature of hope what makes it susceptible of being taught appropriately or not being taught at all. This is what makes hope predisposed of being tailored in such a way as to make it the backbone of a system of organized hopelessness.

The method of hope is already ingrained in one form or another within the plurality of human activities. This means that the methodologies, the knowledge, the wisdom and the criticalness that are supposed to be taught to people within different contexts and practices are already part of society. This includes the learning processes and methods about how do humans create and re-create the world around them to build their future in many instances and context of their lives. I give the name of pedagogies of hope to the plurality of these methods. This means, as Ernst Bloch suggests in *The Principle of Hope*, that the method to face, to meet and built up

the future is already a property of the present even when the future is still an unknown and uncertain entity or the not-yet.[142]

The tradition of the oppressed is however a tradition of hopelessness and not necessarily of optimism. The oppressed are not necessarily fully aware about how hope operates as a method; furthermore, they are not able to recognize how the pedagogies of hope work, even when they are putting them into practice every day. Thus, in many ways, their condition is the reverse side of the history of the victorious and his triumphalist optimistic outlook of life. It is, for instance, the reverse story of the typical optimistic positive thinking often described as one important asset of the most successful people in society. The tradition of the oppressed is the history of people who by their place inside the structure of domination in a society are treated as marginal persons who deviate from the general configuration, forms and values of the good-well-ordered society.[143] Nonetheless, as Freire reminds us, they are not really deviant or marginals. The view is not only a false and alienating one, but it is primarily an illusion. This illusion begins by not recognizing the existence of a reality to which they have become marginal as the product of a social structure that was not created by them or chosen by them, but imposed upon them. Thus, they are not really "marginals", because "they have always been inside—inside the structure which makes them *being for others*."[144] Their marginality, as Freire explains, is not a choice. They have been expelled from and made felt like outcast of society.[145] No wonder they are hopeless. Yet, their hopelessness comes from the fact that while they are kept outside society they are not actually outside it, but are still within the social structure, and into a relationship of dependence to those members of society that have marginalized them in the first place.[146] It is in this way that the tradition of the oppressed is a tradition of alienation and domination. This

---

[142] See Bloch, Ernst, *The Principle of Hope, Volume 1*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1986.

[143] See Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: p. 74. See also, Freire, Paulo. *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation.* New York: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1985, pp. 47-49, 56 and 102.

[144] Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* pp. 74.

[145] Freire, Paulo. *The Politics of Education,* pp. 48.

[146] Ibid.

tradition of alienation and hopelessness comes from being the ones having to respond realistically to, and surrender (in body, mind and soul) to the moral cynicism and arrogance behind the ancient Athenian imperialistic maxim, made famous by Thucydides in *The History of the Peloponnesian War*; "The strong do what can, and the weak suffer what they must." This is a timeless law of power politics and domination—naked and unmasked. The geometry of power parts the earth equally only among those with equivalent might. The nature of this truth for the oppressed is mathematic. What this means is that this truth is learned through minuses and pluses; namely, through the violent subtraction (little by little or all at once) of powers, means, optimism and humanness from the oppressed and by the addition of tons of undeserved and unjust suffering. To this suffering it must be added the addition of unwelcome values, forms and contours into their socio-cultural space at the expense of their own cultural values. This is the sort of truth that can only be really understood through experiencing the methods by means of which certain levels of social reality are violently imposed upon people. On this point let me quote Kenneth Burke, who said regarding the issue of suffering power politics what follows; "We can discern something of the tragic grammar behind the Greek proverb's way of saying, *one learns by experience*; *ta pathemata mathemata*, the suffered learned."[147] Suffering teaches lessons. Yet, the lessons taught by oppressive regimes come against the oppressed will and/or in detriment of their true welfare. This is a horrible pedagogy; a tragic pedagogy for domestication. Tragedy for the Greeks was something inescapable; the result of fate or of destiny where the human individual suffers what he apparently deserves as part of a cosmic order that will even seek retribution for transgressions to it. Of course, the human condition is hard and originally, as Thomas Hobbes wanted us to think, even brutish. Still the very nature of the tragedy that characterizes human existence has historically been a puzzle. The suffering of the innocence is not a matter of fate, but of someone's calculus. Therefore, human suffering should not be something taken lightly or seen as a superficial innocuous phenomenon. Many of the tragedies and misfortunes that certain group of people suffers are the direct or indirect consequences of a

---

[147] Burke, Kenneth, A. *Grammar of Motives.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969, pp. 39.

system of oppression. With the aim of excluding them from the benefits and assurances of society an oppressive system makes people suffer a series of vicissitudes becomes an alienating learning experience; an experience that greatly distorts their own identity as human beings. The accumulation of this pedagogical lessons drags the oppressed into thinking, among other things, that they deserve the situation in which they are living. This distortion, as we learned from Freire, occurs within history and within a society because of domination and oppression and not because of fate or ill fortune.[148]

Auschwitz and the extermination camps have become paradigmatic as an undeniable historical fact of how technically sophisticated the methods for the degradation of a human being can become. Indeed, Auschwitz demonstrates that there are social techniques of human suffering, humiliation and mortification that can easily and successfully be implemented in a very brief period to turn a man into an object and take away almost the totality of his humanity, leaving in its place only the bare physiology of him as a result. The set of techniques employed to depersonalize a person is what Primo Levi called the methodic process of "the demolition of a man."[149] This is a process that reduces the person to an empty shell, a being who only knows need and suffering, and has forgotten what the word dignity means. A person that has lost his dignity is no longer able of asserting himself, and so will easily summit to any pain or indignity, because along with the faculty of hoping and feeling anything, he had also lost himself and all his agentic capabilities in this demolishing process. The totality of his persona is gone in a way that he no longer belongs to himself. This person, as Levi says, has reached the bottom.[150]

As Giorgio Agamben has convincingly argued, the extermination camp experience became possible when what could be defined only as a state of emergency was made normal and extended to an entire segment of the population by virtue of the Nazi German legal system that

---

[148] Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York; Continuum, 2000, pp. 44.

[149] Levi, Primo. *If this a Man*. New York: The Orion Press, 1959, pp. 21.

[150] Ibid.

legitimated what was regarded as illegal before.[151] The camp was a legally designated area inside the juridical order, but conveniently placed outside the ordinary legal system, so it was made easy for fact and law to be completely confused and made everything in the camps truly possible.[152] As Agamben observes referring to Hannah Arendt's insights on totalitarianism and the camps, "the principle supports totalitarian rule and that common sense obstinately refuses to admit comes fully into light: this is the principle according to which *everything is possible.*"[153] As a matter of fact, according to Arendt, the camp was just but a factory of corpses designed to murder the person at the moral level and stripping from the person all his humanness. This process, according to her, was perversely accomplished in three steps; first, the annihilation of a person as a politico-juridical subject, accomplished by the legal repositioning of the camp outside the normal penal-legal system; second, by morally murdering the person by submerging him or her under conditions in which human consciousness ceases to be adequate and to do good becomes impossible, and; third, by demolishing the individual identity and uniqueness.[154] What is left of this process, as Arendt describes it, is but a living corpse, a "ghastly marionette with human face."[155] It is important to bring forward, as Arendt invites us to think, that the experience of the concentrations camps show that human nature, as she asserts, "is only human insofar as it opens up to man the possibility of becoming something highly unnatural that, is a man."[156]

Now, have the socio economic and political conditions that allowed Auschwitz to become a reality disappeared altogether or are these conditions still around us? As Theodor Adorno argues in *Education after Auschwitz*, the new categorical imperative of all education after the monstrosity of the Holocaust is that Auschwitz does not happen again. Nonetheless, not

---

[151] Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, Cal: Stanford University Press, 1998, pp. 95-97.

[152] Ibid. p. 97.

[153] Ibid. p. 97.

[154] Arendt, Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Cleveland/New York: Meridian Books, 1958, pp. 454-455.

[155] Ibid. pp. 455.

[156] Ibid.

only oppressive, unjust and humanly degrading conditions that allowed it are still among us, but also education, as Freire convincingly argues, instead of being used to humanize and liberate all people is still being systematically used to dehumanize and domesticate people. Domesticating models of education, as he argues, make persons less than human. A closed society and its oppressive system create many educative venues through which this dehumanizing process is implemented. Formal schooling is but one of these venues. The modes of contemporary oppression do not necessarily aim at fabricating complete walking corpses like in Auschwitz, but nonetheless they aim at excluding people from the political space and therefore from many different sorts of social and political goods. It also aims at fragmenting people's identities to keep them as separated as possible in order to render solidarity ineffective, unachievable and/or as something superfluous and spurious. Annihilating and destructing solidarity is the best form of falsifying, distorting, twisting and making true democracy ineffective. The individual uniqueness runs also the chance of being obliterated through the very dialectics of the process of dehumanization. The intention of any oppressive system has always been domination. Paradoxically, even when people may experience firsthand or see that other persons experience the violence of colonialism, racism, sexism, homophobia and discrimination, they still might refuse to accept or even to consider the existence of certain specific structural conditions of oppression and that these conditions have a gruesome deteriorating effects on people's souls individually and collectively.

The real tragedy is that conventional conditions of oppression are still, as in the past, masked, mystified and portrayed as natural or fateful outcomes of history. As part of an alienating and myth creating learning process people learn to believe in the falsehood of fate. As so, they become fatalists. Fatalism, as we learned from Paulo Freire, is immobilizing and tends to silence people. It also makes them docile. Yet, as he explains neither muteness nor docility are natural or essential characteristics of behavior, but rather the fruits of a historical and sociological situation of oppression. [157] Fatalism, used as an explanatory causation, is one of the

---

[157] Freire, Paulo. *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 61-62.

ways in which concrete socio-political and economic realities are mythologized. As Paulo Freire claims, an oppressive system is an environment of negation and violence, both psychological and physical.[158] This is the concrete situation that leads the oppressed into, mutism, despair and hopelessness. Being immersed under this condition of hopelessness is what might eventually trigger them to question their own humanity and ultimately to doubt the real value of their lives. As Freire explains, submerged in a superimposed reality, "the oppressed cannot perceive clearly the order which serves the interests of the oppressors, whose image [ideals, contours, values and models] they have internalized."[159] Self-depreciation—helplessness and lack of self-confidence attached to it—becomes a defining trait of the psyche of the oppressed derived from the internalization of the opinions the oppressors hold of them—such as, that they are sick, lazy and unproductive.[160] As I suggested above, oppression makes them hopeless and teaches them helplessness by purposely taking away their optimism (i.e., their self-confidence and self-efficacy by virtue of completely dispossessing people from their means of subsistence), rendering them thereby even afraid of freedom.[161] For instance, heinous paternalistic practices become the perfect tool to render people helpless and to instill fears of being free. First, material resources, tools and wealth are taken away from people. Now, these tools and resources are partially or totally controlled by the oppressor, such as in the cases of colonialism and slavery. Then, the oppressor brings down "supplies" in the form of help. Oddly, this is a sort of help that will eventually turn a group of persons into helpless people and turn people into beings that are afraid to act by themselves and be free. Paternalism does not really allow true personal and collective autonomy to be practiced. Either because oppression does not really teach autonomy to people; it imparts fear of freedom. Moreover, if oppressed people are aware of lacking the means to be truly autonomous, autonomy may never be a feasible practice for the them. Within certain

---

[158] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage*. Maryland: Rowand & Littlefield Publishers, 1998, pp. 70.

[159] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York; Continuum, 2000, pp. 62.

[160] Ibid. pp. 63.

[161] Ibid. pp. 35-36, 95-96, and 155-156.

contexts, such as slavery, it might actually become quite dangerous to try to practice true autonomy.

Ironically, when the well-ordered society defines *a priori* the well-behaved independent person (or citizen), as John Stuart Mill does; as that individual who asserts his own autonomy by *choosing his plan for himself and employing all his faculties*—namely, by been confident of himself and self-efficacious—then it automatically castoffs that person (or persons) "…who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him [and declares him as a person] with no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one imitation."[162] Nonetheless, what defines a condition of oppression is precisely the fact that the person is incapable of determining by himself and freely his own course of action in life. The oppressed person is in fact unable to fully employing all his faculties because his own self-determination and many of his faculties and resources have been rendered in some way or another inoperative. Paradoxically, this is so by a philosophical falsification, in which individual freedom or autonomy gets ideally and unrealistically defined and decontextualized—such as the one John Stuart Mill offers— "the oppressed comes to be regarded as the pathology of the healthy society."[163] John Stuart Mill idealistic notion of autonomy upturns socio-political reality. And therefore, from the point of view of the concrete reality of the oppressed, his idea of autonomy is a myth. And yet, the oppressed ends up anyways being accused of not having the guts or the intelligence to formulate his own plans or of employing his own faculties. He suffers then the humiliation of being accused of being unprepared for freedom or of being a sort of immature child who is incapable of governing himself. But the fact that he has been taught to fear autonomy is completely ignored. Within the illogic and absurd unjust world-order of the oppressed, a culture of silence and fear of freedom intermixes with a sort of partially realistic and partially illusory pessimism. The result of such a reality is an ethos of rationalized and highly critical pessimism. As we learned from Freire, this pessimistic climate is the direct consequence of a pedagogy of

---

[162] Stuart Mill, John, *On liberty*. Seed Box Press, 2012, e-book.

[163] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* pp. 74.

domestication imposed upon the oppressed with the ultimate intention of keeping the present domesticated and ready to reproduce its reality in the future.[164]

But then, what and where are the sources of optimism and hope of the oppressed? A recurring inquiry within the contemporary literature on the category of hope is the question about the availability of the resources of hope, especially in moments of socio-cultural and political turmoil, and/or suffering. Precisely, in *Restoring Hope: Conversations on the Future of Black America*, Cornel West asks; "What are the resources of hope? (…) How do we talk about hope with all the suffering and the pain in the world today?"[165] And in his book, *Hope on a Tightrope*, he asks again, "How do we analyze this present moment and discern some sources of vision and hope?"[166] Cornel West is an American pragmatist. Therefore, his answers to these questions are supposed to be realistic. Certainly, West's work offers an uncanny politically realistic critique of conditions of oppression in the contemporary American society. However, when it comes down to the discussion of the category of hope, the topic seems to get somehow mystified and optimism is never genuinely thought through and brought up in a concrete politically realistic light. Throughout his insightful discussions on the topic, hope is always portrayed as a much deeper and sometimes even as a mysterious phenomenon, while "optimism" is casted-off as superfluous and "cheap."[167] As Bill Bradley says in his conversation with West, "optimism is something that's somewhat synthetic."[168] West seems to agree with him. Yet, in what exact ways is optimism considered synthetic is not necessarily explained. Optimism seems to be somewhat

---

[164] Ibid. pp. 38.

[165] West, Cornel. *Restoring Hope: Conversations on the Future of Black America.* Boston: Beacon Press,1997, pp. 46 and 189.

[166] West, Cornel. *Hope on a Tightrope.* New York: Smiley Books, 2008, pp.3-4.

[167] Ibid. pp.16-17 and pp.41.

[168] West, Cornel. *Restoring Hope,* pp. 46 and 189.

mystically understood as something coming only from "the power of positive thinking."[169] West portrays optimism as naïve, innocent or/and immature, while hope is described as a mature human asset that "sustains in the darkest hours."[170]

Without losing sight of the fact that uneducated optimism might entertain a naïve side and that certain practices of hope could have a more mature structure, I want to suggest that we should not necessarily abandon optimism altogether. Contemporary positive psychology associates optimism with some sort of positive thinking at the level of the individual. Is there any real and substantial human power or set of faculties behind "positive thinking" or is it simply another sort of illusion concocted by contemporary positive psychology to sugarcoat the mental sufferings caused by hardships of today's socio-economic reality? I want to dispute the thesis defended by West and others that optimism is something cheap, synthetic and/or naïve. On the contrary, what I think is truly naïve is the resolute neglect of the intimate relation that the human attitude often known as "optimism" has with actual social, political, materials resources and powers, and the relationship that these resources have with hope, human volition and agency in general. I will expand on this fact by giving a detailed account of my thesis on optimism and power below. Yet, my purpose is not necessarily to break away entirely with the distinction between hope and optimism, but to show how politically innocent is to separate hope and optimism and to understand the later as something cheap that is preferable not to have.

Hope is a very powerful human phenomenon. Furthermore, hope is a concrete expression of reality. Though, as reality has been mystified, so has been hope. As Freire neatly explains in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in a universe of themes in dialectical contradiction, people take many contradictories positions.[171] In the abyssal depth of the dialectics of political antagonism, "there is a tendency for themes and reality itself to be mythicized establishing a climate of

---

[169] Ibid.

[170] Ibid.

[171] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. pp.101-102.

irrationality".[172] This climate of irrationality drains the themes of hope and optimism of their deeper concrete significance depriving them of their authenticity and dynamic aspects.

Unfortunately, as Paulo Freire says in *Education as the Practice of Freedom*, what happens to a greater or lesser degree in the various divisions of the world is that:

> …the ordinary person is crushed, diminished, converted into a spectator, maneuvered by myths which powerful social forces have created. These myths turn against him; they destroy and annihilate him. Tragically frightened, men fear authentic relationships and even doubt the possibility of their existence. On the other hand, fearing solitude, they gather in groups lacking in any critical and loving ties which might transform them into a cooperating unit, into a true community…It is also an imprisoning armor which prevents men from loving. Perhaps the greatest tragedy of modern man is his domination by the force of these myths and his manipulation by organized advertising, ideological or otherwise. Gradually, without even realizing the loss, he relinquishes his capacity for choice; he is expelled from the orbit of decisions. Ordinary men do not perceive the tasks of the time; the latter are interpreted by an elite and presented in the form of recipes, of prescriptions. And when men try to save themselves by following the prescriptions, they drown in leveling anonymity, without hope and without faith, domesticated and adjusted. [173]

As I said, oppression does not really give room for real human autonomy. Humans are supposed to act freely, and yet to exist under an oppressive system is to live under a system that forces them to adapt to invisibles forces and to adopt contours and values that are not of their choosing, but that come to shape their identities. Freedom and choice, as Freire says, become illusory to the degree that they represent the expectations of others.[174] In other words, under an oppressive system where choices are imposed upon a collective, these choices are false and illusory as they only represent someone else's hopes. Thus, since the moment of choice and autonomy are falsified so is hope. The myth of freedom, however, turns against the oppressed

---

[172] Ibid. pp. 7.

[173] Freire, Paulo. "Education as the Practice of Freedom", in *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Continuum, 1981, pp. 6.

[174] Ibid. pp. 7.

people themselves. By falsely believing they are free to choose they do not realize they have been excluded from the real orbit of decisions. They are, nonetheless, made responsibly for choosing between the options that they were given even when they did not establish the choices in the first place. As freedom and hope are two moments of the same phenomena—the human-will trying to determine itself through time—when freedom is distorted so is hope and vice-versa. When freedom is lacking or violated hope gets either suppressed or distorted in the process. Mystification plays its role in suppressing hope and thwarting freedom. It makes even possible for the oppressed to believe they are free when in reality they are still in chains. A false sense of hope helps to carry on the false sense of freedom.

Now, when Cornel West says that he is "never optimistic",[175] I am sure he means that he is not naïve and that he would not fall for the enthusiastic-cheering effect of optimism falsely instilled by the oppressors. Still, looking at optimism as separately as possible from the mystifying ideological spell produced by the climate of irrationality that places veils upon everything, including optimism and hope, might yield a more realistic and down to earth notion of optimism. The interpretation of optimism as something meager and the glorification of hope as a kind of a mysterious and transcendental force testify to the depth and difficulty of getting a clear politically realistic vision of these two categories. Only by demystifying both categories would we see them as they are. Once we take hope back down to earth and restore it to its specific concrete function in human life and do the same with optimism we are going to clearly see the role that power, power relations and oppression play in the mystification and concealment of the true value, scope, and availability of hope.

A critical look at the tradition of the oppressed from the standpoint of the elpidology of the oppressed places hope and optimism under a different light. It establishes hope and optimism as contested political categories that have also been abused and distorted by domesticating pedagogic methods and mystification practices. Oppression hampers true autonomy and therefore suppresses the human sense of hope by taking concrete resources of hope and optimism

---

[175] West, Cornel. *Hope on a Tightrope.* New York: Smiley Books, 2008, pp. 41.

away from people. The tradition of the oppressed stands in direct contrast to the tradition of the triumphalist conqueror that by his victory feels the right to perpetuate his hopes into the future by questionable means. Oppression is the way the *conquistador* hopes to domesticate not only the present, but also the future. Practicing hope under oppression is a very dangerous challenge because it directly challenges the hope of the oppressors.

Between Hope and Optimism: a fuzzy dilemma at the core of human agency

Hope assumes different forms and it means different things, depending on context. The *Collins English Dictionary* defines it as: *"A feeling of desire for something and confidence in the possibility of its fulfillment', 'to have a wish', 'to trust, expect or believe."*[176] This definition equates hope with confidence and trust, but also with having a wish. The later, however, signals hope as mere wishful thinking. This version of hope is often thought as unrealistic and it is usually seen to hold no credible value. Yet, given the complexity of hope as a striving human force shaped by and within the life-and-death struggle against the elements of nature and against other people, we should not rule out so easily the daydream-like side of hope as invaluable. As I shall make abundantly clear in the rest of this dissertation, the imaginative or illusory nature of hope is an integral part of the way humans deal and cope with concrete socio-political and physical limitations they find along their way within the fluid structure of the temporal and physical or spatio-temporal constraints imposed upon them by the very human conditions of life upon earth. This is a condition that forces humans to assume different mental states that propel them into different courses of actions depending on their actual contextual situation. As time, as understood today in the post-relativistic (post-Einstein's) world, is an illusion, hope—the human faculty that deals directly and heads on with our space-temporal issues in our movement toward the future—adopts a plural-illusory nature towards time. In our projection toward the future

---

[176] Collins English Dictionary, Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014.

hoping is but to formulate a hypothesis regarding the future to come, it is the construction of futurity; it is the way the not-yet appears to us. But, as Freire reminds us, futurity is but a problem; it is the future problematized. It is not a fixed or pre-given entity. And therefore, the future is always uncertain and full of endless possibilities. Therefore, as José Ortega y Gasset reminds us in *Man and People*, the open possibilities of the future offered to us are always uncertain, risky and dangerous.[177] For Ortega y Gasset, as for Freire, the future is a problem.

Despite uncertainty the human being needs to hope with some sort of confidence to move forward and to meet the future. As American philosopher and psychologist, William James thought, wisdom is "to believe what one desires, for the belief is one indispensable preliminary conditions of the realization of its objects."[178] The human being is encircled by many possibilities, by latent realities, which he cannot yet count with. Thus, humans need to live on hope, holding to some sort of certainty or belief and confident that they will prevail. Therefore, to hope is to entertain a belief, not totally certain, but confident that the hoped-for good will be obtained in the future. In fact, certain meanings of hope, such as the one found on the Oxford Dictionary, define it as *"Grounds for believing that something good may happen."[179]* In this definition, grounds for believing means that expected end-results or goals are realistically attainable. Now, some dictionaries offer *optimism* as a synonymy of hope.[180] Optimism is often defined as, *"the tendency to expect the best and see the best in all things."[181]* Furthermore, as I mentioned above, psychologists and other scholars from a variety of fields have defined optimism as: "a general disposition to expect positive outcomes, rather than negative outcomes

---

[177] See Ortega y Gasset, José. *Man and People*. New York/London: Norton & Company, Inc., 1963.

[178] James, Williams. "Rationality, Activity and Faith." *Princeton Review*, 2, 1882, pp. 58-87.

[179] Hope, *Oxford Dictionaries*, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/hope.

[180] *The Chambers Thesaurus*, 5th Edition, Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd 2015.

[181] *Collins English Dictionary*, Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014.

or results in circumstances and situations."[182] The optimist usually tends to trust that her future will be favorable. But, are hope and optimism the same? To be sure, on the one hand many definitions of hope incorporate the general meaning of optimism within. For instance, characterizing hope as, "the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out well,"[183] seems to be one these cases. Yet, on the other hand, most contemporary scholarly discussions on these subjects draw a sharp distinction between optimism and what is described as true, genuine, great, robust or radical hope.[184]

Nevertheless, as I intend to advance in my discussion below and to fully demonstrate in the next chapter, this dilemma quickly turns fuzzy when trying to understand what exact human practices are described by the terms of hope and of optimism. Further, the distinction between these two terms could also be seen as the product of a modern myth-creating process. This mythification enfolds the differences between optimism and hope within the cage of a distorted structure that ultimately conceals key facts about these two human dispositions. I begin my inquiry into this issue by looking at how philosophers draw a distinction between what they define as hope and how they look at optimism in order to access the apparent differences between these two practices.

---

[182] Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M.F. "Dispositional optimism and physical well-being: The influence of generalized outcome expectancies on health." *Journal of Personality,* 55, 1987, pp.170-210.

[183] Collins English Dictionary, Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014.

[184] In the Christian tradition "biblical hope" is always described as "true", "genuine" or "great" and often contrasted with despair and optimism. For an account of hope as "robust", see, for example, Singh, Michael and Wayne Sawyer. "Democracy and Robust Hope: Queensland's Education and Training Reforms for the Future." *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice,* 2008, vol.3(3), pp. 223-237; For an account of hope as radical see, Lear, Jonathan. *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation,* Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press; 2006.

In *Hope and Its Place in Mind*, political philosopher Philip Pettit, distinguishes between superficial and substantial hope.[185] Superficial hope, he says, is like believing and desiring. Substantial hope, on the contrary, requires the elements of belief and desire, but it also requires an extra structure, which is supposed to give substantial hope its specific identity.[186] He also sees substantial hope as substantively different from optimism. As Pettit explains, while substantial "hope is an intentionally sustained, essentially avowable response, optimism is a spontaneous, perhaps unconscious habit of belief formation."[187] As mentioned above, Cornell Well also possesses a sharp distinction between optimism and hope. Phillip Pettit suggests that optimism is something impulsive and/or as an instinct, while Cornell West portraits it as cheap. Let's not forget, as I discussed earlier, that optimism is also labeled "artificial" by one of West interlocutors in one of his works on the topic of hope. As mentioned above, within the scholarly work on hope there is a well-established philosophical tradition that does not consider optimism to be a phenomenon similar to the nature of hope. As I shall discuss at the end of this section, this tradition that rejects optimism in favor of hope has a history that relates back to Leibniz's philosophical optimism and its discontents. In fact, numerous contemporary philosophers show contempt for optimism. Erich Fromm, for example, calls optimism "empty" and contrasts it with sincere hope and fortitude.[188] Gabriel Marcel—a French Christian Catholic theologian— describes the "optimist" as he who "has a firm conviction, or in certain cases just, a vague feeling, that things tend to turn out the best." The optimist, Marcel says, "always relies upon experience which is not drawn from the most intimate and living part of himself, but (…)

---

[185] Pettit, Philip. "Hope and Its Place in Mind." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 592, 2004, pp. 152-165.

[186] Ibid.

[187] Ibid.

[188] Fromm, Erich *The Revolution of Hope: Toward a Humanized Technology*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers Inc., 1968, pp.15

considered from a sufficient distance."[189] This distance, according to Marcel, allows the optimist to generalize and to utter rhetoric out of his optimism. In sum, optimism, according to Marcel, is "oratorical."[190] American philosopher, Christopher Lasch takes the criticism against optimism even further when attacking the contemporary belief on progress through innovation. Optimism, Lasch says, is "an opiate [that] lulls us into a false sense of security [and that ironically] we administer it to ourselves (…) self-consciously as the antidote to depression."[191] Therefore, optimism is suggested as some sort of naiveté; an empty unconscious impulsive and unstructured habit of people's minds. In the context of the modern technological society optimism even figures as some sort of artificial drug used by ` modern people to falsely fight depression or as some sort of analgesic or balm to calm our sorrows.

Now, back to Philip Pettit's analysis of hope, he offers a neat set of criteria to describe what he considerers "hoping in a substantial way". His notion of hope is outlined in three steps. The agent of substantial hope, Pettit says; first, hopes for certain prospect that is desirable and obtainable (but not sure); second, requires strategic agency and acting as if the desire prospect is going to (must probably) be obtained (but not for sure); third, the agent, acting and planning a pragmatic rational strategy that promises the hoping agent that there is no danger of losing heart, secures for himself or herself, at the very least, "the related secondary benefit, relevant even for someone relatively optimistic, of ensuring stability across the ups and downs of evidence."[192]

Human agency stands as the most essential element in Pettit's account of substantial hope. As I mentioned above, most contemporary approaches to the category in many different

---

[189] Marcel, Gabriel. *Homo Viator: Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope.* Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978, pp.33.

[190] Ibid. pp. 33-34.

[191] Pettit, Philip. "Hope and Its Place in Mind." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 592, 2004, pp. 152-165.

[192] Ibid.

disciplines resort to basically the same-shared underlying theory of human agency to inform their appraisals of hope. Hope's best recourse comes from within the human being and not from any outside or transcendental force. Indeed, echoing Paulo Freire, Pettit affirms that without hope there would be no "possibility for us to asserting our agency and of putting our own signature or stamp on our conduct."[193] In other words, as Freire would say, without hope we would have no agency, no word and no voice of our own and no real capacity to re-create the world. "We would collapse in a heap of despair and uncertainty, beaten down by cascades of inimical fact."[194] Within certain catastrophic contexts, Pettit says, hope "can be our one salvation as agents [offering us] the best way of coping with some harsh realities and of finding our way through."[195] American philosopher Victoria McGeer shares a similar view. For her, hope involves a complex dynamic of attitudes, affects and dispositions because it "is a unifying and grounding force of human agency."[196] As she says, "to be a full-blown intentional agent is to be an agent that hopes."[197] McGeer adds, to "…live a life devoid of hope is to simply not to live a human live."[198] According to her, hope is a way of inhabiting our agency, whether in thought or in deed.[199]

Hope, according to Pettit and McGeer, is required for true agency. McGeer thinks that to become true agents we need first to be taught how to hope.[200] Full-blown agency, as she explains, requires placing hope into a person's upbringing since infancy. Parents do invest a lot

---

[193] Ibid.

[194] Ibid. pp. 160.

[195] Ibid.

[196] McGeer, Victoria, "The Art of Good Hope." *Annals of the American of Political and Social Science,* vol. 592. 2004, pp. 100-127.

[197] Ibid.

[198] Ibid.

[199] Ibid.

[200] Ibid. pp. 105.

of time and energy, according to her, in instilling hope into their kids.[201] Paulo Freire would totally agree with McGeer on this point. As a matter of fact, neither McGeer nor Pettit mention or comment on Freire, and yet, their arguments greatly resemble his. Freire, however, adds three crucial elements to this discussion that seems to be totally missing from these two theorists' analytical radar. As I shall show below, these Freirean analytical tools are worth discussing not only because they add depth and scope to the theme, but also because they add a great deal of socio-political realism. First, Freire thinks that education is an essential instrument in the development of human agentic capabilities not only because of its centrality to human upbringing, but also, and especially because of education socio-political implications. Freire's insight on the educability of hope in this discussion is decisive, because it brings to life a very important tension between education and agency that Pettit misses completely and that McGeer's assessment of hope and agency development fails to fully address, even when she takes the educative element into consideration. As Pettit suggests, hope saves us, because it saves us as persons and as agents. Now, if hope is necessary for agency and if it saves us as agents, hope, in the way Pettit describes it, is not only an important asset in human life, but, as Paulo Freire affirms, it also has an ontological priority, which cannot be overlooked by any education model that supports and promotes human freedom.[202] As he claims in *Pedagogy of Freedom*, "from the point of view of the human condition, hope is an essential component and not and intruder."[203] Hope, he continues explaining, is a possible and necessary impetus in the context of our unfinished endeavors and in our experience as subjects of history.[204] Without it, Freire asserts, "instead of history we would have pure determinism. History exists only where time is problematized and not simply a given. A future that is inexorable is a denial of history."[205] According to Freire, men and women are beings in the process of becoming, unfinished,

---

[201] Ibid. pp.105-108.

[202] Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of Hope,* pp. 8.

[203] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Freedom*, pp. 69.

[204] Ibid.

[205] Ibid.

uncompleted, who are aware of their incompletion.[206] Hope, as an impetus, is actually rooted in this incompletion, from which men and women move out in constant search.[207] It is actually in this incompletion and in this awareness that lie the very roots of education, not only as a radical and exclusive human manifestation, but also as a method for the human inquiry and continuous search for orientation and completion in the world.[208] "Orientation in the world places the question of the purposes of action at the level of critical perception of reality."[209] Since the human being is a subject of history, he possesses "the sense of project" and awareness of aim.[210] These elements of human life imply movement and praxis. According to Freire, freedom is neither a gift nor a donation.[211] Likewise hope is not supposed to be a gift either. So, as he suggests, like freedom, hope is not an ideal located outside of the human being, it is rather an indispensable condition for the quest for human completion, which the human must constantly pursue and conquer.[212] This means that if human freedom and autonomy are to be genuinely valued and safeguarded, then, agency and hope are goods not to be conceived as gifts handed down to an individual or to a group of people from someone else's hands. This specifically means that these goods should not be treated as gifts—in the form of assistances or help—handled down to people from kings, from masters, or priests, from teachers or parents, from physicians or philosophers, nor by any other kind of authoritative figure, the government or the State. As Freire suggests, human agency and agentic hope could only become what they are supposed to be through people's own praxis. Praxis, according to Freire, includes thinking,

---

[206] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the* Oppressed, pp. 84.

[207] Ibid.pp. 91.

[208] Ibid.; and Freire, Paulo, *El Grito Manso*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Siglo XXI, 2003, pp. 21-22; and, Freire, Paulo. *The Politics of Education,* pp. 44.

[209] Freire, Paulo. *The Politics of Education*, pp. 44.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the* Oppressed, pp. 47.

[212] Ibid.

theorizing and engagement.[213] This praxiological engagement is not frivolous, but it is an active process of thought and action in a dynamic dialectics in which the agent becomes an agent of change and transformation; i.e. an agent capable of creating and transforming reality by imprinting his historical mark upon society in democratic conjunction with the rest of the members of society.[214] And as Freire ads in *El Grito Manso*, there is neither search nor genuine praxis without hope.[215] Men and women are subjects of hope not out of stubbornness, but because they are searchers. Therefore, as Freire affirms, it "would be a serious contradiction of what we are if, aware of our incompleteness, we were not disposed to participate in a constant movement of search, which in its very nature is an expression of hope."[216] Yet, what oppression and domination precisely do is to curtail the human movement and freedom by diminishing or suppressing the oppressed people's agentic capabilities and therefore, making people hopeless, distorting and deforming, thereby, their humanness.

Nevertheless, in his discussion of "substantial hope", Philip Pettit appears kind of shy at the time of asserting hope's ontological priority. He only states that hope is ubiquitous.[217] The problematic here, however, goes to very core of human agency and to the core of most of the contemporary theories of hope that follow a structure akin to the one provided by Pettit, such as McGeer's, and many others contemporary scholars. The vulnerability of Pettit's theory of hope is not only a weakness at the heart of his substantial hope's model, but it is a fissure at the core of the traditional political theories of human agency, action and human autonomy that inform most contemporary theories of hope. If hope is prior and/or concomitant to agency, as Petit and McGeer (among others) suggest, then, for a person to be a full human agent, she would need to be an agent of hope too. And yet, as Paulo Freire continuously claims, agency is something that

---

[213] Ibid. pp. 87-101.

[214] Ibid. pp.100-101.

[215] Freire, Paulo. *El Grito Manso*, pp. 23.

[216] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Freedom*, pp. 69.

[217] Pettit, Philip. "Hope and Its Place in Mind", pp. 160.

is very often denied to many people within oppressive socio-political arrangements. As Henry Giroux explains in the introduction of *Politics of Education*, Freire rejects the idea of a universalized form of oppression. Instead, as Giroux explains, Freire "acknowledges and locates within different social fields of suffering that speak to forms of domination…[that] are not reducible to class oppression [which] contains a multiplicity of social relations [and] contradictions…" Domination, in Freire's view, as Giroux clarifies, "is more than the simple imposition of arbitrary power by one group of another. Instead, for Freire, the logic of domination represents a combination of historical and contemporary ideological and material practices…" This logic of suffering, instead of teaching people to be subjects of history and of hope, try to convince oppressed people that despair and hopelessness are but part of their fate, naturally rooted in their own personal and collective constitution and normal occurrences of life itself. This is what I have described earlier as a system of organized hopelessness, whose main purposes is to convince people that hoping to change the concrete conditions under which they are living is impossible and that hope is but "a dangerous illusion." As Freire suggests, hopelessness immobilizes people because it immobilizes their inquisitive nature and impetus to go on searching. Hopelessness shackles the person's feet. To silence human inquiry is not only to stop them by freezing all their important questions, but to also silence hope. Therefore, denying hope, as I already explained above, is to deny agency, and vice versa. And, thus, to deny hope is also to deny freedom. Without hope, therefore, true autonomy is rendered impossible. Without genuine autonomy, genuine human praxis and hope, agency becomes not only illusory, but human life itself becomes a sham.

Nonetheless, the tension between education and hope within oppressive context described above cannot be fully appreciated in its actual depth without adding a second crucial element to our analysis. Let me re-introduce here the second crucial element of analysis in Paulo Freire's deep vision of hope, which is also the most significant political realist aspect of the elpidology of the oppressed. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, according to Freire, hope has educability; and therefore, as in all things educable, it also possesses "politicity". This means that hope not only is something teachable, but that it can also be used politically, either to liberate or

to domesticate. This feature of hope is what explains why it is susceptible of being distorted, suppressed and even completely obliterated by way of an array of methods capable of being systematized and made into an organized system. In Freire's view, to be full-blown humans, people not only need to be educated in hope so that they become subjects of hope, but they also need to be critically conscious and fully empowered to carry on the battle against the concrete conditions that make people hopeless in the first place. This is precisely why Paulo Freire's entire career as a political philosopher of education and his actual political struggles in many real scenarios around the world aimed at concretely diminishing or eliminating the objective reasons that tend to immobilize people and make them helpless and hopeless. Paulo Freire's problem-posing critical education model aims at calling and bringing to the fore the crucial contradictions in education and beyond. Indeed, one of these fundamental contradictions is that oppressed people are educated to be helpless and hopeless, instead of being educated to be autonomous, self-confident, and hopeful agents. And yet, if there are things of which oppressed people are often accused is of being sick, lazy, silent, dumb, ignorant, incompetent, unproductive and unfit. [218] Then, under this sort of oppressive, hopeless and highly contradictory context—which even portraits hope as a dangerous intruder—how are all people, particularly the oppressed, to be able to become full-blown agents of history and, therefore, agents of hope?

In sum, from the viewpoint of agency and hope, when taking oppression into consideration, we can easily appreciate that oppressive conditions are oppressive precisely because they are designed to block a group of people's agentic capabilities and therefore, to prevent and/or freeze their praxis of hope in time. As an outcome of this situation, the oppressed people perceive their lives as frozen in time and futureless. Consequently, they end up experiencing life as a fixed continuous moment of hopelessness, where the future never comes about. The former set of Freirean principles regarding hope and human agency explain why hope's ontological priority cannot be taken lightly.

---

[218] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the* Oppressed, pp. 59, 63-64 and 74.

Evidently, seen from the standpoint of the elpidology of the oppressed, hope's ontological priority drags and brings a paradox to the fore that neither Phillip Pettit's nor Victoria McGeer's assessments of this category elucidate. Do human beings need to be subjects of hope first to be genuine full-blown humans, and therefore, genuine self-confident and autonomous agents or do they need to be full-blown agents first to be hopeful agents? Can hopeless people be fully autonomous agents? Pettit's rendition of substantial hope does not necessarily elucidate this tension. McGeer does not really address the issue either as if oppression and domination would have no effect upon all kinds of educative scenarios, including families.

Let me now take some time to explain why the paradox in question is of crucial theoretical importance in the contemporary ongoing philosophical debates on this theme and how the elpidology of the oppressed throws light upon this problematic. Yet, before carrying on my analysis, it is important to bring forward another crucial fact of the nature of the contemporary debate on hope. Many contemporary theoretical renditions and valuations of the category hope seem to heavily rely upon C.R. Snyder's prominent theory of this category. This is the case of Phillip Pettit's rendition of substantial hope, which considerably resembles Snyder's. In some degree Victoria McGeer's assessment of hope also resembles Snyder's interpretation of this category. As a matter of fact, Snyder's vision of hope is probably the most recognized contemporary theory of this category in the academy today. It is certainly, in my opinion, one of the most deployed assessments of hope today and, therefore, the one most used as the theoretical basis for a varied interpretation of hope in many different academic fields, including politics. Hence, the importance of looking at Snyder's rendition of hope before going back to my critique of Pettit's and McGeer's discussion of the theme in question.

As a matter of fact, Snyder offers a theory of hope that poses a very strong emphasis on human agency, human autonomy and on the human capacity to cope with stressful and/or devastating circumstances. He defines hope as a positive human "motivational based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways

(planning to meet goals)."[219] Snyder's hope equation—agency, goals and pathways—can be summarized as the human capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate one-self via agency to use those pathways. Hopeful thinking, according to Snyder, needs both pathways and agentic thought. Accordingly, agentic "thinking is important in all goal-directed thought, but it takes on special significance when people encounter impediments."[220] As Snyder argues, during such blockages "agency helps people to channel the requisite motivation to the best alternate pathway."[221] As he explains, varying levels of hopeful thought produce differing robustness in emerging agentic thinking and emerging pathways.[222] What Snyder defines as "the full high-hope person" is supposed to have a more fluid and fast repetitive agentic and pathways thinking than the "the full low-hope person" (with a low agency and low pathway thinking).[223] The same theoretical tension and vulnerability commented above emerges in Snyder's theory of hope. Barriers to the people's desired goals cannot be seen merely emerging from nowhere, for they are social, economic and political in the first place.

Now, coming back to my original discussion, the crucial and concrete problematic that neither Snyder, Pettit nor McGeer bring to their discussion is the fact that agency itself could be interrupted, blocked or entirely denied to some people by society itself; i.e. by socio-political and economic conditions of oppression and domination. Paradoxically, none of these theories give us one clue as to which human trait is exactly blocked or denied when a person is purposely left or appears to be hopeless, or "a full low-hope person". The actual social mechanisms or processes that make humans more or less "substantially hopeful persons" or "full high-hope people" are not necessarily elucidated by these approaches to hope either. How exactly is hope to be

---

[219] Snyder, C. R. "Hope theory: Rainbows in the Mind." *Psychological Inquiry*, 13, (2002), 249-275; pp. 250.

[220] Ibid. pp.251.

[221] Ibid.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Ibid.

promoted in people? What does it mean to encourage hope? Is to promote hope the same as promoting (autonomous-free) agency? If hope is not a gift, a given or something to be handled down or "instilled" in people, as Freire proposes, what should the method be for promoting hope? The methodology of supporting and cultivating hope entails a pedagogy. The opposite method, whose objective is to instill the idea that hope is a gift coming from above supposed another sort of pedagogy. The former sort of pedagogy, as Freire affirms throughout the bulk of his work, is to liberate and the later to domesticate. If hope is a method, it belongs to those things susceptible of being taught and also susceptible to become either a virtue or a vice. Hope as a method for liberation presupposes some sort of awareness or what Freire's calls critical knowledge regarding the cognitive structure and praxis of hope. This is what Paulo Freire terms, "educated hope". His educated hope, from the standpoint of the elpidology of the oppressed, signals hope as a kind of empowering wisdom or *sapienza*.

Unfortunately, Phillip Pettit—as well as many other contemporary thinkers such as McGeer and Snyder—flies over the question of the presence of alienating conditions that might limit or fully block individual or collective praxis of hope by relying on an idealistic approach to this category and to human agency itself. His ideal conception of hope, as presented in the work analyzed here, does not seem to take into consideration the non-availability of hope or/and of agency due to social conditioning, arbitrary use of power, domination or any other alienating situation. Pettit's idealistic approach to hope should strike us as very odd indeed. His notion of hope looks very limited regarding his own theoretical approaches to the topic of freedom and especially regarding his account of freedom as non-domination—a conception according to which humans are free to the extent that they do not find themselves under the domination of others, subject to other people's wills and exposed to the vicissitudes of their desires.[224] Pettit's conception of freedom as non-domination supports, according to him, a (neo-Roman) republican model of political life.[225] As he explains in an interview for *Ethics and Economics*, his neo-

---

[224] See Pettit, Philip. *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

[225] Ibid.

Roman tradition's main emphasis is "on the connection between being free and not being dependent on the goodwill of other individuals or groupings; not being subjected to others as to a master who can interfere arbitrarily on one's life."[226]

Again, oddly Pettit's idealistic notion of the self—or of the substantially hopeful agent—seems to float over the issue of domination. By the end of his short treatise on hope he advances a very timid analysis of collective-political agency based on his findings. Now, judged from my (Freirean) political realist standpoint, Pettit's approach to hope looks anemic. In the political scenario, at the collective level, Pettit informs us, everyone "enjoys the status of a person among others—the status of a conversable, reason-capable subject," [227] or so he wants to suppose. Unfortunately, Pettit does not take into consideration the asymmetry of power and the role that this asymmetry plays in shaping people's hopes—their expectations, goals and plans. He also seems to forget that the asymmetry of power and power struggles and resistances that characterize the political context also tend to shape the way people relate "politically" to each other. Political domination is about giving a shape to the political arena. It is about perpetuating in time the asymmetry of power that keeps those in power in control of a society and of its future. Thus, disarticulating essential elements of collective action, mutual trust, cooperation, political alliances and solidarity between potential dissidents to the system becomes a prime objective of those in power. But, what is collective hope supposed to be about? It is dreaming about and having mutual political goals, planning for those goals and finding a path to effectively attain them. Having mutual positive expectations about the practical attainability (or practicality) of those goals is a crucial element for this process to be successful. Having positive expectations about the practicality of the hoped-for goals is vital because people need to have a *convincing hypothesis* (a hope) as a motive for collective action, especially under the context of oppression.

---

[226] Berges, Sandrine. "Interview with Professor Philip Pettit." *Ethique et economique/Ethics and Economics*, 3 (2), 2006, http://ethique-economique.org/; pp. 1.

[227] Pettit, Philip. "Hope and Its Place in Mind." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 592, 2004, pp. 160.

Yet, what an oppressive socio-political system does in a very systematic and effective way is suppressing and destroying all possible venues and resources of hope that nurture and make possible collective hope. What kind of practical and convincing hypothesis about the future attainability of certain specific goals can an oppressed group of people have when they even lack the most basic and rudimentary material and instrumental resources to push their dreams forward? Oppression even determines oppressed people's desires and dreams. In fact, cultivating silence, immobilism and fear of freedom in a specific group of a society is precisely about discouraging their capacity to dream about a possible (feasible) different future and consequently annihilating their hope. Of course, there are different degrees of oppression and diverse ways of subtly oppressing entire groups of people in order to modify, manipulate or entirely suppress their sense of hope with the ultimate intention of keeping the current political order in place. Even societies that are not necessarily judged oppressive require mechanisms to encourage certain sort of political dreams and collective hopes, while discouraging others. The methodology to be used for the process of promoting, encouraging or discouraging collective or individual hopes within a society is a matter of critical political controversy in open democratic societies. Yet, oppression and the possible manipulation or suppression of people's hope is a topic usually ignored in the contemporary discussions of hope. The elpidology of the oppressed not only takes notice of this fact but, as I said earlier, it is a method that seeks to unearth the reasons for the existence of such a veil of ignorance placed upon the practice of hope and optimism. Political power assumes many forms and shapes. As I shall argue in the rest of the dissertation, the geometry of power not only seeks to shape the people's desires and dreams, but it also wants to assume control upon the entire spectrum of psychic phenomena associated to the human elpidic mind at the individual and collective levels; namely it seeks to manipulate people's hopes, anxieties and fears.

Within any political scenario political power, human agency and hope are meant to be in tension. This means that the political is characterized, among other things, by conflict. And, hope plays a crucial role in this process. According to Freire, any movement of inquiry and of personal or collective transformation to be conceptualized as autonomous should be truly free from

arbitrary oppressive constraints. If people do not control their own movement (including the most elemental ones, such as the capacity of launching an inquiry into the very conditions that limit them) it is "a violation of their humanity."[228] This is ultimately an infringement upon agency. And any infringement upon human agency is an infringement upon the person's capacity to hope. "Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging [in a process of questioning, transformation and hoping] is one of violence (…) and to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects."[229] If the antonym of freedom is subjugation, then the antonym of the hopeful agent is a hopeless individual that has being made into an object of other's person's desires and agency, and therefore, of someone else's hope, by political domination.

Therefore, since Pettit's does not consider the former set of conditions, his approach to hope seems to be a-political. And consequently, it tends to be un-realistic. For the same reasons, Victoria McGeer's assessment of the topic of hope is also politically antiseptic. Similarly, but unsurprisingly, C.R. Snyder has a similar a-political and sanitized conceptualization of hope. Nonetheless, a-political theories of hope are not a new phenomenon. Other philosophers have opted for this sort of approach to this category in the past. For example, Gabriel Marcel has also preferred to understand hope's ultimate defining structure as a mystery and not as a problem to be solved by a rationalistic investigation.[230] Should hope be problematized politically? Hope, according to Marcel, is not a political issue, and should not be treated or pursued as a political problem neither. Obviously, my approach here goes contra-Marcel and against his recommendation. The elpidology of the oppressed is a realistic political inquiry into hope motivated by the fact that oppressed people experience life in a constant situation of hopelessness because of politics.

---

[228] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York; Continuum, 2000, pp.85.

[229] Ibid.

[230] Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope.* Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978, pp.3.

Ironically, Phillip Pettit indicates that he is committed to present "an attractive" theory of hope that makes this category "relatively unmysterious."[231] Yet, in his "elegant" attempt to take the mystery of hope away he ends up adding just another layer of illusory-mysterious veneer upon it. Looking at hope as if this human practice is unaffected by power or political domination is, after all, a hidden utopian impulse, very common in political philosophers inclined to look at the political world oblivious of concrete reality. Unrealistic theory of hope such as Pettit's, that tend to detach hope from concrete social contexts, end up arguing for a dehumanized notion and practice of hope. By doing so, these sorts of theories of hope do not help at all in taking mystery away from the subject, but rather contribute to obscure the notion even more.

There is yet another critical issue with Philipp Pettit's assessment of hope, which I find necessary to address before moving up to the next sections of this chapter. Thus, I want to wrap up my examination of his analysis with some important remarks on the theme of optimism. First, Pettit differentiates substantial hope from optimism. Yet he does not explain if optimism is a kind of superficial hope or if it is, instead, a completely different human attitude unrelated to it. This is a crucial matter. And, therefore, it calls for clarification. In fact, this is a question that I shall pursue beyond this chapter. Interestingly, as we shall see, in discussing the theme of optimism, another entirely new problematic is brought to light. The issue relates back to the existing resemblance between Pettit's conceptualization of hope and Snyder's. This difficulty adds just another thick level of confusion to the already confusing divide between hope and optimism. Let me now describe the problem. As I advanced earlier, Pettit's structures his theory of hope similarly to C.R. Snyder's notion of hope. Both assessments of hope include the categories of active agency and planning in pursuing hoped-for goals and searching paths for attaining them. Now, here is the specific problem: defining hope in such a way—as comprising active human agency, hoped-for goals, planning and looking for paths to reach these goals, is precisely the kind of conceptualization of hope that some contemporary Christian scholars find at odds with what they understand as "genuine hope". In other words, contemporary Christian

---

[231]Ibid. pp.159.

scholars reject Snyder's theory of hope because it is not true or authentic hope. Paradoxically, some find the sort of agentic hope advanced by Snyder (and Pettit) more akin to what they would describe as optimism. This is, for example, the opinion of Neil Pembroke. He expresses his position in *Witnessing to Hope in the Christian Community Through Irony* at the time of offering a list of what he considers to be proper and sound contemporary psychological visions of hope. He argues that he has specifically excluded C.R. Snyder's theory from his list because; it seems "more like optimism." He then adds optimism "is usually construed as a feeling or conviction that one will prevail in one's quest, despite the obstacles in one's path."[232] Optimism, according to Pembroke looks easy, given that, as experience indicates, "it is not that often that we find a trouble-free, easy, or direct route to our cherished goals."[233] Yet, Snyder theory of hope, according to Pembroke, makes hope look always as an easy solitary pursuit of a single individual who gets his personal and own agentic resources to overcome the roadblocks on the path to his goals without the need of any exterior force outside himself.[234]

Now, Pembroke's attack on certain theories of hope such as Snyder's, points towards a traditional divide between hope and optimism that appears in most of the contemporary discussions on the topic. Yet, we still need to ask ourselves if this divide is after all a valid one. Actually, Pembroke's critique of Snyder's theory of hope opens a wound on most contemporary theories of hope, because it qualitatively separates the idea of Christian-genuine hope from other contemporary characterizations of hope. Yet, as I discussed earlier, many contemporary characterizations of hope are but a secularization of the Christian version of hope that incorporate more or less the Pauline structure of "hoping against hope" as their underlying basis. Therefore, by saying that Snyder's vision of hope is a version of "optimism", Pembroke undermines the distinction that most contemporary approaches to the category of hope establish

---

[232] Pembroke, N. "Witnessing to Hope in the Christian Community Through Irony." *Pastoral Psychol* (2009) 58, pp. 433–443.

[233] Ibid.

[234] Ibid.

between these two notions. If in practice both phenomena can be then described in a similar fashion; then what is exactly the element or elements that distinguish them? Pembroke does not provide a clear answer to this question. He only points out that the divine nature of hope and the fact that its strength lies in a force outside the human being (God) that the Christian community shares makes Christian hope superior to optimism.

The controversy created by the persistent traditional philosophical characterization of hope as qualitatively different from optimism makes necessary a rigorous exploration of the subject of optimism in its relation to hope and vice versa. I propose approaching this matter by looking beyond the layers of illusion that involves the topic of hope. It looks like the very same deceptive veils cloud the category of optimism. It is important to point to the fact that the contemporary literature on both subjects does not necessarily offers abundant and clear arguments and specific criteria to actually ground the soundness of the distinction between hope and optimism.

Now, let me close this section by offering what I propose as one of the main thesis of this dissertation regarding the relationship between hope and optimism. Today, the so-called qualitative difference between hope and optimism that is usually highlighted in the literature on the topic of hope functions as a political-ideological illusion. As it happens with any ideological illusory trap, this deceptive impression alienates people and deludes them into believing that optimism is unimportant, cheap, synthetic and easy; while making them think that hope (and/or hoping), understood, as an eternal force—maybe coming from God—is much stronger and authentic than the former. By accepting this sort of view about hope and hoping, people become alienated from seeing and understanding what optimism and hoping are concretely about and how are they nurtured and promoted in society. True human agency is not possible without a minimum of optimism or without being somehow "hopeful and confident about the future or the successful outcome of" [235] our own practical actions. Without a minimal "expectation about the

---

[235] Definition of "Optimism", Oxford Dictionaries, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/optimism.

social or material future— [which I regard] as socially desirable."[236]; how could I judge as "optimal", "good", "right", or advantageous and undertake with enthusiasm any action, especially one that I perceived as difficult or risky? How could I undertake an action if I am pessimistic about the fruit of my undertaking in the first place? How do I advance any desire or longing of mine if I am not optimistic about the positive outcome of my actions? How could I be able to cope with disaster without being at least a little bit certain and confident about my own personal powers or agentic personal capabilities to deal with tragedy in the first place? A minimum dose of optimism and confidence in our own agentic capabilities and our inner strengths is necessary to make our actions possible in a true and meaningful way. Without it our actions become empty, automatic zombie-like activities. Therefore, taking actual autonomous action requires certain measure of optimism in the form of self-confidence and self-efficacy.

Elucidating the difference between optimism and hope, if such a difference exists, is crucial, especially from the specific standpoint of the oppressed. In my view, optimism matters! It matters in individual and collective decision-making. It matters when things get tough, especially in the socio-political life of the oppressed, because it is under conditions of oppression that the paradox between agency and hope discussed above becomes a concrete historical fact. From this optic, for instance, a crucial practical question that oppressed people may ask is as follows; where are the actual resources of hope? At the practical level, the oppressed are in much need to know and understand what resources do they have or which do they lack? Optimism and/or hope (as the literature on hope highlights) has a lot to do with a sort of instrumental knowledge on the part of an individual or collectivity about the actual availability of instrumental, material and cultural resources. Yet, there are instrumental tangible resources (of hope) easy to be accounted for, as well as there are other resources non-tangible important resources that are not that easy to see, recognize or account for. Ironically, in extreme situations of oppression, oppressed people, resigned to a fatalistic view of their own existence and poorly

---

[236] Definition of optimism offered by Tiger, Lionel in, *Optimism: The Biology of Hope.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979, pp. 18.

trained to know and to recognize their own potencies, are even incapable of looking at their strengths and capabilities as actual resources realistically available to them. In Freire's terms, both at the individual and at the collective political level, oppressed people have a tough time looking at themselves as qualified historical agents capable of taking their lives and history in their own hands. They are in many ways continuously and systematically alienated "from their own decision-making [and thereby changed into] objects", instead of been given the chance to become subjects of history.[237] A culture of silence is a hopeless culture precisely because it is a culture where the passive tradition of fearing to exercise freedom seeks to counter and suppress any active, liberating and transformational hope for change. Optimism, on the contrary, as I suggested earlier, is a daring attitude that inclines us to act.

Nonetheless, optimism has a soft, empty, cheerful and naïve side that is problematic because it is sort of delusional. As I mentioned earlier, the idea of optimism or a positive outlook in life faces basically the same vulnerabilities and challenges that hope has historically faced. This should not be a surprise if we consider that optimism is like and/or a function of hope. We know from our own personal experience that it is quite common for people not to be sufficiently objective in their predictions about their own future and expectations. In fact, researches in psychology have amply documented the existence of a general bias in humans to expect their future to be better than can possibly be true.[238] People, it is argued, tend to over-value their probabilities of personal gain, their chances of success and the possibility of experiencing positive events in their lives. In other words, persons tend to be over optimistic; they perceive themselves to have better than average chances of experiencing a range of desirable future outcomes.[239] In the field of psychology, this tendency has been called *unrealistic optimism* or

---

[237] Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York; Continuum, 2000, pp.85.

[238] See for example, Weinstein, Neil D., "Unrealistic Optimism About Future Life Events." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 39, no. 5, 1980, pp. 806-820.

[239] Harris, Peter. "Sufficient Grounds for Optimism? The Relationship Between Perceived Controllability and Optimistic Bias." Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 15(1) 1996, pp. 9-52.

optimistic bias.[240] This sort of criticism against optimism differ from the one traditionally lunched against hope only in the amount of empirically supported evidence in favor of the positions taken by the scholars, trying to substantiate their evaluation of this human tendency. As I shall argue in Chapter IV, humans have long recognized this human disposition to "excessive optimism" from different perspectives as an evil. On the one hand, according to Neil D. Weinstein—who coined the term "unrealistic optimism" in what is today considered a seminal work on the topic, *Unrealistic Optimism About Future Life Events*—this human tendency implies "not a merely hopeful outlook on life, but an error in judgment."[241] Nonetheless, on the other hand, both folk wisdom and contemporary positive psychologists consider an optimistic or hopeful outlook in life to provide numerous benefits for people.[242]

In the case of C.R. Snyder, his theory of hope is launched from the standpoint of the positive psychology movement. The movement, initiated by Seligman and Csikszentmilályi, has taken preeminence in American psychology.[243] Positive psychology claims to study the brighter aspects of human functioning, including hope. Reinforced by lots of scientific research, this movement claims, among other things, that positive hopeful thinking and optimism are linked to health and longevity, while pessimism has the opposite effects. Yet, Snyder's theory of hope and the positive thinking movement he advocates has been the object of intense attacks because of its over-positivistic, naïve and unrealistic outlook of life. His positive psychology is also criticized because of the way positive thinking and hope tend to be arbitrarily imposed upon people in different scenarios, such as in the medical realm. For instance, some psychologists argue contra

---

[240] Weinstein, Neil D., "Unrealistic Optimism About Future Life Events." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 39, no. 5, 1980, pp. 806-820.

[241] Ibid. pp. 806.

[242] Sweeny, Kate, Patrick J. Carroll, and James A. Shepperd, "Is Optimism Always Best? Futures Outlooks and Preparedness." *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, vol. 15, no. 6, 2006, pp. 302-306.

[243] Seligman, M.E.P., & Csikszentmilályi, M. "Positive psychology: An introduction." *American Psychologist.* 55 2000, pp. 5–14.

positive psychology, calling its preaching, "the tyranny of the positive attitude".[244] Other scholars, such Barbara Ehrenreich, echoing the former criticism, asks how is it possible that this movement tries to force people into being irrational by relying on illusions.[245] Interestingly, in her attack on this positive outlook of life, instead of going against Seligman's optimism, her assault is launched against the category of hope.[246] Again, she seems unable to perceive as unnecessary the attempt to establish a distinction between positive thinking, hope and optimism.

In sum, the dilemma between hope and optimism entails a paradox, which lies at the core of human autonomy and agency that demands much further attention. We saw how contemporary discussions on the theme of hope seems to yield a decontextualized vision of autonomy and human agency, which at the end it is but a way of de-politicizing hope and idealizing human agency. This is the case of Phillip Pettit's rendition of hope and, to a lesser extent, that of Victoria McGeer's theory. It is also the case of C.R. Snyder's famous vision of hope. Further, the divide between hope and optimism is called into question by the inability of contemporary theories of hope to establish a sound distinction between them. Indeed, the confusion caused by the similitudes, discrepancies, fuzziness and obscurities in the debates on the topics of hope and optimism might prompt any serious scholar to ask if contemporary scholars writing about both themes really know what they are talking about when they theorize about these two subjects.[247] It is obvious, then, that identifying the illusory aspects of hope and

---

[244] Held, Barbara. "The Negative Side of Positive Psychology." *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, vol. 44, no. 1, Winter 2004, pp. 9-46.

[245] Ehrenreich, B. ''Pathologies of Hope.'' *Harper's Monthly*, February 1 (2007). 9–11.

[246] Ibid. Barbara Ehrenreich launches her attack on hope from the context of her personal experience when going through a diagnosis of and treatment of cancer.

[247] See for example, Peterson, Christopher. "The Future of Optimism." *American Psychologist*, vol. 55, no. 1, 2000, pp. 44-55. In this article, the author's critical look upon optimism does not necessarily openly distinguishes it from hope (although he mentions the concept of "hope" when analyzing C.R Snyder's hope theory). But, at the time of recognizing the usual traditional objections to optimism, he lists instead the most common objections issued against

of optimism becomes key for the task of elucidating the true nature, value and scope of hope. It is also clear that the task ahead is made even more complicated not only by the historical complexity that these two topics brings to the table, but also by the colossal amount of inconsistencies and ambiguities that surround both concepts. Moreover, as I have been emphasizing over the length of this chapter, the myth creating cultural force behind the making of this divide is strong enough to conceal important concrete facts about both, hope and optimism in general. The nonsense under which the variety of distortions created by ideological myths is so thick that the true nature of hope and the way that this human disposition is taught and pass on among the members of society remain invisible. In this way, concrete hope and optimism remain difficult to find. As I have already advanced in my discussion thus far, oppression is also about appropriating and/or monopolizing concrete resources of hope, and/or about degrading or hiding them to keep the oppressed hopeless. In the next two sections I turn

---

hope, as for example, Nietzsche's; who regards hope as a vice that "prolongs human suffering." Yet, Peterson uses the word "optimism", instead of hope, adding in this way to the confusion, especially for the trained eye. (pp.45) Other scholars, such as positive psychologist and today's leading specialist in the subject of optimism within the psychology field, Martin E.P. Seligman, has helped to develop a whole discipline within the field of the sciences of the human mind and its therapeutics based on his theory of "learned optimism". Optimism and not hope is what Seligman proposes as the "path" to positively transform people's minds and lives to avoid depression and to reach "authentic happiness". Although I agree with some of Seligman's general ideas about optimism and on the agentic skills or capabilities that he professes as necessary to have what he terms as a meaningful life, his theory seems at times to disregard the actual concrete reasons that are the mayor causes of hopelessness and helplessness in profound conditions of socio-political and economic inequality. A Freirean look into Seligman's proposals shall yield a dramatic change of perspective in what is supposed to be taking as the path to authenticity. The struggle for emancipation shall be a hopeful struggle where optimism is key. Yet the path should never be confused with the necessary skills to attain the proposed goals. See Seligman, Martin. *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2006). Furthermore, interestingly, C.R. Snyder, whose theory of hope fundamentally originates from Seligman's positive psychology and original studies about optimism, decided to use hope as the term to refer to his psychological theoretical construction. Snyder's triadic structure of hope, as I already pointed out, is like Philip Pettit's substantial hope theory. Yet, as I already pointed out above, some scholars reject Snyder's theory of hope because it appears to be similar to easy optimism than to authentic hope.

my attention to two short but substantive accounts of how myth-creating cultural forces conceal key facts not only about the true nature of hope, but also about oppression itself.

Does hope spring eternal? *Ojalá!*[248] But it really doesn't.

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast." This very popular proverb is a verse in Alexander Pope's poem, "An Essay on Man." This metaphor seems to occupy a very important place in the English-speaking world's imaginary. A considerable number of poets, writers, songwriters, and scholars have incorporated Pope's metaphorical image of hope unto their works.[249] But, is it true that hope does spring eternal for humanity? Most people take Pope's

---

[248] In the Spanish-speaking world, the word *Ojalá* is often used to express hopefulness or a desire for something to come to pass, as in, "*Ojalá* he passes his exams". *Ojalá* is a word that comes directly from the Arabic, *Insh' Allah*, which means, "God willing (*Si Dios quiere, o si Dios así lo permite*). Thus, the hope that the word originally wanted to convey was not only religiously charged, but also places in God's will the possibility of the occurrence of the preferred outcome. Of course, it is uncertain what the idiom, *Si Dios Quiere*, reflects. *Ojalá* opens the door for the risk of a "maybe". But this "maybe" or "possibility" does not appear in the horizon by pure chance or randomly. The possibility always exists that even the most probable and certain of things do not go the way they were expected to go simply because it was not in God's will. Contemporarily, however, the original meaning of the word *Ojalá* has lost its original connotation. In Puerto Rico, for example, this word is commonly used to denote the uncertain possibility of the accomplishment of a vague wish or longing, more than a complete confidence in the direct intervention of God in human affairs and the future. It could be said that in certain specific situations, there is a similarity between this word and the standard idiomatic use of the word "hope" in the English, as in, "I hope she passes her exams". Yet, if we go back and look at the word *Ojalá* from a Christian religious perspective, we still appreciate the ideation that future events are in God's will and that, ultimately, he is the one administering the velocity of the future experiences of humankind.

[249] See, for example, Russell, Graham /Air Supply. "Hope springs Eternal." Hearts in Motion (Album) 1986; see also, King, Stephen. "Hope Springs Eternal: Rita Hayworth and The Shawshank Redemption", in *Different Seasons*. New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1982, pp. 3-116. It is worth mentioning that King's story has become an important reference in the contemporary discussions on the theme of hope at many levels, including the academy;

representation of hope face value. A few, however, engage the image critically. For instance, in *Our Mutual Friends* (Ch. 43), Charles Dickens writes: "Night after night his disappointment is acute, but *hope springs eternal* in the scholastic breast, and he follows me again to-morrow." Dickens incorporates Pope's image into his story, but not necessarily to embrace it. On the contrary, he subtly engages the metaphor pointing to the fact that hope might only spring eternal—in an unrealistic and, therefore, disappointing way—in the breast of certain very credulous and pious Christians (the scholastics). And so what Dickens really does is to cast doubt over the traditional Christian idea—which Pope's seemingly embraces through his metaphor—about the eternal nature of hope. Indeed, Pope's image portraits hope as a natural thing that is spontaneously emanating from the chest of every human being on earth *ad infinitum* and/or as something eternally supplied to humankind by God. But, as Dickens implicitly noticed, the possibility always exists that while some people hope in a Christian way, there might be others that do not. Dickens' critique of Christian hope also opens the possibility to think that there might be people that might not even experience hope at all or at least not properly. Indeed, if there is something that Pope's metaphor does is obscuring the fact that many people in the world experience in their life many degrees of hopelessness, including having no hope for the future at all. In other words, Pope's image of hope is one of those human poetic artifacts that turns hope into a myth, and therefore, it mystifies and glamorizes hope.

If as Paulo Freire and others propose, the human being is, a hoping animal—this is an animal that desires and cognitively (judiciously or not), seeks different paths towards a new set of realities that are not yet, but which realization appears as a possibility in his or her horizon— the reasons for any absence or deficit of hope, including the chance of the total hopeless breast demand to be accounted for. Hopelessness exists as a concrete and genuine experience of people

---

see, for example, the discussion on hope regarding King's story in Bovens, Luc, "The Value of Hope." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 59, 1999, pp. 667-81; S. King's novella was also made into a movie in 2004; see, Darabont, Frank and Stephen King. *The Shawshank Redemption*. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2004; The film became not only a box office hit, but also an importance reference in the popular discussion on this topic.

in the world. The hopeless condition of a terminally ill patient who awaits death is an example, in which the absence of hope is always a patent and even expected possibility. This person might certainly have no ground or concrete reasons to hope not to expect a positive outcome.[250] Nonetheless, oppressive social systems bring another qualitatively different kind of deprivation of hope to the fore. The absence of hope within an oppressive system is one intentionally created by the system itself. Slavery is an example of how oppression purposely and systematically forces a condition of hopelessness in people. For instance, the deep emotional and physical suffering that slaves endured within the legalized system of chatter slavery that existed in United States antebellum is common knowledge. Slave owners in America and elsewhere in the world, as we know, sought to subdue and suppress their slaves physically and psychologically in many ways. The narratives of hopelessness of many of the slaves who experienced this system still resonate today.[251] Other forms of subjugation and oppression are a common source of human sorrow and pain even in today's most economically advanced societies among distinct groups of people.[252] The emotional and cognitive suffering and the hopelessness that all forms of oppression bring upon actual men and women in the world are a fact of human existence. Their suffering and hopelessness cannot be ignored. How could someone think that hope is a fundamental asset of human life, but do nothing to fight the causes of hopelessness in their societies and in the world, allowing hopelessness to prevail? The uneasiness with the socio-political and cultural circumstances that are, after all, the ultimate causes of hopelessness in the world, which I experience as a Puerto Rican who lives in Puerto Rico, a Caribbean archipelago that still suffers the noxious consequences of classical colonialism, as well as other socio-

---

[250] "Hopeless"; http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hopeless

[251] The autobiographic story by Frederick Douglass, an African-American slave who later became a free person, is one of the best know examples of this sort of narratives.

[252] As Iris Marion Young, among other contemporary thinkers, such as Cornel West, has argued, racism, systematic violence, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and sexism, among other social practices of systematic discrimination, are actual forms of oppression that still exist in our contemporary society today. See, Young, Iris. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

economic and political maladies (including some that are exclusive of our singular condition), prompts me to question Pope's famous metaphor. If hope truly springs eternal in the human breast; how exactly are we going to account for hopelessness through Pope's metaphor? His image gives no clue about the known fact that hope stops springing from people's hearts. The image of hope as something of an eternal nature does not offer any clue about the possibility of hope simply coming to a catastrophic end or even less explains how is to be regained when lost or re-constructed when shattered or devastated by oppressive and unjust forces.

For instance, after the catastrophic and barbaric historical events of the Holocaust and Hiroshima's nuclear bombing, scholars and people in general were prompted to ask if was there really any point in talking about hope for humanity after such violent events.[253] How can human hope be realistically expected to overcome the kind of horror and sense of hopelessness that catastrophes like these leave in the human breast? Pope's image of hope as something eternal seems to dodge this question. His metaphor does not open the possibility to think of hope as having a beginning; neither does it tell us anything about hope having some historic dynamic structure as part of our journey as human creatures upon earth; a history that, as we know, it is not eternal. Further, the idea of hope as an eternal element in human life provided to us by God does not tell anything about the dialectical dynamic ways in which humans teach each other to hope or to recognize its pedagogical structure.

Whatever the poetic merits of Alexander Pope's image of hope, it seems to me, nonetheless, that it is unable to account by itself for the concrete reasons of the absence of hope in people's lives. As I suggested above, the most obvious reason this image seems unable to account for hopelessness is because it belongs to the realm of the mythological imaginary that has traditionally surrounded both, the category and the actual practice of hope. Only within the mythical idea of human existence and social reality as something pre-given can hope be thought

---

[253] See for example, Fackenheim, Emil, Johannes Metz, and Jürgen Moltmann, "Hope—after Auschwitz and Hiroshima? in, *The Future of Hope*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970); p. 68; see also, Summerskill, William, "Hope after Hiroshima." *The Lancet*, vol. 378, September 2011.

as timeless and everlasting. Certainly, the swell idea of hope flowing interminable from the human soul fits perfectly with the image of a fixed and pre-ordained, unchanging human world, which offers hope eternally. Nonetheless, our concrete human existence upon earth does not necessarily belong to eternity. As in many other literary and even philosophical portrayals of hope, what one finds in Pope's image is a lack of realism. "There is always hope" or "hope dies last"—whose probable precursor is Cicero's "While there is life there is hope"—as well as many other popular images of hope, share the same lack of realism. Metaphors equating hope with things such as food, balms, or medicines do not necessarily help to give this category a more realistic outlook either. Take for instance, Francis Bacon's "hope is a good breakfast, but it is a bad supper". This image gives the idea that hope feeds one, as if hope would have some sort of nutritional function. But at the same time, it also portraits hope as a meager sort of food, bad or insufficiently nutritious to get you through the entire day. In other words, Bacon's words make hope looks precarious and ineffective. Yet, while, some visions of hope portrait it as inadequate for real life, other views stress and embrace its apparent powerful nutritional or medicinal-balsamic benefits. These images usually characterize hope, as a sort of food or edible bread that energizes the soul or as a sort of elixir or balm that helps people through life, alleviating their sufferings and relieving their pains. For example, in Christianity, Jesus Christ has been traditionally portrayed, as "the bread of life".[254] Regarding hope, as John Bloom comments, God's word and promises feed our hope, "just like we energize our bodies by eating food."[255] Thus, from the Christian standpoint, hope feeds and restores the spiritual energy of the human soul. Further, hope has also been portrayed as a balm or as having balsamic-medicinal properties. For instance, in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, for example, Claudio observes, "the miserable have no other medicine, but only hope."[256] As Jack Coulehan observers, many doctors,

---

[254] John 6:33-35.

[255] Bloom, John. "God's Soul Food." *Desiring God.* September 2010. Retrieved January 2017. http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/gods-soul-food.

[256] Shakespeare, William. "Measure for measure". In *Shakespeare—the complete works*, edited by George B. Harrison. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1952, pp. 1103–1135.

like Claudio, "have long considered hope as a universal balm."[257] The idea of hope as a balm also abounds in the Christian theological tradition.[258] The image of God as a physician is very common too.[259] Correspondingly, the medicine he prescribes is his word.[260] God's word has always been thought as the cure for the diseased souls of men. And one of his most significant and frequent prescription to sooth the aches and sorrow of humans seems to be hope.

But, is hope a sort of food with nutritional effects on the human soul? Is hope a balm that soothes and heals? Is it a medicine that cures a person's wounds? Should hope be conceived in these ways at all? Paradoxically, understanding hope in the ways formerly described, "feeds" our feelings of hope; i.e., people feel hopeful with these sorts of ideations. Yet, the critical issue that the elpidology of the oppressed wants to bring forward is questioning whether these are practical, engaging or realistic ways of hoping. Unfortunately, these ways of looking at hope could be interpreted as a distorted way of construing and practicing hope, at least from the perspective of hope as a practical transformational force in society.

First, as I argued earlier, as Freire insists, hope is neither a given nor "a donation".[261] Yet, characterizing hope as a sort of food and/or balm continuously and eternally supplied to men and

---

[257] Coulehan, J. "Deep Hope: A Song without words." *Theor Med Bioeth* (2011) 32: 143. doi:10.1007/s11017-011-9172-2.

[258] The idea of the balsamic powers of hope is a tradition in Christian thought directly associated with the curative or palliative effects of god's words or of praying, etc. As Vaughn E. Worthen notices in "The Healing Balm of Hope", hope heals. (https://www.lds.org/ensign/2013/09/the-healing-balm-of-hope?lang=eng). The most prominent metaphoric image of divine hope as a balm we can find in the bible seems to be Jeremiah's words regarding the balm of Gilead: "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"; Jeremiah 8:22. For a full interpretation of this view see, Whitefield, George. *The Balm of Gilead.* Meadow View-England: Quinta Press, 2008.

[259] See for example, Blumhardt Johann Christoph and Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt. *The God who Heals: Words of Hope for a time of Sickness*. (Walden, NY: Plough Publishing House, 2016); See also,

[260] See Exodus 15:26, *I the Lord am thy physician.*

[261] Freire, Paulo and Moacir Gadotti. "We can Reinvent the World." In Peter McLaren and James M. Giarelli (Eds.) *Critical Theory and Educational Research*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1995, pp. 259.

women by God already establishes hope as a gift, depleting it from its dynamic, historical and praxiological character. This sort of view on hope might also entertain a naïve and unrealistic outlook of society. Having an idealistic look of society could, among other things, make hope appear as a sort of magical charm handed down by God to humans. This tension cuts deep into Paulo Freire's theory and insights on human agency, praxis, hope and conscientização. As he establishes in *Pedagogy of Hope*, "hope needs practice in order to become historical concreteness."[262] As he stresses, human existence, and the struggle needed to improve it, cannot be understood apart from the praxis of hope.[263] There is no hope in mere sheering or enthusiastic hopefulness in which the elements of reflective action or conscious critical engagement and actual struggle are not present.[264] In other words, the ordinary feeling of hope without engagement is but a feeble, silenced and distorted form of hope. Hope as a food or as a balm that are in addition being thought as gifts from God do not seem to require the kind of critical engagement proposed by Freire. The problem is that these views of hope suppose a passive and an unengaged person whose role is that of a mere inert or submissive recipient to be filled with hope by God or by someone else; the priest, the medic, the political leader, the teacher, etc.

In *The Politics of Education*, Paulo Freire brings to the fore a very illuminating critique of the traditional understanding of human knowledge as a sort of food or what he calls, following Jean Paul Sartre, "the nutritionist concept of knowledge." [265] His rejection of the idea of knowledge passed on by the teacher into the student as food implicitly represents a rejection of the notion of hope as food. Freire begins his critique by taking issue with the traditional view of the teacher as the one who is supposed to choose the words and ideas with which the student is to be filled. According to him, this view of the teacher accommodates an implicit notion of the human being that presupposes the brain of the student as an undernourished empty vessel that

---

[262] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Hope*, pp. 9.

[263] Ibid. pp. 8

[264] Ibid. pp. 9

[265] Freire, Paulo. *The Politics of Education,* pp. 45.

needs to be feed and filled with the bread of knowledge.[266] This view—which perfectly fits the banking model of education—sees the student as "starving for letters". Under this view the student's lack of knowledge and illiteracy is pre-conceived as a debilitating malady.[267] Therefore, it is thought that giving them "the bread of knowledge" is a form of curing them. Under this view, as Freire points out, the student is not only a passive subject; but knowledge itself is conceptualized as something already made and as a given, instead as something to be created and born out of the effort of the learners. Hidden behind this nutritionist notion of knowledge is the conceptualization of the human being as the object of the process of learning and not as its active subject.[268]

The same critique applies to hope. For Freire hope needs to be something born out of the effort and creative critical engagement of men and women with the world and not as something provided by someone who helps. When the actual reasons for people's unhappiness and sorrows are naively understood as the product of fate or as natural occurrences of life and hope is thought as help coming in the form of a divine energy that provides comfort to human pains, its function becomes a mere palliative and an analgesic one. Again, as in the former case, in the context of oppression the balsamic notion of hope could also entertain a conceptualization of oppressed people—to which hope is to be given—as persons who are sick and devoid of hope because of their sickness, for whom hope would become a sort of cure that would even enable them to appreciate a healthy spirit even under their unhappy situation. Paraphrasing Freire in *The Politics of Education*, in accepting the oppressed as a hopeless person who exists in the fringe of society because of her own choosing, we are led to envision this person as a helpless, unhappy and sick human being, for whom positive thinking, a good dose of optimism and hope would be the remedy necessary for starting her curative process that could eventually enable her to return to a healthy life and to get back to society and to a good life from which she ran away in the first

---

[266] Ibid.

[267] Ibid.

[268] Ibid. pp. 45-46.

place.[269] In Freire's view, while hope is certainly a crucial element in people's lives, the two types of views of hope described above could never really serve as the mainstay of any effort toward true emancipation. These are but mystified views of hope, which instead of becoming a concrete transforming force in people lives would only serve as a sort of a placebo, having only palliative effects on their sorrows. But the worse kind of effect that these kind of palliative uses and practices of hope have upon people's minds is that they could serve as an idealistic and abstract escaping route from concrete reality, becoming not only a sort of an analgesic, but also a reinforcing element of the oppressive status quo. This kind of practice of hope is typical of prescriptive domesticating methods to educate people to comply and adapt to oppressive situations. And yet, as Paulo Freire punctiliously and so brilliantly reminds us, neither vainly hoping in a certain way nor trying any other mental method of escapism can help anyone as a concrete escaping route from reality, for reality is inescapably.[270] Thus, by hoping unrealistically, or by orienting their lives in such a way that their hopes are put in a life above earth or beyond life, humans could hope ingenuously to escape reality. Yet, they cannot really escape concrete reality by just "hoping" do so, for no actual action here on earth amounts to a real and concrete way of staying outside social and political reality.

Now, since Paulo Freire's deep, critical and radically democratic vision of hope promulgates it as a sort of critical knowledge, which requires above all conscious engagement to transform socio-political reality, then, the theoretical premises that underlie his conceptualization of critical awareness—also known as conscientização—also apply to his notion of educated hope. But what does "educated hope" mean in the context of Freire's theory of conscientização? The answer to this question shall elucidate once and for all why hope should not be conceived as something that springs eternal from the human breast, but as the dynamic outcome of a critical engagement among humans with the world.

Let me first remind my reader that I previously advanced a notion of hope as a question,

---

[269] Ibid. pp. 48.

[270] Ibid. pp. 103.

as one possible meaning or interpretation of this category. The idea of hope as a question neatly captures the spirit of Freire's problem posing educational model. I defined it as; *to know that our questions have answers even when the answers are not here yet*. As signaled earlier, as any human desire projected to the future, asking any question entails a risk, for hoping is always an uncertain human endeavor. Now, let me provide some qualifications of this idea of hope, taking Freire's notion of critical awareness as my point of departure. Through this analysis, I always intend to provide a description of Freire's notion of educated hope in a nutshell. First, Freire's theory of conscientização begins from the fact that oppressed people, by being under a condition of domination and having been subjected to various forms of systematic domesticating procedures, most probably exhibit a naïve outlook of their social reality. Thus, their way of looking at their relationship with the world is naïve and so it is their view of reality. Further, this naïve view of reality might make the oppressed see the social conditions that surround them as pre-ordained or as a given destiny and not as a part of a reality that is still in the making. As Paulo Freire explains, unfortunately, silence and fear of freedom become part of the cultural makeup that characterizes oppressed people. Under this situation, questioning the reality that deprives them of the right to speak up becomes challenging because of their lack of awareness regarding the concrete causes of their deprivations. Domesticating practices of all sorts, including educative ones, impart a false consciousness to oppressed people. This results in their forced adaptation to the reality, and thereby, in their concrete dehumanization; a concrete historical aspect of their life of which there are not necessarily fully aware about it. As Freire so lucidly explains in *The Politics of Education*, all these alienating and dehumanizing elements in the lives of the oppressed amount to what he describes as "political illiteracy". If the illiterate, he clarifies, "is one who does not know to read and write, a political illiterate—regardless of whether he she or he knows how to read and write—is one who has an ingenious perception of humanity in its relationships the world."[271] In other words, the political illiterate is one who does not know how to read and write the world realistically from a political point of view. The

---

[271] Ibid.

106

political dimension of her thinking is either missing or dull. She has been politically deactivated. And, therefore, she also lacks the knowledge, necessary awareness and capabilities for re-reading the world in her own voice, and for re-writing the world with her own word in communion with the rest of the people. Political illiterate people do not appreciate themselves as an "active presence in the world, as being of praxis, of action and thinking about the world."[272] And, therefore, they tend to lack an understanding of themselves as historical beings capable of creating and re-creating their own history. As Freire explains, a feature that politically illiterate people exhibit as part of not recognizing themselves as subjects of history is the incapacity to reach a full awareness of temporality and therefore, of their own historicity and place as makers of culture.[273] Incapable or refrained (because of oppression) of making their own choices, they are forced to adapt themselves to the spatio-temporal reality imposed upon them.[274] Alienated, and incapable of implementing autonomous projects of their own, oppressed people oscillate between ingenious optimism and hopelessness.[275]

Hopelessness is but a distortion of hope; it "is a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it."[276] The silenced-hopeless person has no perception of herself as becoming, "hence cannot have a future to build in unity with others."[277] From her ingenious outlook of society, she does not understand the future as a problem to be solved by her. For her, the future does not appear as a question, and, so, she has no operative inquiry about her political future and that of the others. In her mind, the future is not something to be problematized. She becomes a mere hopeless spectator of future happenings. Now, if conscientização is, according to Freire, "...the process in which men, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening

---

[272] Ibid. pp. 104.

[273] Freire, Paulo. "Education for the Practice of Freedom", in *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Corporation, 1881, pp. 3-4.

[274] Ibid. pp. 4.

[275] Ibid. pp. 12-13.

[276] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 91.

[277] Ibid. pp. 173.

awareness both of the socio-cultural reality that shapes their lives and their capacity to transform it",[278] then, critical-educated hope is the crucial agentic element that, instead of keeping people silenced, give them the critical and deep understanding and the re-assuring strength to question the present and to problematize the future. Conscientização is after all the opening of the possibility of hope and the deepening of the cognitive dimension of this human feeling and capability. Critical-educated hope brings futurity home, for it means a conscious and active praxiological process of futurization in which "men and women who fight side by side (…) learn together how to build the future—which is not something given to be received by people, but rather something to be created by them."[279]

Constructing the future or futurization is the active cognitive dimension of the human sense of hope, which, when politically charged, becomes an active praxiological process through which people critically engage; on the one hand, in questioning and denouncing concrete oppressive socio-political-economic circumstances; and, on the other hand, in imagining, theorizing, creating and publicly announcing possible alternatives to these circumstances. This is what Ernst Bloch calls the utopian function of hope, which is based on both, the unfinished nature of our material world and the human capacity to imagining, and actively bringing on the future.[280] Human agency, or the human being as a maker or as a producer, plays a crucial role here. Utopia, according to Bloch, "is the expression of hope…understood…as a direct act of cognitive kind."[281] In Paulo Freire's radical political view, this utopian side of hope assumes a prophetic political dimension. This means that politically aware consciously hopeful people vigorously engage in denunciation and annunciation. Freire's deep notion of hope finds its supreme pedagogical vehicle in his problem posing educative mode. This model entails a deeply utopian pedagogical praxis. Freire's deep-critical-educated hope finds its finest and most

---

[278] Freire, Paulo. "Cultural action and conscientization." *Harvard Educational Review*, 40 (3)1970.

[279] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 38-39.

[280] Bloch, Ernst. *The Principle of Hope.* Translated by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight. 3 vols. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.

[281] Ibid. Vol. 1; pp. 12.

democratically radical expression in the dialogical praxis, in which the teachers and learners together, in the act of thinking over and analyzing a dehumanizing reality, denounce it while announcing its transformation in the name of emancipation.[282] This pedagogic-dialogical praxis, as I have pointed out earlier, goes way beyond schooling and the traditional educational scenarios. Radical pedagogies of hope are everywhere and, yet, they remain either hidden or masked. I will return in a moment to this issue. Now let me clarify that for Freire, the utopian nature of his radical pedagogy, does not mean idealistic or impractical but rather the very praxiological hopeful attitude of denouncing unjust social circumstances and announcing a better future. Therefore, according to this view of hope, denunciation and annunciation are not meant to be an empty discourse, but a historic political commitment, which requires a concrete praxis of transformation and socio-political change.[283] This hopeful praxis requires a continuous dialectic shaping and re-shaping of itself if it is to be critical and an authentically realistic radical praxis. It is clear now why, from this radical perspective, the denunciation and annunciation dimension of hope is not idealistic or impractical. It is rather a moment in a historical process in which the announced reality is already present in the very praxis of denouncing and announcing as part of a transformational political agenda, which understands the future as a creative overcoming of the present. Under this view, hope is not only a catalyst and enabling force of a better future, but also a methodology. It should be emphasized that in Freire's views, the radical nature of the dialogical praxis that underlies his view of hope makes it a radically democratic method for social change. The radicality of this method consists in the requirement of this praxis of hope of the construction of futurity through a dialogic process in which all men and women participates in both the creative and the actualization of their own future together.

Nonetheless, when the sense of hope becomes distorted by any reason, by the naïve over-simplification of reality and its problems or by the dissemination and accentuation of cultural myths, then hope loses its practical-political utopian dimension, becoming a mere palliative

---

[282] Freire, Paulo. *The Politics of Education,* pp. 57.

[283] Ibid.

remedy with magical unpractical properties. Hope, in the form of magic palliative remedies, such as hope understood as either a sort of food for the human soul or as a balm to sooth men's pains, only helps to confuse people's awareness, transforming them in ambiguous domesticated beings. Attempting to heal the hearts of humankind by supporting and disseminating idealistic and magical notions of hope, without doing anything to change the social structure in which oppressed men and women are made to feel hopeless only contributes to the deepening of the alienation of these people and of oppressive situation itself.

Conscientização, Paulo Freire stresses, "is not a magical charm" for social change but a basic dimension of the reflective action of people who wants to bring about change. Likewise hope should not be conceived as if it would be a sort of magical amulet or as an eternal power continuously supplied by God. Hope is neither a magical nutritive ingredient for the human soul nor a balm to sooth our aching heart. Hope is not a given. It must be gained. Yet, the multiple mystifying cultural means through which hope is glamorized and converted into a mystery or a myth conceal its dynamic transformative utopian dimension, because its cognitive dimension gets almost completely distorted. Ironically, its mystification also helps to conceal the multiples ways in which hope survives and is imperceptibly and unconsciously created and re-created even within oppressive conditions. The multiple pedagogies of hope are also obscured by this mystification processes. Hopelessness is not only a form of silence, but it is also a form of blindness, because to be hopeless is not seeing how the resources of hope are already around us and within us.

In sum, the mystification and glamorization of hope cripple people's agentic capabilities, especially the capacity to recognize themselves as historical being and agents of history capable of actively creating and re-creating the world and their own future. Within oppressive systems, converting hope into a myth becomes part of the systematic ways in which hope is rendered dull and ineffective. Does hope spring eternal? As I intended to show above, this is not even an appropriate and realistic question to be asked after all. Even when eternity functions as a temporal term, as an adjective, it strips hope of its historicity, reducing its concrete temporality to a mere imaginary feeling in the person's breast about the future to come with no possibility of

110

actualization by way of a concrete act, even less a concrete practice. Yet, what might actually feel painfully and tragically eternal in the hearts of the oppressed is the passing of time while expecting and awaiting a justice that never comes about.

Let me now move to the next and last section in which I approach the phenomenon of the mystification of hope from the side of the obscuring effects this process has upon the pedagogies of hope. With this last section, I intend to offer a more concrete outlook of the ways in which hopelessness is culturally produces and re-produced in the world.

The masking of the concrete resources, methods
and pedagogies of hope

As I have illustrated in the preceding sections, the mystification and glamorization of hope are part of the methods through which the practices, methods and pedagogies of hope are concealed. A system of organized hopelessness cannot be put into place and perpetuated without taking concrete cultural actions to drain people of resources of hope. Thus, the mystification of hope becomes part of the cultural actions implemented to sustain and re-produce oppressive social conditions. Thus, under conditions of oppression in which irrationality and myth creating practices become a tradition, a tragic tendency evolves. Prejudice, discrimination and marginalization also become concealed, as part of the myth-creating processes, whose tendency is to mask oppressive reality. Thus, the way in which hope, or any other socio-cultural practice, is made into a myth also becomes concealed. As a result, we all might end up unintentionally contributing, in one way or the other, to mystify the practice of hope. Consequently, when we declare that hope is eternal or that it never dies, or that that it is a food that feeds our hearts, we could be unintentionally helping to mask hope and, thereby, contributing to its mystification. As I explained above, mystifying hope only helps to drain concrete reality away from it, leaving in its place a mysterious and invisible phantom. Nonetheless, the true socio-political tragedy behind the mystification and glamorization of hope is the fact that these cultural practices tend to

disguise the actual resources, methodologies, strategies and pedagogies of hope. And as I shall illustrate below, this concealment can only amount to taking away the resources with which people could really become full-blown subjects of history. In this section I shall offer two examples of what I mean exactly by the mystification of hope and the mystification of its indispensable methodologies and pedagogies. This section also serves to fully explain what do I specifically means by "a pedagogy of hope".

My first example refers to Tupac Shakur's famous poem, *The Rose That Grew from Concrete*, which reads as follows: "Did you hear about the rose that grew/ from a crack in the concrete? / Proving nature's law is wrong it/ learned to walk with out having feet. / Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams, / it learned to breathe fresh air. / Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else ever cared." [284] Despite its inspiring and hopeful magnetism, the poem, I want to argue, entertains an unintended quadruple masking-mystifying logic, which, as I shall illustrate below, has a tendency to disguise certain concrete practices and pedagogies of hope.

This poem has been interpreted in a variety of forms, including as a very short biographic metaphor of Tupac's own life that, as the rose that grew from concrete, thrived in a very harsh social environment—the poor inner-city neighborhoods of New York City—and grew up to shine as an artist.[285] Yet, notwithstanding the honesty of his words in describing metaphorically the conditions in which his own development as a human being came about, and despite the beauty of its poetry or its poetic attributes and, paradoxically, precisely because it is poetry, Tupac's poem masks four fundamental concrete realities of life, which I want to relate to hope and its practices.

First, the poem masks the fact that if a rose or any other flower or plant grows in the concrete it is because the basic and right biological and nutritional conditions are present there

---

[284] Shakur, T. *The Rose That Grew from Concrete* https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/181246-the-rose-that-grew-from-concrete.

[285] See, for example, Lancaster, Iris. "Tupac Shakur: The Rose That Grew from a Legacy of Hope." *The Griot*, vol. 34, Issue 1, 2015, pp. 61-62.

for the flower to grow. That a flower got to grow in such a place was not a miracle neither an accident of nature. Although conditions might have appeared to someone at first that were not present in that environment, the right seed—which might had been stronger that others—got into the right crack in the concrete with enough biotic possibilities for the flower plant to be able to grow and bloom. In the very same way, a human being cannot flourish or develop out of nothing or magically. Precisely, the hidden but very concrete socio-cultural reasons that explain why individuals, such as Tupac Shakur, among many others, can develop such awesome artistic personas, within a social milieu that prejudice, marginalization and oppression portrait as places from where nothing good can actually come from, are the very raw material from which concrete hope comes from; i.e. these reasons are the actual and concrete resources of hope that narrow-mindedness, discrimination and marginalization might have already successfully masked in the first place.

The first masking effect we have just formerly described reveals the second way in which Tupac's poem tends to hide certain key facts of the concrete reality of human life in general and of his own life. These concealed facts are important for understanding how certain aspects of concrete hope, such as hope's resources, social methods and pedagogies get also concealed. Tupac personhood (including his personal agency as an individual), artistry, dexterity and awesomeness were not the product of random occurrences, not a fluke. He grew up immersed in a very culturally rich and musically diverse environment that is still a special characteristic of the Bronx and Harlem today. In fact, this environment is still producing the same kind of artistic awesomeness that characterized Tupac. For instance, his verbal dexterity, as scholar Walter Edwards explains, is the sort of speech that characterizes the African American working class today.[286] In other words, he learned to express himself in the way he used to. It was no accident. It was part of his upbringing and education as part of an African American working-class family. Furthermore, his socio-political criticalness was not random either. He was the son of two

---

[286] Edwards, Walter. "From poetry to rap: The lyrics of Tupac Shakur." *Western Journal of Black Studies;* Summer 2002; 26, 2, pp. 61-70.

prominent figures of the 1960's Black Panther Movement, Billy Garland and Afeni Shakur.[287] He was also formally educated in the arts.[288] And we also have the many, cultural (musical and artistic) and socio-political lessons that the streets of his neighborhood, as a cultural ethos, taught him as he was growing up as part of a very particular and actually peculiar social milieu, which happens to be part of the most important and cultural diverse city of the world. Tupac's school of life or his experiential learning process—or processes, good and bad—as an African American from the inner-city of New York shaped him as well as he shaped himself in an intricate dialectics. In this process of creating and recreating the social, Tupac, as a historical cultural agent, also helped to give form to his own social space with all sort of socio-cultural and political implications.

It should be clear by now that I am pointing toward a series of diverse, but well-defined set of pedagogical or educational practices that are ingrained within every culture and within every society. These pedagogical practices are responsible for the cultural and personal upbringing of all individuals within a social organization. These kinds of educational processes go way beyond formal schooling. Nonetheless, these pedagogical practices tend to be mascaraed, concealed and diminished by all kind of socio-cultural processes that mystify the ways in which culture is created, re-created and transmitted, pedagogically, in society. But, to be sure, let me take some time to analyze this element further.

Human culture is also about ways of knowing and the forms in which these ways of knowing and knowledge itself are dynamically communicated and transmitted forward. As Henry Giroux suggests, human culture is an educational site; a space for both, the production of meaning and social interaction in which various modes of agency identity and values are continuously being created, recreated and/or negotiated through struggle within a milieu of power relations.[289] Pedagogy is a living experience. It is a performative practice embodied in the

---

[287] Ibid.

[288] Ibid.

[289] Giroux, Henry. "Cultural Studies, Public Pedagogy, and the Responsibility of Intellectuals." *Communications and Critical/Cultural Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2004 pp. 59-79.

lived daily interactions of all members in a society; within families, communities, workplaces, and all sort of social institutions and organizations in which common people, intellectuals, educators and all forms of cultural artifacts interact.[290] "Pedagogy, as its best, implies that learning takes place across a spectrum of social practices and settings."[291] Consequently, pedagogy as a method and educative practices are already ingrained in human culture since the beginning of human society itself. These practices are part of the human cultural stock. As Giroux explains, drawing from Raymond Williams's insights on culture, pedagogy is not restricted to what goes on in the schools, but becomes a defined principle of a wide-ranging set of cultural apparatuses that Williams called "permanent education."[292] This is a process that Williams, Giroux and Freire understood as one that played a significant role in any viable form of cultural politics.

Many of these informal pedagogical practices are collective and highly democratic. They form part of socio-collective actions to preserve and re-create culture in general. This is the field in which our conceptualization of reality and the image (or images) of the world that surrounds us come to life. It is also the arena where our ideas of what is possible and/or impossible are born and re-created. It is the place in which our own future possibilities within our reality are imagined. Consequently, this is also the social ground in which our sense of future possibilities is constructed and hope, as a collective force, manifests itself through the creation and re-creation of cultural artifacts. It is also the ground where hope as a method gets its pedagogical form and/or becomes ingrained in the very system that sustains and animates the permanent education process that brings forward what society and individuals within are all about. This pedagogical ground is ultimately where humanness grows and where full-blown humans, as subjects of history and hope are born.

---

[290] Ibid. p. 61.

[291] Ibid.

[292] Ibid. p. 63.

Now, this means that we are all continuously engaged in a dynamic and reflective process in which we learn to be humans (and all other human things and practices) by doing, constructing, talking, writing (and so on), and by creating and re-creating collectively all sort of meanings throughout the interpretation of our own activities and (personal and collective) experiences; i.e. by praxis. This is the ground where the social and individual subjectivity are simultaneously born. Consequently, social reality and our very understandings of what it means for us to be human and society itself are born out of this process. Nonetheless, as we learned from Paulo Freire, this whole social educative enterprise is not straightforward or candid, but a process in which a continuous social struggle makes all products of culture, including knowledge, highly contested objects. Social antagonism between cultural themes is indeed part of reality.[293] Culture is recognized by Freire as a social platform of historic-political action and creation of social goods in which cultural artifacts are endowed with politically symbolic powers to produce political effects and outcomes. Yet, within oppressive socio-cultural and economic regimes alienation occurs. Thus, people are induced to believe that they are just mere spectators in the production of culture. In other words, most of the time myths-creating processes conceal the active part that oppressed people (and all people) play in the actual production of culture. Collective educative practices are repressed and/or obscured and then kept hidden. This is what explains how the oppressed could be manipulated and taught to believe that their own concrete cultural activities do not produce anything of real value or even that these activities do not really exists at all. As Paulo Freire explains, because of conquest and subjugation, oppressed people tend to subordinate their own experiences, knowledge, culture, values and contours to the cultural ideas, knowledge and values of the culturally dominant class who governs society.[294] Within such oppressive social schemes, people own pedagogical practices tend to be subsumed or obscured by privileged cultural forms and pedagogies. These pedagogies entertain methods

---

[293] Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* pp. 101.

[294] Ibid. pp. 138.

that simply ask people to adapt to the privileged values, contours and forms.[295] Reality gets distorted in many ways and the different social pedagogies that get to produce and re-produce distinct levels of people's reality get distorted and mystified as well. This sort of mystification is what made possible and even believable to say that an extraordinary, awesome, and unusual character, person or cultural entity—a specific cultural artifact, such as a piece of art or an entire cultural-artistic movement—could be the product of nothing or of a fluke or to dismiss an outcome as mere chance. Unfortunately, the mystification and concealment of the pedagogies of hope also conceal the actual capabilities of the people involved in these processes. This concealment also contributes, therefore, to the devaluation or nullification of the cultural activities and forms that produce certain cultural artifacts in the first place. As I shall explain below, concealing the resources and pedagogies of hope is part of the way in which oppressed people are dehumanized, because it is a way of masking the methods in which their own cultural products are developed.

Now, coming back to Tupac, it can be appreciated better now that his poem, *The Rose That Grew from Concrete,* not only masquerades his own upbringing, but also and unintentionally helps to mystify the whole cultural milieu in which he was growing up and the pedagogical experiences from which he benefited. The pedagogy or pedagogies that formed part of his own life process all get subsumed under a veil that renders them anonymous and therefore, virtually inexistent. It is evident too that the whole music enterprise that was bubbling during that time and that was to be known as the "Gangsta Rap" constitutes in itself a very powerful and highly politically charged pedagogical enterprise of its own. This is what Henry Giroux calls a "public pedagogy", that he describes as a dynamic way in which power, and politics expressed through culture, assumes a pedagogical role with political emancipatory purposes.[296] Here we find the third concrete reality and source of hope that Tupac's poem tends to mask. Tupac's raps and music belongs to a genre that was already in place, in which his political charged lyrics and

---

[295] Ibid.

[296] Ibid. pp. 62.

music found room. His raps are a testament to the "cultural expression that prioritizes Black voice from the margins of urban America."[297] His was music of resistance and rebellion. Tupac's political persona and lyrical prowess also grew out of the power that this type of rebellious counter-cultural entity had already gained in United States. By claiming that the flower blossomed out of concrete and intimating that this was a kind of an almost impossible event that was not supposed to happen—at least not in the eyes of certain people—Tupac was masquerading the concrete and organic reality where the figurative flower grew up. These educative processes, their methods and the knowledge transmitted and reproduced by and within them, that allowed Tupac's personal growing and blossoming, are the actual resources of hope already available to people even within conditions of oppression. Unfortunately, the effect that it is created by the poem is not necessarily to bring forward this reality, but to describe the process in such a way that Tupac's rose is seen as something abruptly and unexplainably emerging from an inorganic material. The poetic images used in the poem conceal the whole praxis of hope that gave birth to Tupac's awesomeness and relevancy.

Now, there is still a fourth way in which Tupac's poem mystifies reality that I want to discuss, because it relates still more specifically to hope as a collective cultural element. He mentions in his poem that the rose was following its dreams. Was Tupac following his dreams in solitude? The very poetic image of a solitary rose growing in the concrete tends to disguise the collective-social nature of any human upbringing within any society. It is evident, as I have already discussed, that Tupac's own political awareness and highly politically charged voice was not the voice of a solitary person. On the contrary, he was representative of a collective movement that, given the nature and content of the rest of his work, was something he was very conscious of. Yet, the metaphors he uses in his poem invite the unaware person to interpret them as a commentary about the strength and personal resilience of one solitary individual-urban youth who has survived and flourished within a jungle made of concrete. Prejudice and ignorance would easily make believe someone that the poem is exclusively about an individual

---

[297] Ibid.

118

person who strived and, against all odds, came to bloom within a place from which nothing good is supposed to come. Yet, how could a flower struggle and blossom out from nothing or come about to flourish even against its own nature? Nothing comes out of nothing, even less a human being. The pedagogies of hope are about the very essence of actual methods and materials used in the creation and re-creation of human culture and humanness. What Tupac's poem does when inserted in the middle of a socio-cultural context that loves and promotes highly individualistic approaches to personal growth is to reinforce ideas about how certain especially gifted individuals, with a lot of personal effort and against all odds—even against their own nature (or the very nature of his/her own people)—get to, almost miraculously, make it out of their awful place and succeed. People who does not really know Tupac's career, his personal and political positions or music history, who have only heard from him because of this very famous poem would not really get to see anything else from this poem but a story of hope stripped out of its socio-political radicality. Paradoxically, a poem coming from a person so politically aware, who is himself so inspiring and encouraging, ends up writing a poem that somehow buys into the same sort of biased cultural discourse that takes concrete collective resources of hope away and disintegrates its pedagogies under the rubbish of a highly individualistic and privatized form of hope and optimism.

Now, this sort of mystification is possible only because the collective forces, the cultural resources, the powers, optimisms, certainties, practices, awareness, preparedness, knowledges, methods and pedagogies of hope that bring a human being, and individual or an entire community to flourishing are buried under the mystifying effect of the already very well cemented idea that in certain places (such as the inner-city of New York) a rose is not supposed to grow, because nothing good is supposed to come from there. So many people easily could erroneously think that if a rose grows in such a place it is because of an error of nature, or chance, a fluke, and not because goodness can be brought to life from the social conditions of marginalization. Again, the reality that gets concealed is the existence of a pedagogy (or pedagogies) that continuously brings to life persons like Tupac. In Freirean terms, these are pedagogies of liberation as opposed to pedagogies of domestication. These specific sorts of

public pedagogies for liberation—which reproduce socio-cultural collective practices that have the intention to make full-blown individuals (subjects of hope and history)—are what I call, after Freire, "pedagogies of hope". These pedagogies are resources of hope available to all people, especially to the oppressed. These pedagogies are present everywhere and go from the most trivial everyday practices to the most significant ones. Yet, one terrible and tragic result of the sort of mystification processes that I have described above is that oppressed people simply lose side of all this reality because of the very bafflement of the processes in question.

Tupac's poem represents just one way among many in which the actual resources of hope get mystified and, therefore, made invisible. For instance, when Cornel West examines the topic of hope in his work and lectures, he very effusively unearths, enumerates, carefully discusses and brings to light the actual resources of hope that, according to him, are actually available to oppressed people within and around their own communities as part of people's (collective) socio-cultural capital.[298] From philosophy to family ties and love, from exemplary leadership to music, from courage to wisdom, are all, according to West, resources of hope that need to be brought to the fore and restored through a deep process of education, so that we can actually restore hope.[299] But, the most obvious question is not necessarily asked; why is it that all these (obvious) resources of hope need to be unveiled and restored in the first place? How is it possible they are not evident? Unfortunately, the fact that Cornel West needs to unmask these resources and remind people of the vital importance of these socio-cultural elements time after time (in many of his writings and lectures) to restore them as part of people lives indicate that these hopeful resources are hidden in plain side. As West explains, oppressed people, such as African Americans, are subjected to oppressive socio-cultural and political processes in which there are kept "so scared, intimidated, helpless, and hopeless [in such a way] that they give up, cave in, or

---

[298] See West, Cornel. *Hope on a Tightrope*. See also, West, Cornel. *Restoring Hope: Conversations on the Future of Black America.*

[299] West, Cornel. *Hope on a Tightrope.*

sell out in the fight for justice, love and hope."[300] West calls this the process of "niggerazation" of the African-American people and culture.

The distortion and masking of the resources and pedagogies of hope is a socio-cultural pedagogical process or public pedagogy that goes down in many ways and at many instances in our societies. Take the following case as my second example of how hope is mystified, another specific instance of this sort of process. Recently a *Netflix* new series, *The Get Down*, which recounts the development of the break-dancing phenomenon, portrays the wholeness of this tremendous cultural achievement as something good that was "made out of nothing", as if such a powerful cultural device could actually came straight from a void.[301] Behind the creation of such powerful cultural devices, such Tupac's lyrics, rap music, Hip-Hope music, brake dancing, urban graffiti, Puerto Rico's reggaeton and salsa or tropical music and the like, there is always a huge web of public-cultural pedagogies at work. Nonetheless, as I explained above, these pedagogies get mystified, becoming anonymous. The hopefulness and optimistic individual and collective endeavors that animate these pedagogies and the people who form part of them are likewise invisibilized, hidden or lost as visible and concrete sources of hope. It is as if the resources of hope behind these practices are something illusory. But what could we expect if the cultural products coming out from the culture of oppressed people is, much of the time, already understood and portrayed everywhere as coming out of nothing or almost from nothing or as the outcome of a fluke? Is not this the perfect recipe for everyone's hopelessness? How can most of the oppressed people feel confidant and optimistic about themselves as subjects of culture and as subjects of history if they are alienated from the concrete facts that would allow them to feel that they own both, the products and the means through which their own cultural objects are created and re-created? While some material resources for optimism are taken away and/or monopolized by the élites, other resources of optimism and hope are masked and kept hidden by these

---

[300] West, Cornel. *Hope on a Tightrope*, pp. 220.

[301] Littleton, Cynthia. "Inside the Troubled Production of Baz Luhrmann's 'The Get Down,' Netflix's Most Expensive Series Yet." *Variety*, July 26, 2016. http://variety.com/2016/tv/features/the-get-down-netflix-baz-luhrmann-production-troubles-1201822679/.

processes. By repeating that very powerful cultural artifacts, practices and/or actual personas are "born or come out of nothing", an entire extraordinarily hopeful socio-cultural reality is make invisible. Yet this sort of way of portraying is actually very common in our societies.

The mystification of hope plays a very important role in the process of organized hopelessness. These processes are ultimately directed to dehumanize people, because they are meant to minimize and/or to suppress people's autonomy and agentic capabilities, especially their sense of hope. Therefore, restoring hope is not only a matter of restoring and bringing its resources to the fore, but also a matter of restoring its methods and pedagogies to a clearer plain side, which means to restore education back to his truer public nature. Restoring hope and its pedagogies is essential in the task of restoring humanity and bringing back humanness to all members of society.

The former analysis of Tupac's poem I just presented is not an attack on Tupac's poetry or artistry in general, nor it is an attack on this poem, but a critical call into the surreptitious ways in which myth-creating cultural practices works against humanity. This is the sort of socio-cultural alienation that creates and reproduces concrete conditions under which silence and hopelessness grow. These are the same sort conditions of oppression that reduce hope to something ethereal and illusory by way of masking its true resources and pedagogies.

As I have also shown above, the socio-cultural practice that I have described as the mystification of hope is an ongoing process. The process itself is very difficult to approach and even more difficult to unearth and decipher. Nonetheless, because restoring hope is such an important task nowadays, in which hope seems to be unavailable to so many people around the world, the demystification of hope is of crucial philosophical importance. In this section, I only laid down one specific aspect of this process of demystification; that was, how the methods and pedagogies of hope are mystified. As I intended to illustrate, the pedagogies of hope are a fundamental part of the human socio-cultural resources of hope. Demystifying hope includes demystifying how hope is social-culturally reproduced. The elpidology of the oppressed, however, departs not from the availability of hope, but from its absence; and so, in trying to unearth hope and its pedagogies, I initiate my inquiry from the opposite side of this equation; i.e.

from the pedagogies of domestication within a system of organized hopelessness. As I intend to show in the rest of this dissertation, it is from this realistic standpoint where I think we will be able to appreciate in a much clearer way what hope is actually all about. It is also from the standpoint of oppression and hopelessness that we will be able to see how education is the actual linchpin that sustains and reproduces the whole political structure that either makes us full blown subjects of hope or hopeless beings for others.

Concluding remarks and questions

Is hope an illusory intruder in people lives? As Paulo Freire consistently repeats throughout his work, "hope is not an intruder."[302] Nonetheless, transformational educated hope intrudes and transgresses the domesticated socio-political temporal-space owned by the power élites in order to denounce it, subvert it and transform it. As we saw, the most radically hopeful tool or resource that humans own is pedagogy itself. Yet, an abyssal tension lies at the very core of hope as a vital human practice that needs to be learned and, therefore, taught to humans. As I showed in this chapter, hope can either be taught as a transformational-liberating tool or it can be taught to become a domesticating and politically passive practice. While practicing hope in a passive form could be a form of maintaining the status quo or at least not actually challenging it, critical-educated hope aims at transforming reality. This is at least one of the reasons this sort of active and transgressing hope has been deemed as (politically) dangerous. For this very same reason, as I explained above, Paulo Freire considers it "utopian" in the sense of having the "utopian prophetic function" of questioning and denouncing the present and of announcing a possible new future to come.

As a political philosophical tool, the elpidology of the oppressed fully embraces Freire's concept of conscientização, and so it becomes an integral part of critical-educated hope. As I

---

[302] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Freedom*, pp.69.

hope I had already made clear, from this perspective, one of the main purposes of the elpidology of the oppressed is the demystification of the human praxis of hope. As I have showed in this chapter, the project of demystifying hope from the standpoint of the oppressed forces a look at this phenomena from the point of view of the question of hope within the context of oppression. Yet, as we saw, the context of oppression is neither characterized by the eternal supply of, nor by an abundance of hope, but by the opposite; namely, hopelessness.

It is from this Freirean politically realist viewpoint that I intend to consider the issue of the illusory nature of hope. I shall specifically look at this issue in the next chapter. The project of demystifying hope will not be complete until we understand this category that can either cast off the traditional paradoxes associated to it—including its illusory and dangerous nature—or that totally embrace them.

Chapter 3

Between Plato's cave of illusions and Machiavelli's Spatio-Temporal landscape of *Fortuna*: *Elpis* as the Source of Illusions or Why is it Impossible for Humans to Escape the Radicality of the Elpidic-mind and Their Sense of Hope

> "To grasp the limits of reason—only this is true philosophy."
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche

> "To the shame of philosophers it must be said that they have never seen the radical phenomenon that is our life. They have always turned their back on it, and it has been the poets and novelists, but above all the ordinary man who has been always aware of its modes and situations."
>
> José Ortega y Gasset

> "¿Qué es la vida? Un frenesí.
> ¿Qué es la vida? Una ilusión,
> una sombra, una ficción.
> Y el mayor bien es pequeño;
> que toda la vida es sueño,
> y los sueños, sueños son."
> ***La Vida es Sueño.***
>
> ~P. Calderón de la Barca

Demystifying hope from a political realistic perspective could be interpreted as a task intended to strip this category of all its illusory features. Indeed, advancing a political realistic notion of hope seems to require finding a realistic rational principle upon which to ground this category and the human practice of hope. Yet, this enterprise collides with the following difficulties: given that hope itself has been traditionally characterized as an illusion that humans

must abandon for their own good: could stripping hope of all its illusory features ultimately mean to abandon hope all together? But then again, can we humans actually abandon hope or is the attempt to abandon it a foolish illusory task?

Since antiquity wisdom advises us to abandon all illusions. Ironically, however, the entire history of philosophy is a testament to an endless controversy regarding which one of the creations of our intellect are illusory and which ones are not. Hence, it is odd and somehow comical too that the category of hope is accused of being an extravagant type of illusion from which we all need to escape to be safe, while many other of our illusory ideas are given a privileged place in our concrete lives without truly questioning their imaginary or fictional status and without being directly asked or forced to abandon any of them. For instance, to mention only one example, it has been argued that the very idea of the self is an illusion. David Hume, in section 1.4.6, in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, in his analysis of selfhood, under the title "Of Personal Identity", concludes that the whole conception of the self is founded on an error. In his view, the self is a collection of different contradictory perceptions "in perpetual flux and movement."[303] The mind, Hume says, is a kind of theater, where several perceptions appear successively, presenting themselves, passing, re-passing and mingling in an infinitive variety of situations and postures.[304] In a similar context, English cognitive scientist Bruce Hood in, *The Self Illusion: How the Social Brain Creates Identity*, also claims that the self is an illusion,

---

[303] Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature* IBook E-Book Ed.

[304] Ibid.

arguing that beyond our feelings, experiences and memories there is nothing we can identify as the self.[305]

In what follows, I shall explore the ancient Greek notion of *elpis* (ἐλπίς) to show how this category captures the dramatic illusion-creating power of the human elpidic-mind. Ultimately, the main hypothesis is that human desires for escaping the oddities that our elpidic anxieties create become the definitive reason behind the creation of a series of illusions that have become part of our socio-cultural landscape. As I shall argue below, neither religion nor philosophy escapes the radical power of our illusion-creating mind. Both religion and philosophy have produced all kinds of illusions, including some that can be characterized as mental escapisms. The illusions to which I refer to below are those directly related to our anxiety and fears toward the future and our future oriented activities and other spatio-temporal oriented thoughts, including hope.

The human elpidic mind is always obsessively preoccupied with the future. As I shall argue, not even philosophy can help us to totally escape these illusions. No doubt, philosophy has aided us to unveil and disintegrate many illusory beliefs throughout the ages. And yet, certain philosophical traditions have significantly contributed to the creation of some illusory ideas that have eventually come to haunt and concretely oppress our lives. As I will show below,

---

[305] See Hood, Bruce. *The Self Illusion: How the Social Brain Creates Identity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

the origins of the Western philosophical tradition offer some important clues regarding philosophy's power as an illusion and myth-creating device.

The central theme in this chapter is that our sense of hope—the positive feelings, mental images and opinions that our elpidic-mind creates regarding the time to come—is what pushes us forward looking for certainty in the future through other means other than our sentiment of hope alone. We humans recognize both, the limitations of our elpidic mind and the general limitations of our intellectual faculties. And consequently, we recognize the inadequacy of hope for orienting our actions and thus, tend to distrust it. Because of this distrust of hope, humans become intellectually inclined to find an alternative perception to ground their opinions about the future. Ironically, we fail to see that it is our own positive opinion about the powers of our intellect to reflect about the future what pushes us forward in our attempt to escape hope. In other words, we end up actively hoping to escape hope without noticing that we are in fact making use of our limited elpidic capacities. In doing this, we are, indeed, not only very intellectually naïve; we also tend to self-deceive ourselves.

In this chapter, I aim primarily at establishing the philosophical foundation on which to sustain my argument concerning the illusory nature of the traditional request for abandoning hope. With this, I lay down a theoretical basis and justification of my unorthodox approach to the task of demystifying hope. My analysis begins with a brief discussion of Plato's allegory of the cave and a critique of his metaphysics as a way of introducing my examination of the themes at hand. Posterior to this, I complement this perspective by connecting the Greek notion of *elpis* with my arguments about the impossibility of escaping our elpidic mind and sense of hope.

Establishing this connection shall provide a conceptual basis for a more comprehensive understanding of the structure of our elpidic urges and the structure of other mental elpidic phenomena for further analysis. Furthermore, my discussion of *elpis* shall demonstrate the actual limitations, vulnerabilities and paradoxes of hope, including an appreciation of its illusory nature and of the consequences of this nature for human existence, including our political life. Moreover, my analysis of *elpis* will also lay down the theoretical grounds from where I shall, later in this chapter, launch a critical analysis of the limitations of Machiavelli's instrumental reasoning. I shall characterize Machiavelli's *prudenzia* as yet another product of the human elpidic mind. As I shall show in detail below, one important conclusion I shall reach from this discussion is that Machiavelli's reasoning bears profound illusory features at more than one level. Hope is, in some way or the other, in all our inquiries. Therefore, an important question I will be pursuing in this chapter is, whether philosophy itself, prudence, and Machiavelli's instrumental reasoning in particular, can escape the limitations and illusory features of hope and/or the effects of the human elpidic mind.

The analysis of *elpis* and the ambiguities of our elpidic mind in general that I shall deliver below will move my discussion into an unconventional terrain regarding the power that the human mind possesses to create myths and illusions. Indeed, the sequence of approaches and topics presented in this thesis will follow onto uncharted territory, in which themes discussed might appear very unusual for a discussion on the topic of hope. Let me, nonetheless, remind my reader first, that taking upon the task of demystifying the category and the human practice of hope is by itself an unexplored path. Second, I don't insert myself into this task from an idealistic

or neutral standpoint, but from a political realistic standpoint in which I fully assume the point of view of the oppressed. This standpoint includes looking at the human elpidic phenomena, including hope, from a point of view that not only takes power and oppression into consideration, but that also looks with suspicion traditional metaphysical approaches to the notion of hope. My perspective tries to look at hope beyond the sugarcoating with which this human experience has been covered. In the process, however, I bump against oddities and realities that lie behind the veils of myths and irrationality that cover hope, as a category, as a human cognitive capability and as a human practice. Again, demystifying hope entails the demystification of its ambiguities and concrete odd experiences. Indeed, hope's illusory nature is a crucial vulnerability that debilitates it by exposing it to uncertainty, inefficacy and unreliability. But, can we actually get rid of hope's illusory nature? The most intriguing outcome of my inquiry is that we cannot alienate ourselves from hope's illusory character. But even more important, the human sense of hope and our elpidic anxieties might be after all the mother of many of our most dangerous cultural shared illusions. And yet, hope seems to be a crucial agentic capability that tends to create illusions without which we cannot even take a step forward. Let me now move straight into the discussions of these subjects.

Greek ancient philosophy originated on the ardent desire on the part of some intellectual men to pierce the veil of ignorance and illusions created by myths, religious-magical thinking and divinization. Myths have, for long, been a robust source for explanations of natural and human events. Thus, propelled by the resolute desire of leaving mythical illusions behind philosophy and "reason"—"logos" for the Greek, and "ratio" for Latin— became the new

130

attitude towards social and human reality. Hence, philosophical thinking was born as an intellectual weapon against illusions. The dictionary defines illusion as "a false appearance, [a] deceptive impression, or misleading perception of reality."[306] Psychologically, Sigmund Freud claims that an illusion is a belief in which "wish-fulfillment is a prominent factor in its motivation, while disregarding its relation to reality."[307] Thus, myths, magic, shamanism, religious mysteries and dogmas, and even untamed human desires or passions, such as fury, lust and passionate-mad love have been traditionally associated with the realm of illusions and irrational tendencies in human life. Likewise, hope has also been associated with the irrational or with that which is not "grounded".

Now, when I read the word illusion my mind throws me back to Plato's allegory of the cave (Book VII of *The Republic,* 514a-519b). The image is one very well known. Shadows, fire and false images carried by people in power—like priests, politicians, poets and the like—behind a wall on the one hand, and the prisoners in chains at the bottom of a cave deceived by shadows, on the other. Hume's idea of the human mind as a theater, mentioned above, is contained in Plato's allegory of the cave. According to the allegory, the puppets masters of a shadow theater create visual illusions in detriment of a captive audience who is aware neither of their own condition of captivity nor of the shadowy nature of their perceptions. As the allegory suggests, even the perceptions that the captives have about themselves and of their own condition are

---

[306] Collins English Dictionary, Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014.

[307] Freud, Sigmund. "The Future of an Illusion." In, Pelikan, Jaroslav, and Clifton Fadiman, *The World Treasury of Modern Religious Thought*. Boston: Little Brown and Comp., 1990, pp. 74.

manipulated through shadows. The theater of illusions, Plato advises, must be abandoned. But, where should we go to be able of effectively escaping the shadows and illusions of the cave? According to Plato, only a selected few can escape this illusory theatrical trap and get access to philosophical truth and to the world of eternal and perfect geometrical *Forms*. This world, from which only a few can escape, constitutes for Plato the only rational knowable reality. Plato's metaphysical philosophical project, nonetheless, is controversial. First, in his celebration of universal and ideal truths, he wanted to leave behind contingency, heterogeneity and the pluralism of differences that populate the down-to-earth human and material reality. Second, by embracing timeless abstracts ideas, he created his own metaphysical illusion; an imagined world of notions and ideas that existed independently and outside of our terrestrial realm. In the allegory of the cave, Plato's "true world" is portrayed as an external realm outside the cavern. Third, Plato's metaphysical theory of the *Forms* is the epistemic foundation of his ideal republic or *Callipolis*, in which the philosophers are kings and absolute bearers of truth.

As I advanced, Plato's theory is polemic and has been called into question for a variety of reasons, including for being utopian. Friedrich Nietzsche in "How the World finally became a Fable" or "The History of an Error" in the *Twilight of the Idols*, accused "Plato's true world" of being unattainable and incapable of being truly known; a world, which could not, by being unknown, obligate us. Nietzsche helped to debunk Plato and his abstract ideas as a legitimate source of moral and political obligation. Plato's idealism, he tells, is "an idea which is no longer

good for anything...useless and superfluous."[308] In sum, Plato's theory of forms and the moral imperatives were, in Nietzsche's view, a fable, a myth, "phantasmagoria" and a "moral-optical illusion."[309] It is very peculiar indeed, that Plato, in his hopeful rational-truth-seeking quest to escape the illusion-creating cave came to walk unto another illusory cavern-like world. Nietzsche also portrays Plato's new illusory world as the "expression of a gravedigger".[310]

Ironically, Plato, hoping to find where "to ground" his immutable, perfect and timeless truths, came to dig instead an ungrounded grave-like-cave. Let's not forget that Plato's walk into his world of perfect truths was also in his mind a conduit unto divinity. Nietzsche's sarcasm regarding this issue is brutal. Gravediggers usually dig graves to find treasures. But, sometimes instead, as many stories about gravediggers tell, they only find mommies and death. Oddly, but true, looking at Plato's metaphysics through Nietzsche's eyes, we can say that Plato's grave digging was the starting point of his path unto God's mind. But, ironically, Plato's grave digging just directed him into the false god of reason. Nonetheless, this false idea came to be thought by Plato and his followers as the ground to measure not only our moral and political affairs, but also, even our own intellectual processes. Plato's idea of rational thinking was also to become his connection between heaven and earth. Nietzsche's critique keeps its merciless tone. He accuses Plato's philosophical project of being a sort of Egypticism; a philosophical urge lacking

---

[308] Nietzsche, Friedrich. "Twilight of the Idols", in *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York/London: Penguin, 1982) pp. 484.

[309] Ibid. pp. 484-485.

[310] Ibid. pp. 480.

historical sense that hated the very idea of becoming.[311] Nietzsche denounces Plato and those after him of de-historicizing ideas. As he says, "nothing real escaped their grasp alive." Death, change, "procreation and growth are to their minds objections…[w]hatever has being does not become; whatever becomes does not have being."[312]

Plato's immortal ideas and perfect geometric forms could not be perceived through the senses. In his view, the senses are deceptive and corrupted. The senses belong to the body and all bodily urges belong to the mob. Let's not forget that, as Plutarch reminds us, that for Plato *god is always doing geometry*.[313] Geometry has been thought since very ancient times as god's language. We could think, following Plato's own logic, that geometry cannot be reached throughout our corporeal senses. Hence, geometry also lacks history. It is timeless and eternal. History, on the contrary, as Nietzsche reminds us, is but faith in the senses.[314] While for Plato geometry and the *Forms* are the only true world, our material world is false. In fact, Plato's ideas would later help to cement the belief that geometry (and the extension to mathematics) was a

---

[311] Ibid. pp. 479.

[312] Ibid. pp. 479-480.

[313] Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* VIII. 2, in his *Moralia*, as quoted in Levy, Silvio., *Flavors of Geometry*. New York/Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. vii. Nietzsche does not make any reference to geometry in his critique of Plato's metaphysics in his *Twilight of the Idols*. Yet, I bring the theme of geometry, which, as we know, is an essential logic in Plato's theory of the forms, for bringing forward what shall become the basis of a crucial element of my analysis and critique of Plato's metaphysics in relation to what I have already referred to as the geometry of power in its relation to hopelessness. I shall come back to the issue of the geometry of power in subsequent chapters.

[314] Nietzsche, F. "Twilight of the Idols", pp. 480.

genuine path into God's master plan and therefore into the very logic that governs the entire universe.

We arrive here to the following conclusion regarding Plato's desire to find a rational alternative to myths and divination; his answer was to discover a more rational and certain passage to the divine. As ancient history attests, Plato lived in chaotic political times. Immersed in the political crisis of Athens, he witnessed the degeneration of the democratic polis. And he thought of his world as one that was dying in the hands of democracy and moral corruption. Thus, this situation propelled Plato unto finding a way out of the democratic cave. He interpreted this world as one governed not by socio-political and moral truths but by appearances and illusions. Thus, he aimed at finding a path or true rational method to reach haven to connect his idea of a divine and timeless world with temporal-political powers. In my opinion, however, this aim was something very idealistic and illusory.

Digging a little into the ancient history, we find a surprising anthropological datum about caves and the connection with the divine that I find truly fascinating and worth being brought forward here as part of my discussion about myth-creating cultural devices. Since very early in our history, caves have served as sites of religious ritual initiations. According to Carl A. P. Ruck, the ancient mystery cults practiced by Greeks derived from this prehistoric use of cave as places to induce altered states of consciousness through a psychoactive substance used as a sacrament.[315] According to Puck, in Greece certain artistic and philosophical practices were

---

[315] Ruck, Carl A. P. "The Cave of Euripides." *Time and Mind*, 8:3, 2014; 279-302, pp. 279.

shaped by mystic states and shamanic experiences induced by chemicals.[316] In fact, by Plato's time (428-347BC) "caves were still serving as places of spiritual inspiration and shamanic rituals."[317] According to Puck, the cave represented the Dionysian way of knowing—through ecstasy and hallucinations. This method, however, was opposed by the Apollonian way of knowing, contrary to the Dionysian who thought this to be a genuine rational way of contemplating truths. Plato supported the Apollonian view.[318] This was the historical context that yields Plato's rejection of what was considered by him the non-rational in general—which in his view included theater and other artistic practices—in favor of a more logical philosophical paradigm. Yet, here we have a singular piece of information worth noticing. Absurdly, in Plato's own opinion, "a mystical state could be induced by intensely meditating upon the mathematical perfection of principles underlying certain geometric forms."[319] In other words, according to Plato, geometry was just another sort of mystical spiritual conduit—yet, "a more rational one". To be sure, in Plato's own view, geometry seemed to be a philosophical contemplative device that apparently caused a mental ecstasy like the hallucinatory sensation produced by drugs. However, this pleasurable method did not require a drug or alcohol inducement. It was indeed thought that the philosophical contemplation of geometrical forms alone produces this sort of altered state of the human mind, which allowed the kind of access to truth and ecstatic wisdom Plato was looking for. It is quite ironic, however, that the so-called perfect and eternal ideas

---

[316] Ibid. pp. 279-280.

[317] Ibid. pp. 280.

[318] Ibid. pp. 280, 283, 288 and 299.

[319] Ibid.

(such as the good, beauty, justice and the like) accessed only through mathematical-geometrical reasoning was thought to be after all the product of just another sort of cave-induced mystical trance. Additionally, as many other ancient mystical practices, this one was also supposed to be mastered only by a limited priestly class, namely; the philosophers.

The former interpretation might look quite odd. Yet the connection between caves, religious mysticism, geometry, philosophy and the divine is a historical fact. But even more ironic is the fact that mysticism, geometry and the divine, among other elements, were what characterized the Pythagorean philosophy; a sort of religious-philosophical movement associated with Pythagoras to which Plato was connected.[320] Following this mystical movement, Plato developed a very influential philosophical view of the world in which the universe was understood as having a divine origin founded on mathematical principles. In fact, it could be said that Plato took Pythagorean ideas and transposed them from the level of mysticism and religious divination to the level of rational argument.[321] Is it not odd that Plato's rational method was so closely connected to a mystical path and a mysterious and ungrounded out-of-earth-universal-divine realm that was originally the product of a sort of hallucinatory-pleasure-seeking illusory experience? Can we say that Plato's philosophical method was but another sort of ecstatic-mantic formula to access the world above the clouds? This was the methodology that Nietzsche

---

[320] According to Koetsier, T. and L. Bergmans in *Mathematics and the Divine: A Historical Study.* Boston: Elsevier, 2005, pp. 13. Pythagoras was described as a shaman and the very Greek tradition credited him "with the shamanistic powers of prophecy, bilocation and magical healing." For Pythagoreans, doing geometry was a way of getting in touch with the divine.

[321] Ibid. pp. 14.

rejects as mythical and illusory. Nietzsche's ferocious critique is not unjustified. Despite its virtues, Plato's metaphysics is highly dubious, and yet it became the foundation of philosophical idealism. And his idealism became a school. And this school of thought still rules some of our most important political philosophical schools.

Thus, Plato's idealism not only turned out to be the moral measure and weight of how to educate and make a man, but also the basis of an elitist or aristocratic utopia. In addition, Plato's illusory-metaphysical principle served later in history as the philosophical "ground" for Christian Platonism, which had its first expression in Paul of Tarsus' proselytism. Religious Platonism stimulated a Christian ontology from which the very substance of the divine could be grasped and used as the ultimate ground for our earthy ethical-political existence. Plato's idealism became a moral and political compass. It could even be said that it also became the foundation of contemporary political totalitarian utopianisms. In fact, Karl Popper finds Plato's epistemological methodology pernicious to human autonomy and political freedom in general. Popper criticizes Plato's idealism because of its authoritarian implications. In his view, Plato's belief that only philosophers could implement heavenly (geometric) order in the administration of the state was the foundation of despotic ruling, which gives way to what Popper calls the closed society. This sort of closed society, according to him, reached its ultimate most obscure expression in the 20th century fascist and communist states.[322] As Paulo Freire suggests in his work, a closed society is a society in which people are silenced by oppression. And, as I already explained earlier, this includes silencing even the oppressed people's sense of hope by creating

---

[322] Popper, Karl. *The Open Society and Its Enemies.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966.

the illusion of hopelessness. In sum, in his desire of fighting the oppressive illusions created by myths and divination, Plato created yet another set of equally oppressing illusions.

To add yet another layer of complexity to this puzzling parade of illusions, Spanish philosopher, Pedro Laín-Entralgo, in his celebrated treatise on the historicity of the category of hope, *La Espera y la Esperanza*, argues that philosophy was the way in which certain members of the intellectual class in the Greek world responded to the dubiety and inadequacy of *elpis*— the Greek notion of hope.[323] Let us now take a look into the ambiguity of *elpis* through Pedro Laín-Entralgo's eyes and see what this view has to tell us about hope's ambiguous illusory nature and its consequences for human reasoning.

The Greek notion of hope—*elpis*—is a crucial element in the historical evolution of the Western concept of hope. As I shall show, the Greek understanding and cultural appropriation of this notion and the variety of responses to it also prove key in our anthropological analysis of the human praxis of hope in general. Nonetheless, the Greek understanding of *elpis* is usually overlooked or inappropriately apprehended when approaching the notion of hope in contemporary discussions on the subject. Yet, as I intend to show in the following chapters of this dissertation, understanding and coming to terms with this ancient Greek notion is vital especially for a more profound comprehension of both, the positive and especially the negative or/and treacherous side of this human trait and its ultimate relation to politics.

---

[323] Laín-Entralgo, Pedro. *La espera y la esperanza; historia y teoría del esperar humano.* Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1962.

As Pedro Laín Entralgo explains, in the Greek ancient mind *elpis* had several meanings; it meant hope, as we understand it today—as expecting something good—but it also meant awaiting, anticipation, conjecture, preoccupation and apprehension or worry.[324] It was, as Laín Entralgo tells us, "the human soul's emotion…for facing a future event being this event a happy or an unfortunate one."[325] Hope for the ancient Greeks meant "anticipation". Consequently, *elpis* is not necessarily coextensive with the idea of hope in contemporary English-language, which tends to point toward a positive expectation of good outcomes in the future. Thus, *elpis* could either mean a placid expectation or a doubtful and fearful anticipation.[326] Thus, *elpis* is inconsistent, ambiguous and not necessarily a positive emotion. As Laín-Entralgo reminds us, Sophocles neatly captures its ambivalence and risks in Antigone, when she warns Creon: "…Hope, widely wandering comes to many of mankind as a blessing, but to many as the deceiver, using light-minded lusts; she comes to him that knows nothing till he burns his foot in the glowing fire."[327] The Greek duple appraisal of *elpis* is obvious. Therefore, as Laín-Entralgo claims, it is an emotion capable of encouraging, pleasing and consoling humans; yet, it is also deeply uncertain, misleading, deceitful and even dangerous.[328] Therefore, humans cannot rely on *elpis*. Hope, as an orientation toward the future, is an ambivalent human attitude. Yet, as I shall

---

[324] Laín-Entralgo, Pedro. *La espera y la esperanza,* pp. 27

[325] Ibid.

[326] Ibid.

[327] Sophocles. *Antigone in Three Tragedies*, Translated by David Greene, 2nd edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991, line 660.

[328] Laín Entralgo, Pedro, pp. 27

argue below, the possibility always exists that after all, hope is our only positive path toward the future.

Laín-Entralgo explains that the ancient Greeks tried three different paths to get rid of elpis' pitiful and blind uncertainty: through divination, through rational prudence and by embracing its mystery through religion.[329] Divination, Laín-Entralgo explicates, had an extraordinary importance in the Hellenic culture. Yet, as he clarifies, Hellenic philosophers were not satisfied with such a suspicious formula and preferred to elevate themselves above the common man's blind hope through philosophy; namely "through the rational forethought of the future that could only be reached by the wise man"[330] Laín-Entralgo quotes Pindar, who rejects *elpis* or unreflective hope and advocates prudence as a judicious means to master the future.[331] He also mentions Thucydides as another Greek thinker trying to find a prudential way to counter and rationalize *elpis*.

Since Thucydides is the thinker who helped cementing the ambiguous and inefficacious character of *elpis* for posterity, it is worth stopping to take a quick critical look at him. As his work attests, Thucydides saw *elpis* as a central element in political decision-making. As he was trying to see the real causes of things, political and otherwise, it could be said that he was looking to find a rationally grounded and realistic political judgment that could escape the limitations, inefficacies and dangerous traps brought to human political affairs by *elpis*. Yet, as

---

[329] Ibid. pp. 29.

[330] Ibid.

[331] Ibid.

his work also attests, his realistic approach does not necessarily walk away from *elpis* as a factual ingredient in politics, but incorporate it as a genuine, although questionable, force behind political decisions. It is never clear if his actual intention is to completely delegitimize *elpis* or rather to give testimony of the impossibility of leaving *elpis* out of the equation of political decision-making. The traditional interpretation from Thucydides approach to this category is that relying upon *elpis* is a logical consequence of the triumph of emotion upon reason. The Athenian at Melos' event is traditionally portrayed as the exemplary Thucydidean critique of the vulnerability of *elpis* as a judicious political realistic element in decision-making. Given the Melians' demise after relying on hope in their dealings with Athenians, relying on hope (alone) is not thought as an adequate realistic ground for (political) action. Yet I find this interpretation inadequate because it is one-dimensional and tends to favor just one side of the story. Being one-dimensional does not seems to be Thucydides' intention in any of the events that he recounts in his history. This interpretation also tends to underestimate Thucydides' own critical stance on the concept of *elpis*. Moreover, the political modern interpretation of the subject tends to assign hope a modern outlook, leaving aside the actual Greek characterization of the subject, which is in part the one I am trying to bring forward here. Therefore, we could legitimately ask the following questions about Thucydides' true intentions regarding the category of *elpis*: did he want to get rid of *elpis* or was he looking for a more rational method to tame its harmful side? Was Thucydides trying to send us a message about the impossibility of escaping *elpis*? This are crucial questions not only for the historical development of some of the criticism that hope has historically received throughout history from the so-called political realistic camp or from

realism in general; it is also important because it opens a door to the critique of political realism from within the very category of *elpis*/hope. I will come back to the issue of political realism and hope in my discussion of Machiavelli's method below.

Now, as explained above, rational prudence—in the form of foresight, rational decision-making in politics, and even philosophy in general—were paths thought by the Greeks as ways to deal with *elpis'* blindness and vicissitudes. Religion appears as another way out of the vulnerabilities of *elpis*. As Lain-Entralgo explains, Greeks tried to embrace the mystery of elpis through ancient divination and religion. The seer and his/her oracular religious speech was another method of escaping the elpidic structure of the human mind. Nonetheless, as argued earlier, religious divination seems to share a puzzling relation with the apparently more rational Apollonian way of looking at life; a relation that mirrors a mystified but clear interplay between the chaotic, yet prolific imaginative side of the human mind and rational thought. As we know, certain philosophical schools and some canonical strands of political thought have tried to privilege the rational over the imaginative. It could be argued, however, that the former is a way of marginalizing some human psychological and emotional manifestations of our existential experience with the intention, nonetheless, of favoring certain political interests. Looking at the category of hope from an idealistic and politically decontextualized standpoint, most of the time, its conclusions may completely disfavor hope because of its undeniable ambiguity, a typical human tendency.

Nonetheless, as implied by my arguments on Thucydides, my discussion in this dissertation tries, among other things, to tap into the force of hope as a central human element in

social and political life and in the decision-making process regarding political affairs. The former is a key part of my main task here, namely; demystifying hope from a politically realist standpoint from the perspective of the oppressed. It is within this framework that Laín-Entralgo historic-anthropological approach to hope and particularly to *elpis* becomes crucial. His approach to *elpis* is controversial. Yet, Laín-Entralgo opens a very fruitful path that leads to a more profound, anthropologically realistic, and consequently, a more theoretically rich understanding of the human sense of hope. The most important piece of analysis that his approach offers is his understanding of hope/*elpis* in relation to the strength and resiliency of the human desire for truth, security and certainty regarding the future *vis à vis* the evident irrationality that trying to tap into the future through our unreliable elpidic faculties represents.

First, as I have already explained, the elpidic structure of the human mind is unavoidable. Therefore, hope and all the other anxiety-creating features and attitudes of our psyche (such as doubt and fear) are permanent conditions of our existence. We certainly tend to recognize the vulnerabilities of hope as a method to reach into the not-yet. And, yet, paradoxically, we have also shown a strong tendency to rationalize our need to look "hopefully" into the future throughout the creation of methods such as divinization, religious faith and philosophy. Understandably, human desire is underneath *elpis*. Human beings desire knowledge and certainty about the future to come. They desire and want to bring forward a better future. And so, they hope for and hypothesize *about the pleasures that might come with it. Consequently, humans feel pleasure when* imagining the prizes that the future might fetch. I am not necessarily talking about mere wishful thinking. This is what we do when looking ahead with pleasure in our minds for

things that we have effectively worked-for, but that are not here-yet. *Elpis* is a sentiment, as Laín-Entralgo explains, that stimulates, pleases, and comforts a person's spirit.[332] Therefore hoping is judged as good even when it might drive us to failure.[333] Thus, future becomes a magnet for our pleasure-seeking mind. For instance, in the *Philebus*, Plato advances the idea that the pleasure of hopefully and imaginative anticipating future goods could only be true within the mind of the wise.[334] Solely within the soul of the wise love (*erōs*) can promote a firm hope. As Plato suggests in *Phaedo*, only the true philosopher can contemplate with a "noble and great hope" the reward of an existence after death.[335]

Hence the following human intellectual conundrum related to hope; desiring truth or objectivity, or wisdom or prudence could then be judged as being just a strong human desire for obtaining a better and more consistent way of considering the future than hope. Ironically, this desire is still a way of hoping, or an elpidic human urge for something better than hope itself. Yet, it is still "hoping". Let me bring light into the specificity of this human intellectual dilemma with the following example. Buddhists seems to understand the phenomena of hope similarly to ancient Greeks. They think of hope and fear as the same feeling with two sides. Hence, the old Buddhist proverb, "hope and fear chase each other's tails". Thus, Buddhists insist in the principle of abandoning hope. For them, hoping is a superficial and ambiguous sentiment that drives humans to suffering. Buddhists tend to prize the present as a sign of wisdom and a mainstay of

---

[332] Ibid.

[333] Ibid.

[334] *Philebus* 38 e-40 d; as quoted by Laín-Entralgo, Ibid.

[335] *Phaedo* 70 a, b; as quoted by Laín-Entralgo, Ibid.

happiness. And correspondingly they refuse the future and preach to abandon all longings for the not-yet and for the past. Nevertheless, taking our argument about the inescapability of the structure of our elpidic minds into consideration and given our tendency to rationalize our hope, it could be argued that even when Buddhists could successfully accomplish to be mentally occupied only with the present, they are ultimately still hoping not to have feelings of hope, because they are nonetheless still preoccupied about only been occupied with the present. Are not Buddhists admitting with their behavior towards hope that they are still afraid of the feeling of hope and its consequences? Are not Buddhists hoping not to get injured by hope? Has a Buddhist conquered hope and fear when being convinced that he has mastered the art of not hoping? My argument, indeed, will be a matter of controversy for Buddhists. But I think they are still trying to escape the psychological oddities of hope by hoping not to hope. In other words, they do what humans have always intended to do since ancient times; they are still rationalizing hope. My answer to any objection will be that a Buddhist's hope for not hoping in the future is but a desire for the future that still needs to be continuously actualized at every step he takes towards the next upcoming moment in his everyday life. Every step that he successfully takes into the next moment is a step into the future without hope that he had previously desired and that he was consciously or unconsciously anticipating. The Buddhist thinks that he has found a reliable and effective way of avoiding the elpidic structure of his mind and therefore, of abandoning hope. And yet, he deceives himself. Ironically, the Buddhist hope for not hoping is, after all, an unrealistic and illusory hope. The object of *elpis* is the future and belongs solely to the future and the future is still unknown.

Again, humans seem to have a strong urge to rationalize hope. As Fred Polak reminds us, human beings have never "been able to accept *Ignoramus, ignorabius* as [their] motto."[336] The human need to know about the future. And our elpidic mind and sense of hope seem to be our only but unreliable conduit into it. Since we know our intellectual limitations, we acknowledge that we have no true and realistic way to be certain about the future. And thus, we become afraid of the unpredictable future. As Polak argues, death—the only one true certainty—becomes the main engine behind our intense desire to try to know and reach into the future with certainty.[337] The future becomes a challenge because humans tend to fear death. Let me follow Polak's precepts on this point by quoting him in some length. The future's domain, he tells us, has no boundaries, yet it is only by:

> ...drawing boundaries in the thought-realm that man can produce a problem that can be grasped and worked with, and it is only by redrawing the boundaries of the unknown that man can increase his knowledge. No problem so persistently defies our skill at drawing boundaries as the problem of the future, and no problem presses quite so hard on our intellectual horizons. In the act of searching out the future, *Homo sapiens* crosses the frontiers of the unknown and is transformed from the man of action, who responds to the moment, to the man of thought, who takes account of the consequences of his actions. He leaves behind the familiar universe of sight and

---

[336] Polak, Fred. *The Image of the Future*. Amsterdam/London/New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, 1973, pp.4.

[337] Ibid.

sound and surveys the universe of the unseen and unheard, continually bringing small fragments of the unknown back with him out of the darkness and adding them to the known. Who can say whether this building up of the known diminishes the unknown? Man is not easily discouraged, however. Everything drives him to accept the challenge of the unknown. The instincts of preservation and reproduction demand it. And the economy activity is an answer to this challenge; the primitive nomad gathering fruits and nuts and the modem industrial magnate are alike answering the call of the unborn tomorrow; so are the men who chart the seas and those who chart the heavens. No man, not even the suicidal can leave tomorrow alone. The suicide but hastens tomorrow in his impatience. In exploring his own future, man has always been haunted by the sense of doing the forbidden. The Greeks knew well the dreadful consequences of hubris, the sin of challenging the omnipotence of the gods. And yet, throughout history, man has never ceased to explore these bounds. He has suffered as a result, but he has also succeeded in pushing the bounds far out into the realm of what was once considered impossible. This spiritual overstepping of the boundaries of the unknown is the sources of ail human creativity; however, man has not always been bold in approaching this frontier. Folk migrations and adventures of daring and discovery have always been countered by the longing for one's home and hearth. Nevertheless, crossing frontiers is both man's héritage and man's task, and the image of the future is his propelling power.[338]

---

[338] Ibid.

Now, the Greek category of *elpis* attests to our anxious, compulsive and continuous thinking about the not-yet. I have earlier referred to this psychic phenomenon as our elpidic urge. As suggested above by my discussion on the Greek notion of *elpis*, our elpidic urge manifests itself in an amalgam of psychic phenomena, which includes the positive expectations about the future, as well as other less positive anxieties about the future, such as apprehension, negative expectations and the like.

Since hope is a multilayered human attitude, it manifests itself in different fashions, depending on context. Yet, it is always the product of an inner compulsion that drags us to problematize the future to project ourselves and our will forward, so we can walk into the realm of the future with our hypothetical positive opinion of what is to come ahead. Thus, our hypothetical positive image of the future propels us forward. Our mind, to deal with the time-continuum and the temporal oddities between the past, the here and now and the not-yet, structures a conscious process of dividing our affects, our perceptions, meanings and responses into categories within a spatio-temporal landscape. Our reality categorizing and reordering mental faculties, in relation to our perceptions of the Other, enable us to be inhabitants of two different temporal dimensions: the present and the imagined (or the utopian). Futurity is born out of this antithesis. This dualism is what allows us to be subjects of hope and subjects of history. As I have been arguing, our minds are structured is such a way that this spatio-temporal continuum and our conscious preoccupation about it are inescapable. This is what I have previously called the "elpidic structure" of all human actions and their dynamics, which includes our inactions and fears or the paralyzing negatives effects of *elpis*. Our proclivity to be

constantly preoccupied with the future predisposes us to find a secure path or paths into the incoming time. Yet these paths, as I have been implying, are made of our imaginative mental fabric; i.e. they are fictive. They are plans. They are strategy. And therefore, they can only be, after all, a mere supposition, a belief, an opinion or, as I prefer to call it, a *hypothesis*. The grounds for this hypothesis could be roughly concrete or, on the contrary, completely fictitious. In the last case, we may have an unrealistic *false hope*. On the contrary, when we rely on realistic or factual grounds for our hypothesis of the future, we could say then that we have a more realistic hope. Yet these "realistic grounds" are always known to have been correct *a posteriori*, as experiences or facts, but never in the future as concrete realities. Our confident expectations might be based on experience and empirical facts, as when we say, "we could do this or that, because if we have done it before, we can do it again." Some certainties about the future might also come from our trust on artifacts to which humankind had previously imprinted certainty in the form of knowledge. My house in Puerto Rico, for instance, is made of solid concrete, according to regulations, so it can resist category 5 hurricanes. We have imprinted certainty unto our technics, methods and pedagogies so we can be optimistic about their future performance and the benefits that they are supposed to yield. Of course, we can only be sure up to certain extent. Even our most secure prospects can fail us precisely because they are prospects. As I explained before, optimism is a form or a function of hope. In my opinion, what defines hope, as a human attitude, is not necessarily its object or objects, but the very nature of the process in which we humans engage into projecting ourselves and our will into the future within certain specific context. My most trivial desires, if they become part of an actual motivation for taking a

specific action to actualize them, have the capacity to disappoint me and therefore be the cause of suffering and despair. Hope is a hypothesis about the future and as with any other sort of hypothesis regarding future happenings, my opinion about what is to come could be erroneous. Evidently, having realistic grounds for hoping for a specific outcome are no guarantee that the hoped-for ends will be obtained. It only meant that we could have a grounded confidence about its realization. As a matter of fact, being realistic about hope means knowing that hope can fail us. Nonetheless, it also means that regardless of how certain or not we are about the future, we still need to hope that we are going to prevail when taking an action if we want at least to give that action a start. Thus, our false or empty hopes are not necessarily false or empty *a priori*—at least not for us. What happens is that our expectations become shattered throughout our path to meet the future. This is, when the future is finally here and our hoped-for goals do not arrive as expected, or instead we end up with an outcome we considered an evil, what transpires is a tragedy that immediately translates into solid empirical data that denounces our hypothesis (hope) either as ungrounded or as totally false.

But, then again; what exactly is the problem with hope? Where can we locate with some precision the source of its inefficacy? The vulnerabilities of hope, as I have been arguing, reside on the very limits of our own intellectual-cognitive faculties and methods to which hope itself and our other elpidic capabilities belong. The problem is not our sense of hope, not our elpidic urges either. We experience our elpidic urges and our feeling of hope neither in a spatio-temporal vacuum nor on an empty socio-political space. In our desire to move pass the present to meet the future and our hoped-for goals, we travel a path within a spatio-temporal landscape in which we

151

collide with other people's paths toward their own hoped-for ends and with other contingent realities. We live in a spatio-temporal context, in which the past is only in our memory, yet fading. Further, the present is a fluid and a complex challenge, full of concrete and illusory moving obstacles; some of these obstacles are the manifestation of other people's hopes, wills and desires for domination, plus the oppressive methods they have created to accomplish they own hoped-for goals. We walk toward the future or not, within a specific spatio-temporal landscape with a socio-political reality, which is already the product of antagonistic tension or group of tensions. It is within this contentious reality in which we need to locate the unreliability of *elpis* in general and of hope. It is also within this antagonistic context in which we need to account for the ineffectiveness of the human intellect in finding a dependable method to meet our elpidic urges. It is also within the concrete set of circumstances established by each social reality that humans desire and hope and determine which action to take or not to take to attain their goals or to avoid perceived future evils. Our elpidic urges, our desires, hopes and the methods developed by us to know and master the future need to be thought both, as a cause and as a product of this complex reality.

Now, the question about hope's illusory nature cannot be answered apart from this complex reality. We cannot understand the ubiquity of hope as separated from this reality either. We should not try to comprehend the reasons why humans have systematically attempted to abandon hope by rationalizing it apart from the complexity in which humans are forced to rely on their ineffective sense of hope as a mechanism to act. Our continuous attempts to rationalize hope need to be perceived as an intellectual effort to cope with the anxieties created by our

elpidic mind within the reality of a milieu that offers no concrete, secure or reliable path into the future apart from the limitlessness of our imagination. The concrete radical reality of our existence is that that there is no genuinely infallible way of knowing the future. Therefore, rationalizing hope becomes yet another hopeful path to try to get an effective grip on the future to either secure the future or to own it. Nonetheless, as I suggested above, some of these attempts, such as Plato's desire for absolute-universal knowledge of the eternal by relying on metaphysics, turned out to be as unreliable and illusory as *elpis* itself. Again, our elpidic capabilities are limited, and therefore, highly vulnerable and so are some of the intellectual paths that humans have taken to cope with these limitations.

For instance, as Laín-Entralgo also indicates, the Christian concept of hope comes as another questionable response to the inadequacy of *elpis*. The Greek notion of *elpis* was still in vogue during the time in which Paul of Tarsus introduced his Christian theosophy and gospel to the ancient world. St. Paul, as he will be later known, was versed in Greek culture and philosophy. Thus, he was likely to be aware of the Greek traditional understanding of *elpis* as an ineffective human method to face the uncertainty of the future. St. Paul relied then on the enthusiastic and robust Hebrew notion of hope, which was based on the future guarantees offered to the people of Israel by their alleged pact with God. We can say that the elpidic urges and spatio-temporal imagination of the Israelites was fueled by their conviction on a destiny promised to them by God. Since the strength of this hope lied outside and beyond the capacities of men, Paul of Tarsus thought that this hope was greater and much more effective and secure than Greek *elpis*. Thus, contrary from the hope of the gentiles—*elpis*—Christian hope guarantees

its own fulfillment in salvation: for "we are saved by hope." [339] Hope is placed in God's almighty providence and not in the hands of mortals.

Thus, in the context of humankind vulnerable intellectual capacities, Christian hope became the most legitimate source of encouragement and comfort through tragic times. Christians continuously prize the comforting-balsamic attributes of their unique great hope. For them the greatest goods belong to the future and are waiting for them in heaven and not here on earth. Nonetheless, as we know, this idea of hope has been strongly condemned for centuries precisely because it is a spiritual attitude that invites both, quietism and danger. While Greeks considered *elpis* a daring-active, but dangerous attitude that invites people to take (sometimes reckless) action, Christian hope has been historically condemned as a negative attitude that invites danger because of its passive and crippling nature when danger is imminent. The Christian notion of hope as a firm and secure anchor for the human soul [340] has usually been thought as an unresponsive mechanism that make people rely more on the power of praying for God intervention in human affairs than on the people's own capacity to act. The contempt against this sort of religious hope includes attacks on its pacifism and its infectiveness as a motive for political action. The future happiness of a Christian is supposed to be secured and satisfied by God. Therefore, hope is made possible by the work of God in the lives of a Christian.

The former is not the only interpretation of Christian hope there is, but it is the one traditionally and predominantly advanced by Christian-Fundamentalism today. As we can

---

[339] *Romans* 8. pp. 24.

[340] *Hebrews* 6:19.

appreciate, this interpretation of Christian hope, which places so much emphasis on God's as the guarantor of people's future, leaves little room for genuine human autonomy regarding the not-yet. And therefore, it also leaves very little room for a concept of hope that relies solely on human-mortal capabilities and own intellectual and material means to imagine and to build newness.

Niccolo Machiavelli, the founder of modern political thought, advanced a view of political decision-making and political ruling that not only excluded moralizing influences, but that also specifically tried to purge Christians values from the exercise of political power. Machiavelli's nostalgia for Roman ways and values in politics, steamed in part from his harsh condemnation of Christian submissiveness, passive obedience, stupor and existential resignation that, in his view, prevented action-minded men to take much needed concrete political actions in the real-earthy world.

Machiavelli, who is considered the father of modern political realism, introduced his notion of political *virtù* as a more realistic and effective method for controlling *Fortuna*. He aimed at finding a method of controlling the abysses on the political landscape created by contingency. Here "contingency" is defined as the unforeseen and other sort of chaotic events created not only by chance, but also and especially created by the complex confluence of the actions and performances of other human agents. Now, following the line of argument that I have developed hitherto, I want to bring forward the following set of questions about Machiavelli's intentions: were hope and other elpidic urges behind Machiavelli's realistic approach to the variations and vicissitudes created by contingency upon the political landscape

when he tried to develop his own method to influence the future outcome political actions? We have been told that Machiavelli's theory of political action and rational strategic planning are methods devised to manipulate the future through more realistic rational-objective means. Could it be said, however, that Machiavelli was trying to find a method to discipline and domesticate the future to boost a political regime's chance for survival? What was indeed Machiavelli's hope? And, was his hope of finding such a method illusory, false or dangerously deceptive as Plato's own?

Now, framing Machiavelli's realistic insights into political affairs and methodology in the language of *elpis*, hope, elpidic urges, illusions, and the like might look at the very least suspicious. However, the short analysis into his thought and theory that I shall offer below starts precisely by meticulously following his own insights and words regarding the theme of fortune and contingency in *The Prince*.

According to Machiavelli, neither fortune—fate, chance, providence, God—nor any other exogenous forces, should be left to govern our affairs without fierce resistance. Yet, as he suggests, mere voluntarism or reckless engagement would not do. Activism, he seems to warn us, is not enough. In Chapter XXV of *The Prince*, Machiavelli gives us an odd but highly a crucial clue of exceptional value for our inquiry here.[341] Our free will, he claims, is at least the arbiter of only one half of our actions. *Fortuna*—a divinity from the ancient Roman pantheon, which like an overflowed river, had the power to shatter men's ambitions and hopes. As he

---

[341] Machiavelli, N. *The Prince and the Discourses*, with an Introduction by Max Lerner. New York: The Modern library, 1940, pp. 91-94.

implies, we can take provisions against her with defenses and barriers, but she still will assert her control over part of our lives. *Fortuna*, nonetheless, according to Machiavelli, also favors the brave. Yet, bravery is not enough to deal with it. As he suggests, wisdom and cautions are also required.

Machiavelli's political realistic advice has traditionally been interpreted as asking the prince or the political agent to learn how to accommodate or adapt himself to the changes and alterations of time and space that *Fortune* brings into the landscape of human political affairs. Nonetheless, looking closely into Machiavelli's thought, we quickly find out that the key is not only for the agent to accommodate himself to changing times (or to adapt) to the river, but also, and more importantly, to adapt his instruments, means, and as much of the political landscape as he can, to his own desires and hopes. The social condition in which power politics is carried out is one of agonic conflict. The former situation is a paradoxical condition of human life in general and political affairs in particular. Since this is so, Machiavelli was convinced that—at least half of the time, *Fortuna* could be domesticated and dominated to one's own will by way of applied realistic political knowledge—instrumental political reasoning. As we know, Machiavelli's strategic model of political action is characterized by purposive rationality, planning, utility and mathematical (or geometrical) measurement of power, effective assessment of, and utilization of available means, and by having clear end-goals. This sort of instrumental reasoning is concerned with the solution of technical-political problems with which the political agent is confronted within an ever-changing spatio-temporal milieu, where the biggest constraint is the fact that the future is impossible to know, because it is not here yet. As a matter of fact, Machiavelli's

analysis of the theme of fortune in Chapter XXV of *The Prince* is a celebration of his instrumental-strategic thinking.[342] Machiavelli's notion of *virtù*—a drive, a set of talents, or the art and/or science of the technical rational calculation of the instruments of power and its effective implementation—is supposed to take control of the political future either by using, manipulating or subduing *Fortuna or* the contingent aspects of the political landscape.

Now, the following arguments are meant to somehow change the perspective from where Machiavelli's political thought is usually addressed. First, Machiavelli's political theory of action entertains an illusion of control upon the not yet (in the political sphere) that those who consider his strategic thinking as an absolute rational and realistic tool for political affairs usually overlook. Second, it becomes obvious to me that his methodology is but another attempt at rationalizing the human elpidic urges (or *elpis*), and specially hope. In other words, Machiavelli's realistic approach to human political affairs is a way of providing certainty and stability to the elpidic structure of the human action-mind regarding forthcoming political events—the political not-yet—and not at all an absolute rational tool.

As I argued earlier, for the ancient Greeks, *elpis* is ambivalent. It can provide neither stability nor certainty. As I also mentioned above, Thucydides delivered a political realistic perspective in which he denounced *elpis* for being a danger's comforter, but also implied in his analysis that this sentiment could be somehow tamed by a more rational approach to future events. Yet, it is never completely clear if his proposal was a substitute for *elpis* or a way to

---

[342] Machiavelli, N. *The Prince and the Discourses*, with an Introduction by Max Lerner. New York: The Modern library, 1940, pp. 91-94.

discipline this sentiment without totally escaping it. Can Machiavelli's instrumental rationality provide a more suitable stability and certainty than *elpis*? Oddly, according to Machiavelli himself—as he clearly puts it in Chapter XXV of *The Prince*—his instrumental rationality can provide such stability only "half the time" or even less—after trying really hard to resist fortune, that is.[343] If the landscape of human action is ruled by contingency—or by *Fortuna*—and a virtuous ruler can control only half or less of it; is not the very idea of having an actual total control upon political human affairs through instrumental rationality an illusion or even "delusional"? Is not to desire total control upon the spatio-temporal political landscape the most utopian desire of all political desires? What does this fact specifically tells us about actual despotic, fascist and/or totalitarian political practices?

In Machiavelli's thought, skill and luck overlap. Not everything can be known, even less entirely dominated in advance. Thus, the idea of having actual control upon contingent events throughout strategizing is a sham and not even Machiavelli pursues such absurdity. The only thing we can do, as Machiavelli advices us, is to be as prepared as possible by following the footsteps of great men and imitating them, by surveying and mapping the landscape and planning for those political circumstances and battles that can be anticipated ahead. Having the cunning of the fox, the force of the lion and a daring attitude might help as well. But do not be fooled by the sagacity of Machiavelli's advices. The fact is that his methods are not meant to counter or transcend contingency, but to cope with it. The only things that can make a difference are preparedness and a sharply structured planning of your future actions in the present. Nonetheless,

---

[343] Ibid.

as Machiavelli recognizes in his assessment of *Fortuna*, there has been, since ancient times, a tendency that deludes humans into thinking that they can understand the world of contingency and control the nature of its tempestuous flow throughout mere acts of imagination, a lot of hope and/or frantic activism. Moreover, he also seems to imply than even when we could put into work the kind of political prowess and/or *virtù* that he promotes it is still quite difficult to absolutely govern worldly events.

To summarize my discussion thus far and to move my argument forward, let me emphasize the following: since the nature of *elpis* is sometimes to produce exuberant illusions, the elpidic structure of the human action-mind—which includes the human feeling of hope and its cognitive properties—indulges us into thinking that we can control the future by devising secure and stable rational methods to access and control the contingent world and the not-yet. As I have indicated above, instrumental reasoning, as Machiavelli's own assessment of *Fortuna* attests, is not exempt from this illusory proclivity. Although our free will, as he claims, is not completely extinguished by the impetus of fortune, we can only take provisions to oppose it when she changes the course of times and derails our expectations or our "vistas" of the future. As Machiavelli explains, the prince who bases himself entirely on God or on fortune is ruined when fortune and circumstances change. On the contrary, when the prince's modes of procedure accords with the needs of times, he might be safe.[344] The problem is, however, that according to Machiavelli's own analysis, the fluid-changing nature of *Fortuna* does not really allow political agents to be able to apply only one distinct method or to act only in one single fashion without

---

[344] Ibid. pp. 92.

ever changing their own nature. "[For] if one could change one's nature with time and circumstances, fortune would never change."[345] As Machiavelli clarifies, both, caution or boldness, might in similar circumstances save the day; patience could mean one's ruin, but someone else's success; and different men with different methods might all succeed in accomplishing the same objective.[346] He advises audacity to conquer *Fortuna* more effectively. But he has already previously warned us that deploying our most effective methods to resist *Fortuna*—the changing of times and circumstances—are only effective half of the time. Therefore, the other half of time we are nonetheless at the mercy of *Fortuna*. Then, exactly what sort of a realistic and effective methodology was Machiavelli after all proposing? Was not his methodology obviously flawed in the very same way that some of our most hopeful unplanned initiatives could be?

Ultimately, as political thinker Charles D. Tarlton reminds us, when taking into consideration the fluid-changing nature of *Fortuna* and Machiavelli's own "realistic" admissions regarding his approach to politics, his methodology can only aspire to be "a shadow of a method."[347] In other words, Machiavelli's methodology is after all but the illusion of an effective method in the struggle for power. This argument, however, needs some qualification. Let me move into my assessment of this issue assisted by Tarlton's analysis. In my view, the human elpidic-action-oriented-mind cannot escape the liquid nature of spatio-temporal landscape of

---

[345] Ibid. pp. 93.

[346] Ibid.p p. 92

[347] Tarlton, Charles D. "Fortuna and Landscape of Action in Machiavelli's Prince". *New Literary History*, vol. 30, no. 4, 1999.

changing circumstances in any realm of action. How do we interpret this? In the context of political power struggle depicted by Machiavelli, the landscape of political action becomes a fluid ground where political agents meet each other—a ground in which every agent's desires for power and glory, and hope-driven actions, clash. In this clash of political agents, the desires and hopes of a prince will either prevail or be crushed. The interested political actor gazes at this complex fluid reality and can only manage to freeze in time and solidify one single set of circumstances to rationally grasp the moment. As Tarlton neatly illustrates this assuming Machiavelli's theory, within this reality:

> […] Every actor worries the fluid stuff of his own doings against the images of act and scene in which history portrays otherwise unknown and dead deeds, both long past and recent. But, of course, because this now solid-looking stuff of circumstance is, in fact, the shifting liquid of multifaceted activity that has been literally construed into the shapes of actions and background, the belief that is created, that it will hold still long enough to plan successfully how to act within it, ***is an illusion, is, in fact, the political illusion.*** Underlying the merely apparent reality of the political geography, the constant undulations of assertion, assault, delay, compromise, promise, betrayal, attack…retreat, and the like, roar toward any observing actor, any interested prince, as if they were that violent river, that destructive torrent, Fortuna. The secret of political success, then, resides in the ability to act and alter one's acting so quickly that the changes in other actions (of those enemy shadows trying to do the

same) that seem to crystallize (only to dissolve again) in the fleeting substance of the

landscape are kept always out of one's way.[348]

Now, before proceeding any further with my analysis, it is important to note that Tarlton advances two different but related arguments regarding the illusory nature of Machiavelli's method; 1) according to him, the thought that we can control through planning and technical calculation of power the shifting-liquid-multifaceted landscape of multiple fortuitous events and unforeseen activities of other people is an illusion; this is what he actually calls, *the political illusion*; 2) despite the former, it is still true that material resources or means, symbolic power and virtù still give the political agent the chance to create the illusion that he is actually in control of the political landscape through acting and altering his performance so fast that the movements and changes of other people's actions (the enemies' shadows trying to do the same) are kept always out of one's way or are left behind.

In other words, what I want to argue, following Tarlton, is that on the one hand, Machiavelli's methodology is in part nothing more than an illusion of an efficient method, which in the Florentine's own words could be effective (with luck) only half of the time, and; on the other, the partial effectiveness of his methodology is based in the capacity on the art of the political agent (the prince, Statesman or any other political player) to create dramatic (theatrical) optic and mental illusions of power and control assisted, of course, by the effective management of his/her actual resources or means. As suggested above, in the fluid changing spatio-temporal landscape the speed with which the political agent changes with the circumstances becomes a

---

[348] Ibid. Emphasis added by me.

crucial strategic tool. In Machiavelli's own terms, the political agent needs to be willing to quickly change his procedures when fortune changes. But what does this requirement exactly mean when we translate it into definitive actions within an actual political landscape? Additionally, as Machiavelli suggests in his writings, the situation of the political agent is not an easy one, but one that requires great efforts and *virtù*. Yet, this is the sort of situation that will not necessarily be described in the traditional language of hope, just because it is assumed that the political agent, being a resourceful and powerful person, might not need hoping. But, is this a realistic view of the situation in which any political agent or leader may find

herself and an accurate representation of hope as a ubiquitous phenomenon? Is hope something useful only for those under great distress or in a situation of great desolation and lack of immediately accessible resources of hope or is hope an attitude ever-present in all our activities and available for all? As argued earlier, demystifying the human practice of hope requires unveiling it as an ever-present and imperative force of the human psyche that cannot be simply dismissed conceptually as mere wishful thinking or as a force that emerges only in some especial cases of the human experience in life. Therefore, demystifying hope entails not only bringing to the surface the full conceptual and normative delineations surrounding this human practice, but also reveling in full the concrete and distinct spectrum of human practices through which hope manifest itself. Strong desires, hoped-for goals (power and glory) that are very difficult to attain and preserve and plans, strategies and the search for paths to reach the desired goals look to me as very accurate notions for describing the context and situation in which Machiavelli portrays his prince. Now, what sorts of implications does the relationship between the human elpidic

urges, hope and movement have for Machiavelli's instrumental-strategic thinking? As we know, manipulation, deceit, pretense, artifice, impersonation, mirrors and duplicity are all part of Machiavelli's advises. As he implies, the rapid modification of procedure when fortune changes is vital for the political agent who wants to have a real chance at being successful especially under circumstances that appear unfavorable or even when catastrophe strikes. When *Fortuna* creates the special conditions for a strong-willed person, resourceful, powerful and ready to take speedy action, the combination between these factors and a great hope can actually show the true radical, realistic and effective potency of a very hopeful person and especially of the human sense of hope.

Consider for example the 1775's Great Lisbon earthquake and the legendary subsequent role of the Marquis of Pombal in the aftermath of this tragedy. The earthquake, which was followed by a massive tsunami and an intense fire that lasted for five days, has been cataloged as the first modern catastrophe due to the unprecedented state of emergency response headed by Sebastião José Carvalho e Melo, Marquis of Pombal, chief minister of King José I.[349] The destruction of the city of Lisbon was of apocalyptic proportion. It sparked a debate on the

---

[349] Pereira, Alvaro S. "The Opportunity of a Disaster: The Economic Impact of the 1755 Lisbon Earthquake." The Journal of Economic History, vol. 69, no. 2 (Jun. 2009), pp. 466-499. According to Pereira, the destruction caused by the earthquake was also described as the first modern catastrophe because it marked a turning point for a more scientific explanation of natural disasters by discarding superstition and fatalistic religious accounts of such occurrences. (Ibid.)

reasons for such an event to happen, in which important figures who belonged to the Enlightenment movement, such as Rousseau, Voltaire and Kant intervened.[350]

Immediately after the earthquake, and worried about how to respond to the infliction the city had received, the King turned to his assembled nobles. Amid requests for prayers, Pombal voiced his now legendary response: "Bury the dead, feed the living."[351] Pombal's calmness, quick and rational response instantly made the King understand that he was the man to take charge of the operations regarding the disaster. The King approved martial law and gave him the power to take urgent action. Pombal took rapid charge of the situation organizing the disposal of corpses, putting in order a food-distribution system, improving water sanitation and establishing temporary hospitals.[352] He also decreed controls of prices and rents, took actions to prevent looting, stopped people for leaving the city, prevented people from initiating disorderly rebuilding of houses and promptly initiated a master plan for the reconstruction of the city

---

[350] Ibid. Interestingly, the catastrophe gave way to a philosophical attack against Leibniz's theodicy and his philosophical optimism that advanced the cheerful and optimistic doctrine of "the best of all possible worlds" and the thesis that "all is well" because it is God's doing. Indeed, Lisbon's earthquake also counted Leibniz's optimism as another one of its fallen victims. After the Lisbon's tragedy, his optimistic philosophy came under such attack that the whole idea never regained philosophical traction. As a matter of fact, Voltaire's *Candid* came to be one the literature piece of work that inflicted considerable damage to this form of optimistic thinking about the world and human life. As a matter of fact, the English poet Alexander Pope's work was heavily influenced by Leibniz's optimistic philosophy and logic, which was, after all, a form of vindicating God's goodness and blessings in the face of evil. Ironically, Pope's poem, *An Essay on Man*, which contains the famous verse concerning hope, "hope springs eternal in the human breast", is impregnated with this optimistic philosophy, which expects too much from the human being, which I already criticized in the previous chapter.

[351] De Almeida-Marquez, José, O., "The Paths of Providence: Voltaire and Rousseau on the Lisbon Earthquake." Cad. Hist. Fil. Ci., Campinas, Série 3, vol. 15, no.1; pp. 33-57.

[352] Pereira, Alvaro S., "The Opportunity of a Disaster", pp. 487.

according to new specifications and regulations. Furthermore, he took immediate actions to advance forward extraordinary political reforms. Before the earthquake, Pombal had been trying to push for the political economical and intellectual modernization of Portugal, but without much success due to the opposition of the old nobility and powerful members of the Catholic Church, especially from Jesuits.[353] The calamity opened a fan of possibilities to the minister that he used to his advantage. In the aftermath of the disaster, the Jesuits proclaimed that the earthquake was a punishment sent by God because of the lack of devotion and sins of the people of Portugal against his word. Their accusations implicitly blamed the government, including Pombal, for the terrible event. Pompal entered then in an open conflict with the Church that lasted some years. Following the spirit of the Enlightenment, he adjudicated the disaster only to natural causes. While the Church asked for praying, penitence, processions and for an *auto-da-fé* in order to appease God's anger, Pombal insisted in concentrating all efforts and resources in rebuilding the city according to his plans.[354] Ultimately, his vision prevailed, but not without an intense fight. Little by little he gained almost absolute power as chief minister, which allowed him on the one hand, to deal effectively and without mercy with opposing rivals of the old aristocracy and the Church and to implement a series of radical reforms that gave form to a new and modern Portugal. In fact, after a failed attempt on the life of the King in 1758, Pombal was able to blow a fatal blow to his enemies, both in the nobility and the Church. By implicating both, the Jesuits and the nobility in the regicide attempt, and accusing, prosecuting, exiling and/or executing

---

[353] Ibid.

[354] De Almeida-Marquez, José, O., "The Paths of Providence", pp. 36.

them, he could eliminate with a single shoot two of his most significant enemies. This move made his power thereafter almost uncontestable. After the incident, the old nobility and their ways were neutralized and he was also able to expulse the Society of Jesus from Portugal and Brazil and all other Portuguese dominions around the world. The political-decision making process put forward by Pombal established a new kind of relation between the state, the church and the nobility, where the Church lost much of its civil power and the nobility lost many of its privileges.[355] The spatial and architectural reconstruction and revitalization of the city itself reflected the new-modern standards and values that Pombal envisioned as the new spirit of Portugal. Lisbon would no longer be the city of the King, the Cardinal Patriarch or the nobility, but the home of the people's government, the merchant and the middle class[356]; a modern metropolis. Other political and economic reforms included the centralization of political power, abolition of the Inquisition, effective separation of the Church and State, abolition of slavery, implementation of mercantilist policies and the reduction of the dependency on Britain as a trading partner.

Fortune in the form of a disaster brought a fan of opportunities and possibilities, of which Pombal took advantage. On top of these open opportunities, he rose to power and became one of the most legendary political figures of his age. No doubt that ambition, skill, speedy-movement, audacious action, strategic planning and path searching were all key ingredients in his success.

---

[355] See Cardozo, José L. "El Terremoto de Lisboa de 1755 y la política de regulación económica del Marqués de Pombal." *Historia y Política*, no. 16, pp. 209-236.

[356] Mullin, John, R. "The Reconstruction of Lisbon Following the Earthquake of 1755: A Study in Despotic Planning." *Landscape Architecture & Regional Planning: Faculty Publications Series*. Paper 45: pp. 1-19.

But luck was the vehicle that allowed him to put in practice his *virtù* and put into motion his plans in a fast track fashion. Now; a) did the Marquis adapt himself to changing times or did he rather used this "unfortunate" situation to adapt the country to his plans?; b) could we actually say without reserves that Pombal—the rational-man, the action-figure, the person, the controversial Machiavellian and enlightened despot, the historical agent—was neither an optimist nor a very hopeful person at the time of pushing forward his desires concerning the future of his City and Portugal?; c) is it realistic not to see Pombal's whole enterprise and deeds, amid the cataclysmic wreckage of his city in ruins, as one carried in the absence of hope or, on the contrary, was everything he did an enterprise pushed forward with and by a magnificent and highly effective and realistic great hope? What does it mean to look realistically at the category of hope from a political realist standpoint?

In what follows I shall offer answers to the former questions, as my analysis of Pombal's example in the light of Machiavelli's methodology progresses. The first thing I shall analyze about Pombal's saga is the capacity that he showed on using fortune in his favor in order to bend other people's wills in his favor, adapting them and the whole situation to his plans. In this specific case, he did not face this calamity by necessarily adapting to it. He rather adapted the rest of the situation and other people to his rational modern view on how to respond first to the disaster and then on how to tend to the rest of the subsequent political issues, including the reconstruction of the city itself. Using despotic power[357], he adapted, molded, and altered the whole scenario to his plans. Notice that I am not saying that he did not needed to adapt, modify

---

[357] See Ibid.

and even drastically change his methods according to the moment. It would be unrealistic and even ridiculous to understand socio-political reality in this form. Changing methodology, tinkering with strategy, finding an effective tactic and/or finding paths, however, does not mean changing one's agenda. On the contrary, Pombal used a messy and very fluid scenario to excel and to construct the illusion that he was in control of the whole chaotic situation through logic and reason, when, in part, he was most probably doing what people of action do in this situation: boldly asserting his power, pushing his vision forward in a trial and error fashion, considering what works and what does not, re-grouping his thoughts and pushing forward again. It's call praxis. Yet there is a reality, a datum that should not escape our attention. Nothing he did, he did out of mere voluntarism or out of mere rigor of mind or out of wisdom or by winning a battle of ideas. As history attests, he was given absolute power to carry his vision forward. The absoluteness of his power was a key ingredient in dominating people and the fluid spatio-temporal landscape of his country. Absolute political power is indeed a great, magnificent and potent "resource of hope." It is as absolute as the political agent wants to possibly and effectively carry his hoped-for goals forward. It was using this very powerful political tool that he could give the impression that he was actually in charge of the present time and even of the future to come, when in fact what he was actually in charge was of people's and, therefore, of the wills and volitions of his subjects to the point that once the original opposition that he found was put to rest, dominating the rest of the landscape was easier. In other words, with his absolute despotic power, he made sure people around him adapted to his vistas and his future oriented comprehensive plans for Portugal—in other words, to his utopia.

But, what about Pombal's own sense of hope? My take into this topic is unorthodox and therefore, controversial. Yet, the attributes I assign to the Marquis' full enterprise, and specifically to his mindset, including my speculation about his sense of hope, are not unwarranted. As I have been arguing since the outset of this dissertation, it is humanly impossible to escape our elpidic mind and our sense of hope. Nonetheless, it is humanly possible to delude ourselves into believing we can do so. It is also possible to construct a narrative of certain specific historical facts and occurrences in which the account of historic details ideologically favors certain descriptive discourses rather than others. As explained above, Pombal's whole respond to the tragedy was judged *a posteriori* to be the first rational and modern respond in which, what is contemporarily known as an state of emergency response from a modernist rationalist standpoint to such events, was implement. Providential and supernatural interpretations of the 1755's Lisbon earthquake were actually rejected in favor of more scientific ones to the point of considering the disaster itself a historical turning point for modern seismology—a turning point in which Pombal's rational and scientific modern approach to the earthquake itself is also credited as crucial.[358] Thus, references to Pombal, as historical figure, is coated by a rationalistic modernist Machiavellian despotic glow, which does no justice to his actual state of mind at the time—which we are not necessarily aware of, but which I insists could not have escaped *elpis*. Therefore, we should not doubt that Pombal had a huge amount of ambition and power on the one hand, and an enormous amount of hope, on the other. He

---

[358] See for example, Araújo, Ana C., "The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755: Public Distress and Political Propaganda." *e-JPH,* vol.4, no. 1, Summer 2006.

cherished certain specific hoped-for goals and when opportunity stroke he rose to the occasion to accomplish them. Calamities such as this earthquake are often described as radical, and socially and emotional devastating. According to some contemporary accounts of hope as an emotional phenomenon, such as Jonathan Lear in *Radical Hope*, these are precisely the conditions in which hope, is supposed to activate itself in its most radical fashion.[359] I do not completely agree with Lear's account of the radicality of hope, but I do share with him the belief that its radicality is to be determined by context. Lisbon's catastrophic situation is radical and it certainly was radically hopeless for thousands of its citizens at the time. And yet, ironically, in none of the accounts that I found about this catastrophe in relation to the Marquis' undertakings amid this situation, the language of hope is ever used to describe his legendary deeds. Instead, his successful political life is described in terms of logic and rationality, in terms of the values of Enlightenment and science and in terms of his political leadership backed up by his almost absolute power. While the language of hope is used to describe situations of great distress in the life of all sorts of persons, it is rarely used to describe the political endeavors of those in power. Nonetheless, the language of hope is frequently used in the narrative of the socio-political life of the oppressed. As mentioned earlier, the tendency is to think that hopeful thoughts and the like are not part of the lives of men and women in power, as if they would not need such a faculty. Why? The common view seems to be that people in power (such as statespersons, entrepreneurs and the like) do not hope, because hope cannot be a strategy for a successful person. Hope seems to be

---

[359] Lear, Jonathan. *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

for the powerless. Powerful people have means. And consequently, they rather have visions, concrete plans, actual strategies and effective tactics to push their agenda forward and bring their desired future to a happy resolution. It is as if hope is thought to be only good for and/or only be made for the sake of those in hopeless situations. Yet, and paradoxically, as I elaborated in the previous chapter, hope is not only an attitude assumed to be ubiquitous and especially important in calamitous times, but it is also, as C.R. Snyder describes it, a human motivational based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)."[360] Hopeful thinking, according to Snyder, needs both pathways and agentic thought. Accordingly, agentic "thinking is important in all goal-directed thought, but it takes on special significance when people encounter impediments."[361]

The Marquis was a man with a colossal dream, with an extraordinary project, with a specific vision and plans about the modern future of Portugal, which he pushed forward albeit facing inordinate impediments within a situation of great perils and massive misfortunes. Was Pombal a full-blown historical agent and, therefore, a subject of hope, with a dream and a project? Of course, he was. It is important to clarify that there is no description of Pombal as having been necessarily hopeless or without optimism or in despair when meeting the challenges of pushing Lisbon back on its feet. And yet it is difficult to imagine any person in such a drastic situation that would simply not feel any anguish, affliction or anxiety and even fear in confronting such a calamity. Going through such a process without showing any of the former

---

[360] Snyder, C. R. "Hope theory: Rainbows in the Mind." *Psychological Inquiry*, 13, (2002), 249-275, pp. 250.

[361] Ibid. pp.251.

feelings would be simply inhumane. But, Pombal was, according to the narratives, a man of action. Men of action are humans. Yet, modern political realistic narratives, such as the ones on Pombal's deeds, tend to miss the human drama and even the tragedy behind being a statesman in the middle of these sorts of events. However, following what contemporary theorists of hope such as Snyder, Pettit or Freire advance regarding the practice of this human capability, my argument is that a person of action is a person of hope, and evidently, not of hopelessness, for hopelessness impedes action. And yet, the specific historical context in which hope is put into practice determines its quality, attributes and specific radicality.

Now, let me come back and conclude my analysis on The Florentine's methodology and political realism. The preceding analysis yields some important conclusions from the standpoint of the enterprise of statecraft, despotic rule and domination. The most important relates to what I perceive to be a traditional strand of interpretation of Machiavelli's methodology that misunderstands what his realistic political thought is about. To begin with, there is this superficial interpretation of Machiavelli, which is abundantly present in the web, in popular culture and even in certain academic circles, which interprets the Florentine ideas on fortune, luck, necessity and change as asking the political agent to adapt and re-adapt himself and his conduct to fluctuating conditions. This view, taken in isolation from of any other important considerations, encapsulates what I consider the greatest confusion about the sort of realistic gaze Machiavelli was advancing. This idea sometimes translates into pseudo-academic works in

the form of advice to managers, entrepreneurs, marketing experts and the like.[362] Furthermore, the idea that "skill beats luck every time" is also a misinterpretation of Machiavelli's idea about fortune that tends to tergiversate his political realism and make a mockery of it, because it impregnates his political thought with a kind of optimism that is not actually there.[363]

First, being a true political realist, from Machiavelli's gaze, demands to accept that which cannot be changed about *Fortuna* and about the not-yet. Pure will or voluntarism is not enough to counter the fluidity and complexity of contingency. Not even the most powerful political agent can manage to manipulate, control, foresee, much less stop contingent events. Furthermore, wishful thinking and hoped-for goals, whose consecution is not based on a realistic assessment of its actual possibilities and strategic paths to success in a given moment are mere fantasy. Second, and therefore, readiness is of tremendous importance, and this implies to be prepared to change procedures or methodology when time demands it. Third, as in the case of the Marquis of Pombal, changing procedure, however, is not necessarily equivalent to change or to adapt oneself to a new situation, but rather to be ready to dominate other people's spatio-temporal activities and times and be prepared to make them adapt to your hoped-for goals and visions regarding the future. The creation for the ground for domination is traditionally understood as a move in which the prince or the political agent creates the objective grounds from which many people will be dominated. Nonetheless, this enterprise is also especially about creating the illusion in people's

---

[362] See, for example, Gutsche, Jeremy, *Exploiting Chaos: 150 Ways to Spark Innovation During Times of Change*. See also, Tobak, Steve. "10 Business and Leadership Lessons-From Machiavelli." *CBS Money Watch*.

[363] See for example, Chadwick, Ian. "Chapter 25: Skill Beasts Luck Every Time." In *The Municipal Machiavelli: Machiavelli's The Prince Rewritten for Municipal Politicians*.

minds that the political agent has the future secured and under his control and that he has domesticated *Fortuna* and gained her favors. It is true that the actual space and, especially, concrete recourses are to be dominated first in one way or another to be entirely successful at this sort of political machinations. Yet the method of controlling and ruling upon a specific space at one time does not suffice for actual domination of the spatio-temporal landscape, for temporality is not fixed and, thus, the things or persons that a political agent dominates as of right now will immediately show continuous resistance. Thus, domination is not a one moment or one-day enterprise, but a continuous daily (or even, every minute) business in which people need to be controlled and re-controlled endlessly if the enterprise is to succeed along time. To deal with this sort of resistance over time, it is necessary to develop a system to domesticate people's minds. In other words, the prince, to be successful at creating the illusion that the space and time is secured today and tomorrow, needs to device a way of domesticating people's minds and especially their sense of hope. His aim is ultimately to control the people's motion and, therefore, to slow down as much as he can their speed. Hope, as I have been advancing is the hypothesis of human motion. Consequently, if the final and aim of a prince or of a government is to control people's movement from its very root, it becomes obvious that the one human emotion that needs to be controlled is the people's sense of hope. Thus, manipulating hope becomes an administrative tool aimed at slowing people down.

Now, as I implied above, my assessment of Machiavelli's true political realism aims at revealing yet another important fact of political life regarding hope. Since the statesperson cannot really dominate entirely the fluid and rapidly changing reality of the spatio-temporal

political landscape nor the time to come; his situation becomes one of a radical and extreme nature, in which he needs to always hope big. Again, *Fortuna* is a river. Machiavelli's measurement of power and calculation of means forcefully needs to take into consideration that the Prince's own desires and hopes will be met by other people's hopeful actions. Besides natural or purely accidental catastrophes that *Fortuna* could bring into the socio-political landscape, other people's big and small hopes also saturate this space with their specific movements, velocities and resistances. This means that other people's hopes and movements become a *contra-tiempo*—a misfortune, a mischance or even a disappointing delay or setback. The power seeking person and her hopeful set of actions and movement need to negotiate other people's hopes and motions to secure her power and reign. Therefore, from this politically antagonistic point of view, we can say that the political landscape becomes a clash of hopes. In this scenario domination is not only necessarily about halting other people's movement, but also it is about finding a way of concretely slowing down or completely crippling someone else's hope to prevail.

Evidently, for Machiavelli the political landscape is characterized by power asymmetry. Thus, *the hopeful motion* of a political agent or of anybody else will be substantially determined by the actual existence of asymmetric and/or oppressive socio-political relations and actual availability of means (and/or resources of hope). As in the case of the Marquis of Pombal, a person with enough power and means, enough sense of anticipation, agency and preparedness will react much quicker to changing times. As I mentioned above, from a strict Machiavellian point of view, when it comes down to actual domination, it is a theoretical error to think that this

177

is only a matter of adaptation on the part of the political agent. Machiavelli's praxis of *virtù* is quite extensive when it comes down to necessity and imposing this necessity upon the political landscape and upon others. And so, for a prince to remain in power or to gain power is a matter of being prepared to adapt other things and other people's bodies, spaces, times, sense of hope and ideas of the future, to his own desires, hopes and plans for the future. It is obvious that the chance of success of a prince's hopeful plans for acquiring and maintaining power will dramatically increase with the creation of conditions where other people's hopes and movements are manipulated, suppressed or canceled through different deceptive and manipulative schemes. From this perspective, therefore, it looks advisable for a prince, when necessity demands, to ask his subjects to abandon all hopes and to make them believe that they have in fact no hope left, but to follow his commands and obey and embrace the future that he is proposing as their own. Yet, other moments might demand to instill false hopes upon them as well. Nonetheless, it is evident that the prince needs not to abandon his hope, but to make sure that his hope is the only one that prevails. In contrast, on the other side of the former situation of domination, we will find a group of people trying to bounce back from a condition in which their elpidic minds are being manipulated, suppressed or negated through different sort of devices designed to keep them hopeless or to make them hope in a fashion according to their new political masters.

Now, taking into consideration the oddities and radical difficulties found within the fluid spatio-temporal political realm, we could appreciate now how the sense of hope of any Machiavellian political agent needs to become praxiological and concrete. Machiavelli's insistence that successful princes rely solely on their own virtue rather than in luck or on other

people's resources to acquire and retain power, or to be successful in future ventures, is an advice that places practical hope in a special politically realistic perspective. Its means that the sense of hope of the political agent needs to become practical in terms of the autonomy he must have at the time of pushing forward his hoped-for goals if what he wants to actually accomplish are his own hoped-for goals and not those of other peoples. In addition, hoping realistically also means that the grounds for hope should be visible and concrete and not mysteriously intangible or invisible ones, such as relying in gods or on a force outside of his own capabilities and resources. The prince's personal achievements cannot be said to be his if he relies on forces and or capacities that are not his own. Nonetheless, remember that in Machiavelli's political realism, self-confidence, daring, planning, strategizing and readiness seem to account for just part of the equation of success, but not necessarily for all. Fortune plays always its parts. Then, what does it really mean to be politically realistic under the fluid changing circumstances described by Machiavelli?

As suggested earlier, a particularly crucial point that it is usually missed from the discussion on *virtù* and contingency in Machiavelli is the need for awareness on the part of the agent that the future cannot be really controlled and that *Fortuna* cannot be fully domesticated. Believing that it is possible to completely dominate *Fortuna* through strategy and planning is an illusion. Yet, as I explained above, creating the illusion of control over the spatio-temporal landscape seems to be crucial for the success of any hegemonic enterprise. Therefore, the only possible way for a prince—whose desire, ambition and great hope is to advance himself at any cost over any other rival—to acquire certain effective control over the future is by having an

effective control upon concrete recourses, as well as on his subjects' concrete resources, actions, hopes, and feelings.

Machiavelli's fear and love dilemma, which he resolves in favor of the tactic of fear without necessarily ruling completely out the possible positive services that love could bring to the strategic cause of the prince, acknowledges the tactical importance for a ruling power to device questionable ways through which to gain and maintain the people's favor. This strategy obviously involves manipulating their feelings, their sense of confidence and security; an operation that, as I will discuss in detail in the next chapter, is intimately related to hope or to the elpidic structure of our minds. This fear and love dilemma is, however, a double-sided coin that Machiavelli, in the opening of Chapter XVII, in which he discusses the dilemma in question, clearly recognizes by discussing peace, unity and loyalty first, and how these political conditions are achieved, guarded or lost.[364]

Now, by discussing the fear and love dilemma in conjunction with the category of loyalty, Machiavelli also invokes a crucial predicament in which we all find ourselves in the context of being members of a specific political community. A pressing paradox facing almost all citizens in an ever-changing and fluid socio-political milieu is to decide, on the one hand; how much legitimate affection or loyalty do they feel for the regime they live under and how much support they intend to show for their current socio-political situation, or; on the other hand, how much anxiety, fear or hopeful they feel about the actual or imagined possibilities of bringing a new, different and better socio-political situation over. The image of an idealized new and

---

[364] Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince and the Discourses*, pp. 60-63.

better future to come could be a captivating and hopeful lure for some people, while an uncertain and gloomy image of a different less secured future is a terrifying image that would surely cause repulsion. Likewise, the idea of a stable and ordered present is naturally luring to the ones enjoying the permanent and enduring goods produced by a society, while those who are in a worse off position might not necessarily agree with the permanency and stability of socio-political and economic conditions that do not favor them. While some are actively hoping for permanence and stability, others are actively hoping for change. Change versus permanence is a perennial dilemma that within the everyday complex and multifaceted fluid and dynamic spatio-temporal social context sometimes invites and even necessitates revolutionary change, but other times it demands practical stability. Yet the registers and nuances of this dynamic reality are determined by many reasons and circumstances. These circumstances are the product of a conglomerate of human desires, motives, hopes and actions, that do not occur within an idealized political arena or a vacuum, but within a reality shaped and ordered (or disordered) in some way or the other, by a concrete political regime on one hand, and the rest of the internal and external political forces, on the other.

As Machiavelli's analysis also yields, no regime or social order endures forever. The puzzling dynamics of socio-political change versus permanence gains momentum and even turns radical at certain special moments. In moments of social unrest and violent conflict, a political crisis could mount until it is put to rest or until something definitive happens. A true revolutionary moment leads to a new foundational era where, as Hannah Arendt says, a plurality

of people discovers true freedom anew and resolve to give birth to a new political reality.[365] Revolution is a moment for the rediscovery of freedom. New political beginnings are times of ecstasy, moments of project, of futurity, of unbound imagination, of design, of creation, of transformative action, of horizon, of open possibilities and above all, of great hope.[366] If hope is an illusion, it is an unquestionably subversive and revolutionary one. Indeed, this compound of feelings and thoughts makes the revolutionary moment one of great inspiration, expectation and joy, but also of unbound transformative illusions and dreams, in which the joyful-hopeful-rapid journey from point A to point B is more pleasurable than arriving at the defining political moment of having to deal with instituting the new political. While revolution, as Arendt signifies, is about finding true unbound political freedom again, this moment needs to end abruptly. Revolution brings legitimacy paradox back; the very inauguration of a new beginning demands for the sake of the revolutionary political project to become much more than just a new time. It demands to gain the characteristic of permanence and stability as an integral part of its institutionalization. Consequently, and paradoxically, necessity strikes at the core of the political dynamics demanding for freedom to be taken away. Unpleasantly oddly, the beginning becomes

---

[365] Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*. New York: Penguin Books, 1979, pp. 33.

[366] Notice we call revolutionary times those times where a new order has been already established. The very narrative of revolutions implies this, and, yet, it commonly tends to miss one side of the story. Every revolutionary moment is a clash of several political forces within a space that is being dominated by a force that is about to lose its hegemony upon that space if the revolution succeeds. Although the case of the Crow Nation mentioned above is not narrated in the language of revolutionary times, their situation was indeed the product of a political revolution in which they were one of the forces defeated and condemned to live under the hegemonic power of another nation.

a sort of an end for transformational hope. Paradoxically, this process might also inaugurate an age of hopelessness for those who took no part of the revolutionary process or for those who lost.

Machiavelli exorcises this perennial paradox by advising to instill fear as the mechanism to ensure the stability and permanence of a regime. Yet, even when fear might ensure the full compliance of the subjects, it might also ensure that people enjoy no liberty, show no love and feel no hope on the possibilities of improvement of their condition as subjects of a regime that terrify them. Ironically, our elpidic minds also handle our anxieties and fears. Fear is also an anticipatory affect. Imagining a gloomy or terrified future is a sort of an illusion too, for that future is not here yet. And, thus, the politics of fear is a strategy based on creating illusions of insecurity and ill happenings in the future by means of manipulating the spatio-temporal context in which the lives of the people go on. The target needs to be the people's minds, at the individual and collective level, for the illusion that needs to be created is one that corresponds to the time in which the action and movement that is in need to be controlled happens. Contrary to a riot or revolt that is happening now, a revolt that is not here yet needs to be stopped before it happens. And the best way to stop a revolt from happening is to make sure people do not even think or dare about revolting. Fear is not only an assault on the mind and on reason. The politics of fear is an assault on movement, and therefore an assault on freedom. It is stopping people from moving. Further, the politics of fear is an assault on hope too. And therefore, its major aim is to create the illusion of hopelessness; an illusion that Brazilian educator and political

philosopher, Paulo Freire describes as the outcome of an organized system of hopelessness.[367] Indeed, "fear of freedom" is oppression's benchmark, which most vivid manifestation is hopelessness.[368]

Concluding Remarks and Questions

Is there any virtue in illusions or we need to absolutely escape them all? And, if we do feel, desire or find the urge to escape all illusions: where can we hope to go then? What exactly is the path we need to take to effectively escape illusions? And, is it realistic to hope to escape them all? There is a radicality in all these questions that points to the radicality of the entire human phenomena that transpires through our experience of hope. This radicality is determined by the peculiar dynamism of the spatio-temporal milieu in which we are bound to experience life and copying with its oddities through a limited set of intellectual elpidic faculties.

The human world is extremely complex. The human experience is not only a physical and material one that occurs upon the ground of a sensible-material world, but also and especially, a mental and psychic experience lived through a perceptual cultural-spiritual reality

---

[367] See Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage*. Maryland: Rowand & Littlefield Publishers, 1998, pp. ix.

[368] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 2005, pp. 35.

superimposed upon the material one. In addition, this intricate web of material and psychic human experiences elapses within an odd spatio-temporal landscape that is unbalanced, volatile and in perpetual flux, where the space is real and physical, but time is but a mental perception or an illusion.[369] Therefore, the oddity of our existence regarding illusions is precisely that illusions are an integral part of the human mental makeup and panorama. This fact is crucial because it makes illusions an integral part of the human reality or at least of the way we come to understand and make sense of what is real for us. Illusions feed and grow from the way the human emotional and conative mind makes sense of the world. The human mind is not a recording machine. It is an organ that interprets and categorizes all the different inputs it receives from the outside world. But this outside world is not only made of material things, but also of the mental and cultural stuff and the interpretations of the outside world that other people produce and with which they feed the cultural milieu—illusions included. Therefore, a much more realistic approach to illusions might need to come to, and cope with realization that instead of being something from which it is necessary to escape, illusions are something that we (all) humans need to critically comprehend and then learn to master in a critical and educated way.

Humans understand quite well the power of illusions. What has been radically problematic throughout the ages is our limited capacity to understand the true nature of illusions and to device an efficient and reliable method to deal and cope with their effects. Thus, humans have strongly hoped to conquer illusions in order either to put them to rest or to fully master

---

[369] Post-Einstein science of physics understands and describes time as an illusion. See, for example, Callender, Craig, "Is Time an Illusion?", *Scientific American*, 2010; pp. 59-65.

them. As I described in this chapter, this is a task that religious people, philosophers, political thinkers and statesmen alike have attempted in different spheres of human life and in a diverse array of ways throughout history. Yet, these attempts have not been free of political and ethical controversy. The paradox of the political has been perennially present at the core of our attempts at dealing with illusions. As we know, whenever humans are in a situation where it becomes possible to administer and/or master a power, the politico-ethical question arises. If humans are to master illusions, they are forced to decide if they are to master them for good or for evil, for the benefit of all or for the benefit of a few or for their own individual benefit. This difficulty turns immediately into the paradoxical question about who is to decide what is what. Political decision-making's ultimate expression resides to a large degree in the power and capacity to resolve who is to suffer and who is to benefit from the decision that is to be made; a process whose outcomes might even include a resolution about who is to live and who must die. The deployment of this power, however, is always a future maker, for decision-making is always an act in futurization. Therefore, futurity and normativity are already a precondition of a political decision-making process that makes social imagination, ideology and human hope an integral part of this political process. In other words, decision-making is a process in which futuristic political and moral force engages and transforms the future status of the socio-political reality and landscape. Yet, the factual status of the future is not here yet. It needs to be pursued in the present through dreams, visions, futurization, plans, policies, and implementation. And, as I have been arguing, hope is the radical affective-cognitive, although unreliable mechanism that drives

this process of hypothesis making of the future. This process is the concrete manifestation of human agency and freedom; a process, in which, not necessarily all humans actively participate.

José Ortega y Gasset calls hope humans' "most visceral organ." [370] Indeed, the true radicality of hope rests on the fact that *to hope* is the most visceral and underlying faculty that humans possess. As I said, it is meant to deal and cope with the risky temporal oddities into which humans are forced to live. Human existence is to live expecting an unpredictable future. Neither society nor our artifacts are completely reliable entities for us to fully trust them to counter the effects of *Fortuna* (the unexpected) and/or of our infinite errors of judgment about the time to come. The true radicality of human life is to have to depend on our unreliable and ineffective sense of hope as the only positive open venue to the future. And as I have tried to advance in this chapter, this radicality is even more patent and potent when approached through the problematization of hope as an illusion-creating force.

Illusions, we have been told, are an attack upon our reason designed to cast shadows not only upon our heads, but also and especially upon our understandings of and practice of freedom. Illusions can be oppressive and oppression is always a way of manipulating and controlling human agency or people's motion and freedom. My discussion of *elpis*, however, took our analysis into a kind of uncharted realm where the main conclusion is that the illusions created by our elpidic-mind appeared as inescapable. Human beings have what I have termed an elpidic-mind. This means that the affective and cognitive structure of our psyche possesses an elpidic nature—an inevitable tendency that forces our intellect to continuously drift towards, and be

---

[370] Ortega y Gasset, José. *Man and People*. New York/London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1957 pp. 56.

187

worried about the future. Yet, as the future is unknown and technically unpredictable, imagining and constructing images or fabricating illusions about the future become a common pursuit of our minds. Dreams, visions, vistas and utopian thinking are forms of futurization. They are all, nonetheless, different sort of illusions. Our cognitive rational faculties are unable to fully dissociate our minds and feelings from these sorts of illusions about the future.

The former explains why hope has always been associated with the irrational or with that which is not "grounded". Nevertheless, this terrestrial reference is misleading. Since ancient times "grounding" hope, or any other human value, has not necessarily been an intellectual exercise concerned with finding a concrete location upon earth where to plant or establish the "foundation" of hope, but on the contrary a human pursuit with a tendency for escaping our material world. As with Plato's mystical geometric explorations, "grounding" his philosophy became a metaphor for justifying a series of values and standards that were very far away from the earthy soil or ground sitting under our feet. As my exploration of Nietzsche's critique of Plato's philosophy and methods showed, metaphysics proves to be just a questionable escaping path from the contingent reality, oddities and uncertainties of our world.

As our discussion also showed, Machiavelli's so-called realistic approach to human affairs from a down-to-earth (non-metaphysical) standpoint to contingency is not necessarily a bulletproof and infallible methodology to fight and/or escape illusions. From the point of view of hope, Machiavelli's methodology and strategic reasoning was just another intellectual attempt at rationalizing hope. He tried to find a method to counter human's short-sightlessness regarding the future by perfecting a way to approach and domesticate fortune. This methodology has been

188

historically prized and valued because of its political realism. But the reality is that Machiavelli's political realistic instrumental and strategic reasoning is a methodology for domination and oppression through the administration of all sorts of illusions, including fear. Machiavelli's model of domination upon the spatio-temporal landscape (as articulated in the Prince) is an invitation to device and implement an illusion-creating formula to manipulate, deceive and force people to fix their minds and remain loyal to a prince's desires, hopes and cause.

As I discussed, Plato's idealism could also be interpreted as a political ideological impulse with tyrannical tendencies. Of course, there are many other ways of interpreting Plato. Interpreting and re-interpreting Plato is nevertheless an ongoing project, which I am sure can still yield philosophical and practical results, as well as positively inform today's human social ethical and political quandaries. Nonetheless, the criticism presented here against his metaphysical approach to ethics and politics and its tyrannical and obvious anti-democratic tendencies cannot be denied. Further his influence upon Christian theology is undeniable. Christian moral consciousness and its faith in the perfect nature of God are all ideas impregnated with Plato's metaphysical illusions. As I argued, both religion in general and Plato's rationalism can be also interpreted as paths into finding alternative "grounds" where to find certainty and appease the anxieties of the human elpidic mind.

As I have shown thus far, humans tend to carry into some of their philosophical and/or religious future oriented elucubrations and opinions the illusory features produced by their elpidic-minds. Since hope is generally a future oriented positive opinion regarding the outcome of the human longings concerning the future, this human habit permeates everything into which

the human being stamps futurity. And thus, to imprint the future with our hope becomes an imperceptible but ever-present habit. In other words, we attach hope to all our cultural artifacts, to the intangibles ones and to the material ones as well. In this way, the illusive certainty that the projected goodness underlying our future expectations contains gets attached or stamped in all our future oriented systems of thought, value models and theories. Contemporary, discussions and theories of hope tend to overlook this fact. And thus, this traditional myopic look into its intricacies obscures a complete side of the equation of the phenomenon of hope and hoping.

For instance, the modern philosophical project—together with its whole idea of moral and political progress—is but another example of this ancient hopeful-optimistic human tendency of believing that it is possible for human reason to device a rational method to escape all illusions, including religious ones. As we know, the Enlightenment project was indeed a very optimistic intellectual undertaking regarding the human intellectual capacity to find a way (through rationalism or science) to either counter or to completely escape religious illusions to emancipate humankind from its tyranny. The Enlightenment critique of religion sought to render revelatory religion as superstition based on fear by promoting rationality and human autonomy against religious authority and priest craft. For example, as advanced in the *Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right,* Karl Marx thought that the criticism of religion was the prerequisite to all criticism. The struggle to emancipate the human being from oppression, he proposed, begins by fighting the illusory "spiritual aroma" of religion and the

illusory happiness that came with it.[371] Religious suffering, Marx claims, "is the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering". Religion "is the opium of the people."[372] It was, according to him, a form of self-estrangement. In his view, a demand for concrete down-to-earth happiness begins by abolishing religion. Marx's hope was for oppressed people to receive and to understand his call "on them to give up their illusions about their condition […which amounts in his opinion…] to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions."[373] From Marx's materialistic point of view, we can extrapolate and argue that abolishing religion altogether, including all its illusions, was also a call for abolishing hope, or, at the very least, to abolish religious or illusory hope. But, then again, if hope is an inescapable illusion; what sort of form of hoping can be advanced from a realist-materialistic standpoint?

In the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's* Marx does not specifically address the category of hope. But we can presume that his call for abolishing all religious illusions was a direct call to give up false notions of hope, such as the balsamic Christian notion of hoping, which was usually used as a tool to keep the oppressed passive, quiet and happy with the unjust conditions that oppress them. The messianic Jewish characterization of hope or messianism could be also deemed as false and illusory from this point of view. Now, it is a fascinating fact that when Marx compares religion with the hallucinatory or illusory effects that opium produces in a person, inadvertently the idea of hope as a "pipe dream" emerges as a reminder of the

---

[371] Marx, Karl. *Marx, 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*, "Introduction" in Karl Marx, Frederick Engels Collected Works, Lawrence and Wishart, 1975; pp.175.

[372] Ibid.

[373] Ibid.

traditional Christian religious hope's anesthetic or balsamic nature. As a matter of fact, the term "pipe-dream" appears as a synonym of hope in several dictionaries. It means a fantastic hope.[374] As a matter of fact, the term originates as a reference to the dreams experienced by people when smoking opium.[375] From this perspective, religious hope could be deemed as a fantastic and illusory-anesthetic image created by the effects in the mind of a person of religious irrationality and myths. Accordingly, to hope is to be out of the mind or irrational. Thus, we could say that, in Marx's view, abandoning unreal (pie-in-the-sky) religious hope for a more concrete and real one will be a way for oppressed people to break their chains and to march into a path of real emancipation. Thus, the task of history, Marx thinks, is to establish the material truth of this world upon earth and to leave the metaphysical world of truth behind.

Nonetheless, Marx's hope confronts the same kind of problems and difficulties to which I have been calling attention since the beginning of this chapter, regarding the illusory nature of hope and the vulnerabilities associated to the structure of the human elpidic mind. Abandoning all illusions at once is something we cannot really hope for. To desire and to try to abandon all hopes is also a vain and false hope and, therefore, illusory. When philosophy touted itself as a way of leaving illusions behind, it had done so under the illusion (or naiveté) that the human intellect can find a reliable and infallible method to leave all illusions behind. When religion proposed a way to hope in a more certain and secure way, it had also wished-for in an illusory

---

[374] See, for example, "Hope" in *Thesaurus.Com*, http://www.thesaurus.com/browse/hope.

[375] See Hiskey, David. "The Origin of the of the Phrase Pipe Dream." http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2011/07/the-origin-of-the-phrase-pipe-dream/.

and naïve way to completely banish uncertainty and anxiety about the future. Therefore, Marx seems to fall in this intellectual trap, as many other thinkers in the past. By being convinced that all illusions could be left behind, he unintentionally entered into another chamber of illusions. Believing, for example, that history had a predetermined outcome is illusory, mythical and even fatalistic. Embracing the idea of progress advanced by the Enlightenment project was another big illusion that ran through his work. To believe that history was necessarily on the side of the oppressed and to hope that history will eventually bring all of us to a great final social paradise was also a profoundly false and illusory optimistic view of history with a myth-creating tendency. Unfortunately, this Marxist myth-creating view of history has also been the mother of all kind of illusory hopes in regard to how social and political change should be brought about.

Nonetheless, a crucial analytical element gets distilled out of Marx's poignant critique of religion, which we need to unveil now as the most important conclusion of our analysis for this chapter. A true critique of all illusions and of oppression or of the oppression of illusions, I shall conclude, does not necessarily starts with a critique on religion as proposed by Karl Marx. His conclusion regarding this point missed the real target, for religion is, as we saw earlier, but the outcome of the anxieties and insecurities produced by the human elpidic mind. Then, a true critique of all illusions and their relation to human oppression starts by a profound critique of hope as the source of some of our most profoundly damaging and oppressive illusions. Hope needs to be exorcised from all the illusory flowers and analgesic-opiate coats that had been placed upon it if we want to look at hope as such. If we humans truly desire to emancipate ourselves from the tyranny of illusions, including any sort of tyrannical grip that religion and

other philosophical enterprises hold upon the human heart, it is necessary first to understand how exactly the tyranny of illusions comes to be, how illusions work and what hope and our future oriented thinking have to do with it. Yet, religion is not the only social institution with tyrannical tendencies in the business of creating illusions. Science in general and modern medicine, in particular, as well as corporate capitalism and the market (local and global), the military as an industry, the communication industry and the State are all social institutions in the business of creating, administering and/or mastering (for us) illusions of emerging risks, possible future hazards and tomorrow's insecurities regarding the possible risks that we might or could expect to face in the time to come. The modern narrative of risk, as Ulrich Beck argues, is a "fatal irony" that advances "an involuntary satire [and an] optimistic futility…in which scientific technical society plunges us, as a consequence of its perfection" into being highly occupied in the present with things that are unknown, but from where many dangers arise.[376] As he reminds us, as all these institutions deal systematically with the future hazards and possible insecurities that are not here yet, but that determine movements, actions and policies, we need to take action now in order "to anticipate what cannot be anticipated."[377] The irony of risk management precisely consists in rationalizing our fears and to try—through some sort of scientific oriented horizon scanning or foresight methodology—to anticipate, calculate and control future's emerging risk vectors; the actual disasters, however, might come from the unanticipated and unknown sources. Nonetheless, a more sinister-tyrannical irony is yet the true threat. To be protected from

---

[376] Beck, Ulrich. "Living in the world risk society." *Economy and Society*, vol.35, no. 3, August 2006, pp. 329-345.

[377] Ibid. pp. 329.

unknown possible dangers, the citizens' civil rights and liberties must be limited and the open society closed. Anticipating risk is as ambivalent and shadowy as anticipating future pleasures and goods. Yet, the irony of all ironies is that it is our hopeful elpidic mind the one that inclines us to create the positive illusion that we can come up with a method to scan the horizon, to control the emerging or incoming threats and to secure the future. As I suggested above, to think that we can domesticate the future and its trajectory is an illusion. Unfortunately, as in any sort of illusion, one deceptive way in which this illusion can still be falsely shown as a solid fact is by creating the material and concrete conditions in which other people's movement and hope is reduced, limited or suppressed.

The shadows of Plato's cave are meant to subdue the captive's minds in order to subdue their bodies. Paradoxically, their restraints are also shadow chains. And yet, these shadows take the captive's actual mobility and, therefore, his hope through a subterfuge that aims at attacking his mind to physically immobilize him. Who would have said that to prevent human movements, freeze time and secure the future the trick rests in implementing a shadowy method that allows controlling people's sense of hope? Therefore, as I stated above, surprisingly, a comprehensible and rigorous critique of hope and of the human elpidic mind becomes a clear, but an unorthodox path through which to arrive at a politically realist understanding of illusions and their tyrannical political effects upon the human body and human mind.

Nonetheless, since abandoning hope is not an option, a critique of hope needs to be cautious. As Nietzsche warns us in his critique of Socrates's methods, when devising a critique, one must be careful not to become a tyrant by means of it. Besides being an absurd impossible

petition, philosophy's historical tendency to ask us to abandon all illusions also rules out the possibility that there might be positive illusions that could be beneficial to humankind. When we are asked to abandon hope because it is an illusion, it is important to find out who exactly is making the call and to what purpose is that person asking us to give up hope. The political truth is that the person asking us to give our hopes might also annunciating with his petition his personal socio-political preference. This preference signals a tendency to block other people hopes and a desire to stop them from being historical beings. And as human history shows, this sort of desire might translate itself into a political program to stop history from happening.

Nonetheless, if hope is after all an illusion, how can we make hope an illusion that has a positive effect for all? The answer of this question comes along with a radical democratic understanding of the process of futurization. Futurization--a process at the core of any decision-making process, including the political one--can be either a process carried through authoritarian or despotic methods or, on the contrary, can be a democratic one that includes all of us.

Chapter 4

Between Hope as a Human Vocation and Hope as a Political Problem: Promethean Blind-Hope, Optimism and a Sort of Hope Called *Hubris*

> "To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
>
> To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
>
> To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
>
> To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
>
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates…" [378]
>> -Percy Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*

Our elpidic mind never rests. The illusion of hope emerges anywhere our desires project ourselves positively into the future. It is an inescapable praxis. As Thucydides remarks, "hope and desire persist…one leading and the other following, one conceiving the enterprise and the other suggesting that it will be successful."[379] Nonetheless, as he claims, hope's persistence turns unsafe, for it causes "the greatest calamities."[380] The illusion of hope is dangerous. As Thucydides also indicates, no risk is ever undertaken by people without having the previous belief that it would be carried out successfully.[381] And, then he adds: "[so] long as poverty forces men to be bold, so long as the insolence and pride of wealth nourish their ambitions…so long

---

[378] Shelley, Percy B. *The complete poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. New York: Modern Library, 1994, 4.570.

[379] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Translated by M.I. Finley. New York: Penguin Books, 1972, pp. 220.

[380] Ibid.

[381] Ibid.

will [their hopes] continue to drive them into danger."[382] Yet, does the fact that hope might drive us into danger disqualify it as an imperative of human life? Does hope's dangerous side necessarily mean that we must abandon it? And, if we in fact decide to abandon hope, what sort of a faculty or power is that which we would be abandoning?

Thucydides brings to light one crucial paradoxical aspect of hope worth elucidating, especially if one wants to advocate with Paulo Freire that hope is a human vocation and not "an intruder" in political matters.[383] Actually, Thucydides' work makes us aware as to the reasons why this paradox intensifies within the political arena. Hope, he warns us, is a solace in risky situations or, as he puts it, "a danger's comforter".[384] Within the context of the Melian dialogue—in which he puts these words in the mouths of the Athenian emissaries and—hope is portrayed as an attitude that, despite being sometimes reckless, makes the Melians sufficiently bold as to dare to challenge Athens. In this context, Thucydides seems to suggest that hope is a luxury that the Melians cannot afford, at least, not in the eyes of the Athenians. However, in the end, Thucydides also appears to accuse Athens' of being too optimistic about their prospects regarding their war against Sparta. His denunciation points to the possibility that Athenians demise had also came as the result of having indulged themselves in the costly luxury of hoping too much. As he suggests, the self-assurance gained from their positive experience in defeating the Persians ushered Athenians' hubris, guiding them from the desperate, defensive action against Persia to the offensive explosion of imperialism that followed their previous success.[385] As Thucydides highlights, Athenians' unreflective systematic optimism leaded them into their own destruction. Paradoxically, from his ancient gaze, *hubris*—a human attitude characterized by exaggerated self-pride, excessive self-confidence, arrogance and an illusory sense of

---

[382] Ibid.

[383] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Freedom*, pp. 69.

[384] Ibid. pp. 404.

[385] For a short but illuminating analysis on this issue see; Forde, Steven. "Thucydides on the Causes of Athenian Imperialism." *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 80, no. 2, Jun. 1986, pp. 433-448.

invulnerability—appears to be inherently connected to the same human elpidic drives from which hope originates.

Thucydides' account of hope contrasts greatly with various contemporary accounts of this human attitude that portrait it as submissive or passive. His view also significantly contrasts with current accounts of hope that characterize it as a fuzzy attitude that modern people who aspire to be reasonable and practical must abandon. Scholars do not seem to agree on the specific nature and value of hope. Thus, for some, hope is vague and ambiguous and even something disposable. For others, on the contrary, hope is something solid, radical and ubiquitous. But if hope is vague, it is difficult to believe how could it be something strong or robust. If hope is, for example, as Simon Critchley argues, a "form of *moral cowardice* that allows us to escape from reality and prolong human suffering"[386]; how can hope be also described as something that "gives us strength to live and to continually try new things, even in conditions as hopeless as ours do, here and now", as Vaclav Havel says?[387]; or if hope is, for example, something "submissive", "passive", "lethargic" or the "the desire to relax" as Spanish philosopher, Fernando Savater argues[388]; how could hope be, as Paulo Freire claims, an "existential concrete imperative" and something without which humans cannot even start the "the struggle needed to improve… human existence."[389]

How much our own understanding of hope had changed from the times in which the Greeks understood it as an audacious, yet a danger's comforter attitude as to produce such dissimilar and confusing accounts of this phenomenon today? How have our own current understandings of hope alienated us from a realistic and active practice of hope? Furthermore,

---

[386] Critchley, Simon. "Abandon (Nearly) all Illusions." *The New York Times*, April 19, 2014. (Recuperated April, 4, 2016) http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/04/19/abandon-nearly-all-hope/?_r=0.

[387] Havel, Vaclav. *Disturbing the Peace*. New York: Random House Inc., 1990, Chapter 5.

[388] Savater, Fernando. *La ética como antídoto*. "Interview to Fernando Savater by Lucía Iglesias Kuntz" (2014, 02, 29) Retrieved http://b.sb-10.org/pravo/4372/index.html.

[389] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving the Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Continuum, 1996, pp. 8.

how much estranged from the actual nature of hope have we become that we have ended up confused about the relationship between the praxis of hope and the availability of material means? Furthermore, as I advanced in previous chapters, we have also become puzzled about the convenience or inconvenience of being optimistic, and, therefore, lost sight of the possible inherent connection between hope and optimism.

Optimism is sometimes dismissed as an unimportant and unauthentic manifestation of our elpidic urges. It is usually portrayed as an unrealistic and cheerful forward-looking feeling about the future that prompts people to beliefs that, regardless of how bad things are looking now, everything will work out fine in the future.[390] Concerning our political life, it is ordinarily thought that people who think optimistically tend to expect that current social problems will be somehow solved in some way or another, either by government's experts or by the intervention of divine forces. The usual idea that transpires from this sort of positive outlook of life is that the future is always benevolent and that all tends to work out for good in the end. And so, the optimist prefers to wait for social problems to be solved as time goes by without actively intervening in politics. This naïve form of optimism is sometimes named Panglossian after Dr. Pangloss in Voltaire's *Candide*. Notice that this is the same kind of criticism that Fernando Savater poses against hope. Hope is a "passive…desire to relax".[391] For him, to hope is just an excuse to sit, or for crossing our arms and wait for things to happen. As Savater suggests, hope incapacitates the individual, both at the personal and at politically level. Nonetheless, according to Paulo Freire, hopelessness, which he defines as sort of silence that paralyses us, "is but hope that has lost its bearings."[392] Hopelessness is a form of "…denying the world and fleeing from it."[393]

---

[390] For a quick look into this view on optimism and hope see Ehrenreich, B. ''Pathologies of Hope.''

[391] Savater, Fernando. *La ética como antídoto*.

[392] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Hope,* pp. 8.

[393] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. pp. 91.

It is crucial to observe that Savater's attack on hope is directed against attitudes that are depicted by him as coming from hope. But, note that these attitudes are also similar to those that Freire ascribes instead to hopelessness. Also notice that hope is characterized either as naïve and passive or as a manifestation of hope that has, nonetheless, lost its bearings. According to Freire, when hope loses its "true course", it tends to manifest itself as hopelessness. Now, also observe that current commonly shared understanding of optimism also ascribes to this attitude the sort of mental attitudes that might generate passiveness. As Laurent Berlant points out, sometimes optimism might induce conventionality; a "place where appetites find a shape in the predictable comforts of the good-life genres that a person or a world has been fit to formulate."[394] However, within political contexts where the exercise of freedom and participation in political society are cherished as fundamental elements of political life, silence, passiveness and inertia are not necessarily seen as positive human traits. And, yet, the former is not true in the context of despotic or totalitarian political regimes where passiveness and silence might be considered appropriate.

Under such confusing accounts of these two categories we may ask, what exactly is the value of hope and of optimism in political affairs if they are either wicked and dangerous human inclinations and/or mental attitudes that might produce silence and inertia? Paulo Freire offers us a very important clue to guide our inquiry into these matters. Our inquiry regarding these subjects leads us inevitably to an investigation into the true bearings of hope. Considering its genuine bearings shall show where does the dangerous nature of hope lies or what is it exactly that which makes it hazardous. Our examination will also allow us to see what exactly is that which hope loses that turns it into hopelessness. Indeed, this investigation is important because (among other reasons) it also drives our inquiry into the heart of hopelessness as a manifestation of hope that has lost its bearings. And therefore, it also forces our investigation into trying to find the relation between hopelessness and inertia in the political realm and between hope and other values such as courage.

---

[394] Berlant, Laurent. *Cruel Optimism.* Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2011, pp. 2.

As I anticipated earlier, exploring the question of the bearings of hope is a task that in the end amounts to demystifying hope. Our examination into these matters begins by looking at the category of hope from historico-anthropological perspective through an exploration of Prometheus' myth. In the first section, I explore the characterization of hope as a rebellious human attitude that lies at the heart of this ancient myth. My approach emphasizes on Aeschylus' characterization of hope in *Prometheus Unbound*. As we shall see, Aeschylus' account of this category could be interpreted as an anthropological look into the human praxis of hope; which he names "blind-hope". Next, I use Aeschylus' notion of blind-hope as a model to explore and illustrate the human praxis of hope in its dialectical relation with fear. I explore this model further in section 3, where I interrogate contemporary anthropological assessments of hope and fear as key human traits. Some key anthropological facts about the human praxis of hope shall come afloat from this analysis. As I shall illustrate below, these facts illuminate the discussion on hope casting light upon some key features of hope that are usually overlooked in the contemporary discussion on the subject that I find crucial in the task of recuperating a politically realistic notion of hope through the exercise of finding its true bearings.

As I suggested above, as part of my analysis, here I also want to explore the intricate relation and correspondence between hope and optimism. First, I shall explain optimism as a manifestation of hope and not as a practice in contradiction with it. Second, I shall bring to the fore what I consider a crucial element of analysis regarding hope's true bearings and dangerous side, which are almost totally overlooked by the discussions about this topic; in my opinion, *hubris* is, in fact, a sort of hope or a manifestation of the human sense of hope. As I shall clarify in this chapter, the only way to truly demystify hope's dangerous character in its full breadth and potency is through the exploration of hubris as a positive future-oriented human attitude, whose ultimate nature corresponds with hope. As I will discuss in section 4, this means that, empirically, hubris is a direct product of our elpidic mind. And thus, I shall characterize hubris as "inflated hope".

To give a true political breadth to my theoretical concerns here, I shall also explore the political dimension of hope in the political scenario of Thucydides' Melian dialogue. I bring

Thucydides' analysis forward to show how the true bearings of hope make it susceptible of being characterized as a menacing or dangerous political practice. I shall end my discussion with a fruitful detour into Thomas Hobbes's insights on the dangers that hope's true bearings bring to the political arena and civil society from his anthropological perspective on human passions and political conflict. The true bearings of hope, as I shall demonstrate, confronts humanity with the issue of the human being as a maker, with his Promethean utopian impulses and his hubristic foolish arrogance. In Hobbes' view, this equation becomes a gruesome political issue that puts political order and peace at risk.

Promethean rebellious hope and its consequences

Prometheus stole fire from the gods, brought it to mortals as a gift and became, thereby, humankind's greatest benefactor. His gift symbolizes technology[395] and the arts for human survival—shelter, agriculture, numbers, calculation, metallurgy, foresight and planning, among others. But above all, Prometheus' gift is a symbol of freedom from servitude. He gave mortals a divine edge, a transformational-emancipatory set of faculties, which included endorsing the idea of transgression of order as a positive action.

---

[395] The idea of technology is not an easy one to explain. Martin Heidegger insisted that it could not be even defined. While modern technology relates to the imposition of order to device solutions and process data, the Greek concept of *techne* was a process of disclosing, a way of revealing truth. See Heidegger, M., *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays.* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977) p. 4-12. Mario Bunge thinks of technology as a body of knowledge that, in our times, is compatible with modern science and that "can be employed to control, transform or create things or processes, natural or social, to some practical end deemed to be valuable." Bunge, M. "The Philosophical Richness of Technology" in *PSA: Proceedings of the Biennal Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, 2 1976, pp. 154. Prometheus' myth can be seen as the ancient interpretation of technology and technological advances. The different accounts of the myth intersect with the idea of an apparent gradual development of arts and techniques as a civilizer process. This ancient assessment is most of the time critically portrayed as underlying the tragic paradoxical flux of the creation/destruction ingrained in human technological advances.

According to Hesiod, humans were in crisis, suffering from starvation. Zeus had decided to keep food concealed from them.[396] Prometheus defies Zeus' hegemonic power by providing mortals with resources to subsist by themselves, independently. It can also be said that Prometheus gave them agency, autonomy and self-reliance by providing mortals with concrete resources for hope. Consequently, it should not come as a surprise, that Prometheus has become a symbol of hope in Western culture. As John Horton argues, "Prometheus, the notion of hope [also] takes on an early identification with humanity curiosity, knowledge and power."[397] Moreover, since Prometheus challenged Zeus, he has also been seen as a symbol of "advocacy of rebellion against all forms of tyrannical authority [that limit human] imagination and potential."[398] As a consequence, embracing Prometheus as a hopeful defiant political hero has been a recurrent tendency in Western literature and philosophy.[399] This interpretation immediately offers clues regarding the true bearings of hope. First, it presents hope as a praxis of self-reliance and autonomy. Second, it also points to hope as a rebellious attitude against tyrannical authorities and as a methodology to gain independence and freedom from these powers.

Nonetheless, before I proceed with my analysis, I call attention to a vulnerability that the traditional account of the myth of Prometheus carries within, which I perceive as crucial to bring to the fore, as part of our exploration into the true bearings of hope. The myth presents

---

[396] See Hesiod. *Works and Days/Theogony*. Translated by Stanley Lombardo. Hacket: Indianapolis, 1993.

[397] Horton, John. "An Emancipatory Recourse Across the Ages." *In Discerning Critical Hope in Educational Practices*. pp.144.

[398] Al-Hasan, Ghadeer and Shadi Neimneh. "Prometheus Unbound: A Romantic Rewriting of a Classical Myth." *Cross-Cultural Communication*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 21-24.

[399] Aeschylus' play, as I discuss below, can be seen as an ancient example of this sort of interpretation of this myth. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* is a modern example of this tendency. [Shelley, P. *The complete poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley*.] Modern philosophers such as Goethe, Marx and Nietzsche are representative of this tendency too. Other thinkers, such as Thomas Hobbes, as I shall show below, assume a more critical stand that, although favoring this interpretation, do not necessarily agree with the Promethean seditious tendencies.

Prometheus as a benefactor who saves, and gives hope to humankind. Yet, this picture of him as a patron conceals a threat. The idea of a benefactor Prometheus has strong paternalistic implications that are not necessarily appreciated, but that are key to observe in the sort of critical exploration of hope that I propose; an exploration of hope from the standpoint of the oppressed.

According to Paulo Freire, paternalism hampers the true praxis of hope. Neither hope nor its resources are to be interpreted as gifts bestowed upon humans by someone else. Thus, as Freire remind us, salvation of a group of people or of a nation by another society means, most of the time, domination.[400] Thus, the notion of a messiah that brings hope in a form of an object or knowledge to people is also to be mistrusted as a possible subterfuge to introduce oppressive practices. Likewise, Freire is also skeptic of the messianic notion of education in terms of seeing education as a means of salvation that someone gives to a person devoid of agency. For him, these have been always dangerous authoritarian educative practices. As I mentioned earlier, the elpidology of the oppressed advocates a radical democratic notion of hope. From this standpoint, the only admissible messianism is the one in which people collectively become their own messiah. As Jorge Luis Borges says about his own personal hope, when asking the people of Argentina to work on their own messianic hope in *El Tamaño de mi Esperanza* (The Size of my Hope); his notion of hope "invites everybody to be gods and work on its incarnation."[401] Yet, as I shall explain below, this sort of understanding of hope might turn to be paradoxical too because the bigger our hope becomes, the bigger the risks we run when trying to attain them, especially if we begin to believe that we are as powerful as gods.

Prometheus' myth reminds us that technological innovations and political revolutions bring hazards. Therefore, the myth recognizes the double edge nature of technological innovation and socio-political change. Underneath the critique of technology and political change, there also lies a critique of hope. Since the myth of Prometheus so insistently relates to the category of

---

[400] Freire, Paulo. *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation.* New York: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1985, pp. 57.

[401] Borges, Jorge L., *El Tamaño de mi Esperanza.* Buenos Aires: Proa, 1926, pp. 9.

hope, it is an evident starting point for our inquiry into the concrete dangers and illusions carried by hope as a practice.

As we know, Prometheus' daring transgression had terrible consequences. Zeus punished him because of his *hubris*. As a punishment to humankind, Zeus also sent Pandora down to earth with a jar full of pestilences. These evils were set free once she opened her jar's lid, giving way to all human sufferings.[402] Hope—portrayed as an evil—the story says, was left in calm at the bottom of the jar when Pandora closed it.[403] But the story of Prometheus and its relation to hope does not end with Pandora's jar. In Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, the author takes hope out from the bottom of the jar. In this version, the hero puts hope inside men's hearts in order to stop them from fearing dying in the future.[404] Aeschylus, calls this hope "blind", which he also describes as a medicine to cure mortals from the compulsion of been continuously foretelling their deaths.[405] As S. Bernardete argues, the pre-Promethean human context was one in which humans were constantly aware and anxious about death, and "as this made any activity based on future expectations impossible, which is the presumption of any productive art, Prometheus had to remove men's oppressive sense of his immortality before the arts could become useful."[406]

---

[402] According to Panofsky and Panofsky, it was Erasmus who turned Pandora's original jar into a box. See Panofsky, D. & E. Panofsky, *Pandora's Box: The Changing Aspects of a Mythical Symbol*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991, pp.14–26.

[403] Christian philosophers and theologians have always struggled with the fact that hope (*elpis*) is mentioned or implied as an evil that was left inside the jar. The problem of interpreting this issue, however, springs from the fact of misunderstanding the Greek notion of elpis, which that means, ambivalently, both good and bad expectations. This Greek notion of elpis, as I explained in the previous chapter, is key to understanding the ambivalent nature of hope, as well as other related issues of its praxis.

[404] Aeschylus. *Prometheus Bound*. In Aeschylus II, 2d ed. Translated by D. Green. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1991, pp. 240-53.

[405] Ibid.

[406] Bernardete, S. "The Crimes and Arts of Prometheus." *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie, Neue Folge*, 107, Bd. 2.H., 1964: pp.126-139.

Through hope, Prometheus made death invisible to mortals. By doing this, he also turned danger invisible too. In Aeschylus' play, the chorus prizes the act as a great boon.[407] Yet, by giving humans hope—the only thing left in Pandora's jar— Prometheus committed one more transgression against Zeus.[408]

Aeschylus offers his own interpretation on the category of hope through his play. Thus, the following questions seem appropriate as a guide to our inquiry here. How exactly are we to interpret the category of blind-hope that Aeschylus is advancing? What sort of implications does this blindness has for our understanding of hope? What does this blindness have to do with hope's true bearings? In my view, Prometheus' gift to humankind in the form of blind-hope amounts to an "optimistic" attitude of life. As John Horton proposes, Prometheus' gift represents three symbolic developments for humankind; "a more hopeful future for humans, (…) new-liberating knowledge, and a template of audacious agency at the service of humankind."[409] Horton, however, does not bring forward Aeschylus' notion of blind hope in his exegesis of Promethean hope. Nonetheless, I find this notion as a crucial dimension of hope, which any contemporary rigorous examination of this category should interrogate.

It is obvious that by calling hope "blind", Aeschylus was implying that this human ability was questionable. Evidently, the term "blind-hope" carried all the objectionable attributes, perils and drama that the Greek culture ascribed to *elpis*, including its illusory and misleading nature. Undeniably, as I already suggested at the outset with Thucydides' view on this subject, by blinding mortals from their fear of death, hope will also "drive them into danger". Yet, it is also anthropologically true, as human history attests, that if hope is a sort of illusion that blinds humans from death and from other great dangers, this blindness has also greatly benefitted

---

[407] Aeschylus. *Prometheus Bound*. Ibid.

[408] Swanson, Judith A., "The Political Philosophy of Aeschylus's Prometheus Bound." *Interpretation*, Winter vol. 22, no. 2, 1994-95, pp. 215-245.

[409] Horton, John. "An Emancipatory Recourse Across the Ages" *in* Bozalek, V., Leibowitz, B., Carolissen, R. & Boler, M. (eds). *Discerning Critical Hope in Educational Practice*. New York: Rouledge, 2014, pp.143.

humankind. Let's call this model of hope, the "Promethean blind-hope model." This model of hope, as we shall see below, signals hope as the opposite of fear and as a kind of courage, but with its limitations.

Aeschylus' anthropological approach to blind-hope and fear

According to Hesiod, hope was supposed to remain trapped and inert at the bottom of Pandora's jar. We could say that this imprisoned hope was not for humans to see or to know. We can also suppose that it was Zeus' intention to keep humans ignorant of hope. Whatever the power or danger hope could represent for mortals, they were to be kept alienated from it. Hence, under Zeus' order, humans were supposed to remain hopeless. As I already suggested, Aeschylus' revised version of the myth could be interpreted as his anthropological outlook and/or analysis of hope in its relation to extreme fear, human agency and action.[410] As a matter of fact, many contemporary discussions on the topic of hope tend to neglect the fact that fear, as well as hope, is also a future oriented emotion.[411] Within this model, both hope and fear are described as "anticipatory…affective responses to the prospect of future events that have positive or negative consequences."[412] While anticipatory worries for undesired future events produces the emotional response of fear, anticipating future desired events produces the emotion of

---

[410] Anxiety, according to scholars, is the "name [they] give to a group of related responses that are selectively deployed in responses to different threats". Anxiety helps human to cope with specific small or big threats. "Flight, aggressive defense, immobility and submission" are specific behaviors associated with anxiety. See Nesse, Randolph. "Panic Disorder: An Evolutionary View." *Psychiatry Annals*, 18 (8) 1988; pp. 478-483. p. 479.

[411] Baumgartner, Hans, et al. "Future-Oriented Emotions: Conceptualization and Behavioral effects." *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 38, 2008, pp. 685–696.

[412] Ibid.

hope.[413] Now, according to anthropologist Ernest Becker, fearing death is a universal…trait […that…] haunts the human animal like nothing else."[414]

Let me add just another paradoxical element to our analysis, which becomes essential for the critical understanding of the human phenomenon of hope in its relation to fear. As Conrad Montell argues in *On the Evolution of God-Seeking Mind*, the human power of imagination also gives way to the development of human religious behavior as another way of coping with the fear of death.[415] However, as Conrad explains, once religious imagination was in place, this behavior acquired a new purpose: "the denial or masking of death."[416] According to this theory, imagination and religious behavior open the door to myth formation and the distortion of the images gathered by the senses; namely, illusions.[417] According to Conrad, dreams also evolved through the same process.[418] As I suggested in the previous chapter, our elpidic-mind is the mother to some of our most paradoxical illusions.

Coming back to Aeschylus' anthropological gaze, he was correct when identifying fear of death as an emotion that kept human beings inert. Fire technical-practical knowledge and blind-hope was the equation that resulted in a turning point in human improvement because fire became a tangible resource of hope that gave humans courage. In anthropological terms, the

---

[413] Ibid.

[414] Ibid.

[415] Montell, Conrad. "On the Evolution of God-Seeking Mind: An Inquiry into Why Natural Selection Would Favor Imagination and Distortion of Sensory Experience." *Evolution and Cognition*, vol. 8, no.1, 2002, pp. 1-19. Imagination, according to Conrad, is the power to form mental images of what it not actually present or experienced or the creation of new images and ideas by combining previous experiences with innovative ideas. This later is termed by him, "creative power." (pp. 4).

[416] Ibid. pp. 5-6.

[417] Ibid.

[418] Ibid.

development of rudimentary technologies, plus the subsequent mastering of fire and the human powers associated with this process eventually facilitated the displacement of anxiety for the future and the diverse fears that death as a phenomenon brought to peoples' minds. On the one hand, fear in general, as I mentioned, is a very powerful mental constraint. It is usually understood as a menace to reason, and, therefore, it is commonly seen as irrational. On the other hand, technology is a social praxis. It embodies the human capacity to transform life and society by creating and employing not only artifacts, but also all sorts of cultural material and symbolic products. Furthermore, knowledge and technique also mean power. One of the powers that technology brought to human life was precisely the power to be free from certain specific constraints imposed upon them by material conditions of life.

Now, what does this picture tell us about the true bearings of hope? The process of developing and creating artifacts freed mortals from the tyranny of the perennial conditions of life. This liberated humans from physical and biological constraints and from fear, giving them freedom to perform new actions, to move their desires forward and to imagine new probable future projects. The whole praxiological experience enlarged the scope of their powers, projecting their desires and elpidic minds into the future. If hope has a true bearing, this feature clearly emerges in its capacity of leading humans into their future as courageous beings, free from fear.

Hope as a Human Vocation and The Development of Pedagogies of Hope: an anthropological gaze

Paulo Freire suggests that hope is not only in what we know, but it is also an attitude that human discovered and developed through praxis.[419] In his view, hope can only be constructed through the process of creating and re-creating the world. Hope moves humans and orients them

---

[419] Freire, Paulo. *The Politics of Education*, pp. 44.

into the future in the very act of walking into reaching their hoped-for goals, because as Freire reminds us, in contrast to the instinctive routines of animals, humans "have a sense of project".[420] By the very act of walking towards their projects and seen their projections become part of their concrete reality, men and women came to build and to make hope part of their own vocation as humans. Notice that what I call a "human vocation" is something constituted in history and not a spiritual or transcendental essence that humans possess *a priori*.

As Randolph M. Nesse suggests, emotions, such as hope, became useful for humans as they successfully influenced the human future.[421] Emotions, such as hope, "are aroused mainly by events that change our appraisals of whether we will be able to reach our goals."[422] Accordingly, in our interpretation of blind-hope, this is the kind of emotion that positively influenced the future by "blinding" humans from extreme fears and by expanding their self-confidence and courage. Probably fear was conquered through the intricate process of production and re-production of human life within the struggle for survival, in which self-awareness and human agency also flourished. Yet, beyond the structure of hope as this anticipatory emotion, the elements of technical knowledge and craftsmanship also suggest that the human vocation of hope flourished out of the human faculties of imagination, creativity and/or artistry, which suggests an aesthetical dimension of hope that is rarely discussed today. Cognitive capacities, such as ingenuity and the capacity to elaborate complex mental designs that allowed humans to be the sustainers of their own purposes seems to be closely related to the development of hope as a human vocation. As Karl Marx and many other social thinkers had pointed out, work is a very complex development, which includes different mental processes, manual labor, and the actual production of material goods. But, where exactly can we locate hope in the specific context of the reproduction of human material life?

---

[420] Ibid.

[421] Nesse, Randolph M. "The Evolution of Hope and Despair." Social Research; 1999, 66, 2, pp. 429-469.

[422] Ibid.

It could be said that humans learned to hope by trial and error or through praxis; this is, through a very arduous and incremental process carried within the context of their struggle for survival. The forces of nature were the first factors to be overcome in this struggle. As Freire argues, as human beings:

> (…) relate to the world by responding to the challenges to the environment, they begin to dynamize, to master and to humanize reality [adding] to it something of their own making by giving temporal meaning to the geographic space, by creating culture. This interplay of men's relations with the world and with their fellow does not (except in cases of repressive power) permit societal or cultural immobility.[423]

In other words, hope did not come all at once, but it was an emergent trait. This process, as Freire suggests, required a continuous pedagogical effort on the part of human beings directed to maintain and to reproduce the cognitive, cultural and material gains that their previous efforts had already yielded. For instance, provisioning for a campfire, as Terrence Twomey explains, not only aided in the evolution of social cooperation, but also in the evolution of learning and understanding why social cohesion and cooperating to keep the fire going was the effective thing to do in order to survive.[424] Fire was one of the early resources that required social cognitive investment in their development in the form of time and energy, in both learning and development of complex subsistence skills.[425] Fire and the development of technologies associated to it and subsequent technological developments required the development of efficient learning and teachings social devices.[426]

---

[423] Freire, Paulo. *Education for Critical Consciousness.* New York: Continuum, 1981, pp. 5.

[424] Twomey, Terrence. "How Domesticating Fire Facilitated the Evolution of Human Cooperation." Biol Philo, 2014 29: 89-899; pp. 95-96.

[425] MacDonald, Katharine. "Cross-Cultural Comparison of Learning in Human Hunting: Implications for Life History Evolution." Hum Nat, 2007, 18; pp. 386-402; p. 386.

[426] Ibid. pp. 387.

All these processes were the product of human physical and mental labor and of mental labor-projects. As Marxist economist Ernest Mandel argues, human labor requires anticipatory mental projects linked to a broader consciousness of the human as producer of goods. According to him, "(…) the human ability to anticipate, picture and imagine is inextricably bound up with the ability to social labour."[427] Consequently, *homo faber* requires the *homo imaginosus*.[428] Human ability to create notions, concepts, to imagine, to plan and to anticipate are profoundly linked to the material and social conditions of life. What we are describing here is the development of the human mind, where experts in the field see imagination and creativity as key factors. According to Montell, imagination was crucial in the development of human awareness of the self, and belief formation, through the superimposition of additional information, on the one hand, and experience, on the other.[429] According to Mandel, the "material basis for the human ability of anticipation, for imaginative representation and making plans is the (…) instinctive, unconscious correlate of the compulsion to produce and reproduce material life to which human are subjected." Yet, as anticipated above, it could be objected that hope might only be after all, a mere survival instinct. Mandel does not deny that hope ranks among the most important human survival instincts (along with fear), but he is emphatic in claiming that; "a pure instinctive hope is impossible."[430] Consequently, as Mendel argues, hope belongs to the core of our anthropological specificity together with social labor and the ability to think, imagine,

---

[427] Mandel, Ernest. "Anticipation and Hope as Categories of Historical Materialism."

Historical Materialism, volume10:4, pp. 245–259.

[428] Ibid.

[429] Montell, Conrad. "On the Evolution of God-Seeking Mind", pp. 2-3.

[430] Mandel, Ernest. "Anticipation and Hope as Categories of Historical Materialism."

Historical Materialism, volume10:4, pp. 245–259.

theorize and develop our own consciousness.[431] "*Homo imaginosus* is human, because he is *homo sperans*."[432]

Thus, hope becomes a fundamental part of the human vocation; this is, it became an integral part of the dispositional nomenclature of women and men to give themselves their own humanity through their own effort and work. It also became a key attitude in the process of giving meaning and conscious purpose to the world or in humanizing the world. As Freire explains, the "interrelations of the awareness of aim and of process is the basis for planning action, which implies methods, objectives, and values options."[433] Hope is not necessarily about what to expect in the future, but it is especially about how to imagine, dream, plan, do, work and construct futurity. In Freire, when referring to the human praxis of hope, "the how" is much more important than "what to expect". Men and women, according to him, are supposed to build their own paths and own future together, "running the risks involved in this very construction" as a collective.[434]

Yet, to be sure, we should avoid mystifying this process. Imagining an original early blissful era in which men and women came harmoniously together as an egalitarian solid cooperative unit to confront the harshness of life upon earth is a very naïve way of looking and speculating at the past. On the contrary, as Paulo Freire suggests, each human historical epoch has been "characterized by a complex of ideas, concepts and hopes, doubts, values and challenges in dialectical interaction with their opposites, striving toward plenitude."[435] There have always been obstacles in people's paths that impeded their full realization as humans, according to the values and hopes of the epoch in question. Material reality presents itself as

---

[431] Ibid.

[432] Ibid.

[433] Freire, Paulo. *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation.* New York: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1985, pp. 44.

[434] Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York; Continuum, 2000, pp. 38-39.

[435] Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 101.

resistance to our movement and speed. Other people's own movement and paths also may turn into obstacles. This is what explains why subjects such as free movement, freedom, pleas for justice and so on became important epochal themes.[436]

Now, let me finish this section on the human vocation of hope by bringing to the fore what I think is another decisive and perplexing element of the human praxis of hope that, unfortunately, is usually neglected in the contemporary debates on the subject. As suggested at the outset, Aeschylus' anthropological rendition of *blind-hope* as a courageous outlook of life most probable served as the basis of subsequent interpretations of the concept of hope by philosophers and scholars in general. This is the case, for instance, of Thomas Hobbes' notion of hope as presented in *Leviathan*, which seems to be in accordance with the notion of *blind-hope* that I have been advancing here. As many other philosophers before and after him, Hobbes makes use of the myth of Prometheus to explain human's anxiety and fear for the future, which is, as I have been arguing, a crucial element in the understanding of the category of hope.[437] Hobbes defines hope, as an: "appetite with an opinion of attaining."[438] He matches the affective element of hope with human reasoning with the use of the word "opinion" in a very concise definition that probably baffles many readers in search of a glamorous definition of hope.[439] Yet, this short assessment is not the only outlook that Hobbes advances about this category. For instance, he defines fear as an "aversion, with opinion of hurt from the object of fear." And then, he defines courage as the same feeling "with hope of avoiding that hurt by resistance."[440]

---

[436] Ibid.

[437] Hobbes, Thomas. *The Leviathan.* London: Penguin Books, 1985, pp.169.

[438] Ibid. pp. 123.

[439] It is, indeed, intriguing that Hobbes' account of hope is rarely brought forward in the contemporary discussions on the subject. My guess is that Hobbes's view of hope takes mystery away from the category, while many scholars love to portrait hope as mysterious.

[440] Hobbes, Thomas. *The Leviathan*, pp. 169.

Interestingly, Hobbes also suggests self-confidence as a constant hope in us.[441] His analysis yields three fascinating elements on hope that are almost completely overlooked by contemporary examinations of this notion. First, he advances a notion of human courage as a sort of hope, when describing *hope as a sort of courageous self-confident attitude*. Second, he adds the element of "resistance" as the human way of avoiding harm as the defining trait of human hope, signaling in this way the notion of human resistance also as a sort of hope. Surely, the relationship between the category of resistance and the category of hope under conditions of oppression deserves attention. I shall work with the category of resistance in its relation to hope under condition of oppression in the next chapter.

Third, Hobbes' perspective also intertwines hope as an appetite with the human cognitive dimension by using the term opinion, which captures my own idea of hope as a hypothesis of the future. This opinion or hypothesis becomes then an enabling force that Hobbes equates to, or depicts as "courage", specifically when "hoping" translates into a concrete action. In Hobbes' view, hoping manifests itself as courage when it allows a subject to either execute an action that yields progress or to resist a force that may harm or revert improvement. Hobbes' idea of hope is multidimensional. His view of hope as resistance, or a hopeful-resistance to limitations and obstacles of all sorts is useful to understand why the human faculty of hope is, as I claimed before, a shape shifter human capacity. It is also helpful in throwing light to the practice of hope under conditions of oppression.

Now, I think, we are prepared to begin outlining some preliminary conclusions from our anthropological analysis of the "Promethean blind hope-model" that I have presented thus far. From this outline an image of the true bearings of hope should emerge. Let's backtrack a bit to gather the specific features of "blind-hope". First, our analysis shows blind-hope as a sort of emotion that differs from fear. We labeled it also as an instinct. Yet, without denying that hope partakes of that which is usually described as primarily instinctive in humans—conatus, or an innate will to live—my portrait of blind-hope goes beyond the mere conative, comprising other

---

[441] Ibid.

fundamental human intellectual traits without which this sort of hope is inoperative. Second, I depicted blind-hope as a courageous and self–confident human orientation toward the future that integrates creative-cognitive capacities to imagine, design, anticipate and to plan for desired end-results. All these traits turn this human attitude into deliberate action. Hope becomes then both, a motivator and an enabling force of human action. Third, as humans became more and more self-aware of their inner capacities to face the challenges of life, more courage and confidence kept building within, individually and collectively, into human social life as a vocation in human beings. Therefore, the Promethean blind-hope model depicts hope as a force that promotes human individual and collective empowerment. Blind-hope consists then in courageously intervening in the production, shaping and re-shaping of the human future. Fourth, in my analysis of blind-hope, individual and collective empowerment does not circumscribe itself to humans' self-awareness of their agentic capabilities, but also, and equally important, it speaks of the awareness in the form of knowledge of the exclusive instrumental powers and strengths that having, controlling and using material assets (such as fire) represent to humans. Fifth, the learning/teaching processes involved in this development should not be ignored as part of the idea of hope as a praxis. Any concrete praxis of hope entails a pedagogy. This pedagogy (or pedagogies) of hope is the fundamental linchpin of the whole praxis of hope because it is precisely at its pedagogical dimension that this human internal power takes the concrete form of a human project and a method for human development. Hope is a method for action. In addition, the development of technologies, methods (in form of certainties) that humans imprinted into artifacts and the learned technique to plan also provided humans with some degree of concrete certitude at the time of looking into the future without fear. This degree of certitude allowed humans to venture with courage and confidence into new uncharted geographical spaces and into the future with the confident opinion of avoiding any possible danger by way of resistance.

The five elements of blind-hope outlined above constitute not only the features that define hope as a human vocation, but also the very bearings of hope. In a nutshell, hope's true bearings are the sum of these features, which can be summarized in the following definition of this human attitude: *an affective-cognitive courageous attitude meant to empower men and*

women and to fight fear that positively orient human towards the future. If the opposite of this empowering process is fear, then the method of hope became the antidote to defeat the sort of human emotions and thoughts that feed human cowardice and that disempower people, turning them into helpless, fearful, silent and immovable creatures.

Now, as the main conclusion of this section, I want to take this model of hope—Promethean blind-hope—and call it "optimism". What I mean with this is that what I just described above as an enabling human force and as a method (or the method of hope) is an empowering process and that this "empowering" or motivational mental force is a form of strong optimism or could be depicted as such. As argued previously, optimism is not something separated or strange from hope, but it is its most important function or the most important way in life in which hope manifests itself. As my examination of Hobbes' insight into this subject brought to light, optimism manifests as a positive opinion that translates into action. It enables our movement forward to execute an action without fear. With this claim, however, I am not subscribing or endorsing the idea of optimism as an innocent opinion about the benign nature of the future, as some contemporary scholars portray this category.[442] My claim comes as the result of understanding that optimism is a manifestation of our elpidic mind. Optimism is not a predisposition of our minds that grows out of thin air. It is not a sort of personality or individual trait, which grows automatically. Optimism is a sort of illusion that is socially constructed, stemming from the interplay of our elpidic mind and the oddities of human life. It grows from our feelings and mental faculties in our daily dealings, with a very fuzzy and odd set of encounters with the real within the human world. Optimism enables the praxis of hope as a method and it is an integral part of this method. In this way, optimism is the attitude that assists us in hypothesizing about the future based on our capacities, means, knowledge and experiences, in trying to foresee with some degree of certainty positive outcomes in the future. As I suggested earlier, the contemporary language of hope, such as the one provided by C.R. Snyder,

---

[442] Tiger, L. *Optimism: The Biology of Hope*. New York: Kodansha International, 1995, pp.18 and 51.

characterizes hope in terms close to the way I portrait optimism as a function of hope here. He defines hope as a positive human "motivational based on an interactively derived sense of successful, (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)."[443] Optimism is the motivational force that enables the process, which dynamics translates into successful agency. The dynamics of the method of hope (which includes its pedagogies) requires optimism as a fuel. Put differently, hope as a method of human action requires a courageous outlook towards the future or a fearful (kind of blind) attitude about the time to come.

The alleged difference between hope and optimism seems to dissipate as soon as we look at hope as a dynamic continuum of the structured mental processes that turns the hopeful human volition into action, of which optimism (blind-hope) is its enabling force. Paradoxically, note that the true bearings of hope, which lay its manifestation as an empowering-courageous attitude to fight fear that positively orient us towards the future, cannot truly actualize themselves in the absence of courage. Also note that hopelessness is also the product of our elpidic mind. Hopelessness is our sense of hope drained of its courageous and self-confident substance or blindness to fear. Hopelessness is in fact the opposite dynamic of optimism, marked by fear. This dynamic tilts our elpidic mind into developing a pessimistic-negative (fearful) outlook of the future. Once installed as a negative tonality in our psyche this pessimistic dynamic process engages all our elpidic functions and orients our actions or inactions accordingly. Our elpidic mind, with its extraordinary capacities, would now rationalize our cowardice in such a sophisticated way as to turn it into what will appear for us as a sort of wisdom. However, the actual paradox regarding the true bearings of hope lays in the concrete difficulty that men and women face when actual resources of hope are unavailable and their agentic capabilities are obstructed by oppression.

The next topic of my discussion of the "Promethean blind-hope model" deals with the dangers that blind-hope brings upon mortals, according to Greek mythology. Let's not forget that our inquiry into the problem of hope and its vulnerabilities began with the accusation of hope

---

[443] Snyder, C. R. "Hope theory: Rainbows in the Mind." *Psychological Inquiry*, 13, (2002), pp. 249-275.

being an illusion. As I suggested in the previous chapter, hope's vulnerabilities are the product of its illusory nature. Further, as suggested above, it is obvious to think that anything that it is characterized as "blind" will, at some point, crash against unforeseen things. The courage behind optimism could simply be an illusion. Nonetheless, note that if, at our point of departure, we had asked if human courage was something dangerous, our task would have been instantly reduced to trying to prove a truism. If being courageous were not dangerous, courage would have never been thought as a human virtue. Yet, the demystification of hope touches the absurd in many ways because unveiling illusions amounts sometimes to expose the obvious and unveiling the obvious produces wonder in the human mind.

Hubris-the drug of power: inflated hope, domination, and Hobbes's politics of hope

The myth of Icarus and his failed flight is yet another ancient tragedy related to the human powers of ingenuity, craftsmanship and what could be named "inflated-hope". According to Ovid in *Metamorphoses*, Daedalus and Icarus, father and son, are trapped in a labyrinth that Daedalus had built for King Minos of Crete. After being betrayed by the King and being both made captives inside the Labyrinth, Daedalus makes plans for escaping. He builds two pairs of wings for him and for his son, so they could fly out of their imprisonment. The wings were made of feathers and wax. Daedalus tries his invention first and quickly recognizes its dangers. So, he proceeds to instruct his son to avoid the extremes of flying either too low and close to the ocean or too high near the sun. The heat, he insisted, will scorch the wings. Be wise, fly safe, was, in sum, his father's advice. At first Icarus vacillated. Yet, as soon as he mastered his wings, he lost his fear and began yielding to the pleasure of his newfound power. His success inflated his ego; he felt empowered and disregarded his father's advice. He dared to go higher and higher. But he got too close to the sun and his wings melted. He then plunged to death into the see. Icarus' demise is another example of what happens when a person hope inflates. In the terms that as I have been developing throughout my analysis, thus far, we can say that Icarus' blind-hope turned

into a reckless attitude that caused him to disregard danger. In other words, his optimism became dangerous, leading him to ignore his father's advice.

Our inquiry on the paradoxical nature of blind-hope would not be complete if the negative tensions and dangers brought upon humanity by Prometheus' gift were to be ignored. The dark side of scientific knowledge and artifacts, on the one side, and hope, on the other, has always been a serious human concern. Prometheus' myth is also a testimony to these worries. As I have been arguing along this chapter, practical-technical knowledge, technology development and human hope are intimately interconnected. We can locate this connection at two points of the equation of hope/optimism: at the cognitive-psychic level (at the point of imagining and designing technology) and at the practical-crafting one (at the point of giving actual shape and manufacturing artifacts or putting a method or technique to work). Notice that the former equation could be summarized in the word, praxis. Ancient mythology points towards hope's dangerous side. As I acknowledged earlier, this dimension of hope cannot be uncritically discounted, especially not when addressing political matters from a realist perspective. Discussing the issue of hope's negative effects with the rigor that it deserves, seems appropriate to counter any objections or criticism of the view of hope and optimism that I have just offered thus far. My discussion in this chapter should dissipate objections to my use of the term optimism and to any possible relation to naïve or cheerful positive notions that are usually ascribed either to optimism or hope as categories.

In this section, I shall examine blind-hope's dangers in relation to two different but closely related set of issues. First, I will discuss what the Greeks used to call *hubris*, as the product of the human sense of hope's own dynamic multidimensional process. *Hubris*, as I shall show, is part of the human mind's elpidic continuum dynamics, which I describe as a sort of hope. This dynamic process can easily turn the human courageous outlook of the future into a sightless and foolishly harmful attitude. As I shall argue, the problem starts when our elpidic-mind produces images (or hypothesis) that are not necessarily kept in close touch with reality. It turns to extreme when our imagination begins to contemplate delusive images of a flawless positive, in which we find the world (and all its possible contingencies) perfectly accommodated

to our most outrageous or impossible desires. Thus, I shall look at how at how contemporary scholarship has re-appropriated this ancient category to analyze and give account what I think is a very important manifestation of hope, which is rarely studied as part of the human elpidic phenomenon.

My discussion on the theme of *hubris* paves the road into the second set of my concerns in this section. The way desires, hope and political power interlock opens the door for a political theoretical approach to *hubris* and its social consequences in which matters such as hubristic political behavior, power abuse, violence and domination come to the fore. Neither hope nor hubris are politically neutral categories. I shall approach these themes in a short examination of hope's dangerous nature within the context of domination by visiting Thucydides' Melian dialogue. This discussion invites to re-examine political philosophy relation to the category of hope in more rigorous way. I shall end the chapter with a short look at Thomas Hobbes' political thought to bring forward some key facts about the relation between hope/hubris, fear, anxiety, the future with socio-political conflict, the Hobbesian Leviathan and the theme of peace.

Part I: from optimism to hubris: a continuum of risks and dangers

According to our previous analysis, blind-hope or optimism is a daring courageous attitude that helps us to conquer fear. Yet, taking people fears away does not deter the possible negative effects of their actions from taking place. Audacity or daring does not shield anyone from the consequences of their deeds, either. And yet, audacity makes heroes. It is also true, however, that there are circumstances in which assuming the role of a hero might be deemed foolish. In some cases, an action might be judged courageous and virtuous under certain circumstance and just after the facts. Under certain conditions, an act of daring that ends up in failure could easily turn into stupidity. The ancient myth recorded Icarus' fall. Was Icarus heroic? Unfortunately, the story does not fully appreciate the fact that he and his father were escaping captivity, fleeing oppression and hoping for freedom. They dared to escape the yoke of a tyrant, a treacherous king who kept his worker captive in a maze that the captive has designed

and constructed himself. Since their escaping brought a calamity, the myth turned a heroic act into a tragedy. Icarus' tragedy, however, captures the drama of the human urge towards creativity and freedom, but also points toward the destructive side of these urges, even when motives are good, fair or are born out of a situation which might entirely justify the act in the first place. At the higher point of his flight, Icarus forgot about danger and his own overblown sense of self-confidence or his "inflated optimism" (inflated hope) made him feel indestructible. Yet, his feelings of invulnerability were illusory. And thus, we can say that his elpidic drive went out of control, driving him to his own demise. Icarus' illusion resided precisely in not even being afraid of the predictable negative consequences of his actions, negative consequences that had been already announced by his father. He was extremely overconfident about the positive end-results of his deeds. Foolishly arrogant people tend to be less cautious in their lives and are, therefore, inclined to suffer from the illusion, or rather, from the delusion of being invincible. This illusory sense of invisibility, I want to argue, is also the result of the dynamicity of the human sense of hope.

In fact, the Greek word *hubris* specifically refers to excessive self-pride that can bring about numerous adverse consequences. The whole idea behind Greek tragedies was precisely that human fate could not be escaped. A person believing that he could change his fate, because he thought he deserved to be above laws, fate and gods, was in fact guilty of this kind of foolish arrogance that Greeks termed *hubris*.[444] Prometheus was in fact guilty of *hubris* because of his affront to Zeus. Interestingly, Promethean justice allowed men a way out of their tragic fate imposed upon them by Zeus. In the Greek tragic understanding of the story, hubris was also something mortals suffered after being offered the gifts by Prometheus, since their new powers allowed them to walk away from their fate into the realm of freedom. However, these new

---

[444] The term is usually associated with a sense of arrogance, haughtiness, overestimating one's capacities and being out of touch with reality. According to D. Green, it is "a state of mind in which man thinks more than human thoughts and later translates them into act. It is an offense against the order of the world." See, Grene D, "Herodotus: The Historian as Dramatists" *Journal of Philosophy*, 58 (16) pp. 477-487.

powers (blind-hope included) also produced the possibility of their own demise by overestimating their actual capabilities and of losing contact with reality. Therefore, the possibility of hubris was introduced into the hearts of mortals along with blind-hope. Yet, in a more anthropological interpretation of *hubris*, we can say that the human potential as an agent is paradoxical. The human being is both, creator and destructor, and hope seems to have a lot to do with the dynamic that impels humans to oscillate between these two poles. And this human quandary, in addition to the dangerous side of hope, seems to be heightened when power is included to the equation.

As David Rondfeldt tells us, Greek literature usually ascribes hubris to "rulers and conquerors who, though endowed with great leadership abilities, abused their power and authority and challenged the divine balance of nature to gratify their own vanity and ambition."[445] "Hubris breed the tyrant", says Sophocles in his play, Antigone.[446] Contemporary psychology and psychiatry have re-appropriated the ancient wisdom on hubris, stripping it away from its mythical origins and relation to the idea of fate and use to designate a mental disorder. Accordingly, the term describes an emotional-psychological syndrome that mostly (but, not necessarily exclusively) afflicts people in power.[447] Contemporary literature on hubris lists

---

[445] Rondfeldt, David. "Beware the Hubris-Nemesis Complex: A Concept for Leadership Analysis" RAND Corporation,1994. pp. 2.

[446] As quoted by Mark E. Button in his article; Button, M. "Hubris Breeds the Tyrant: The Anti-Politics of Hubris from Thebes to Abu Garib." *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 8 (2), pp. 305-332.

[447] In a now famous work, David Owen and Jonathan Davidson, advance a medical theory where they describe "the [political] leader who hubristically abuses power, damaging the lives of others" as someone afflicted by the "hubris syndrome". They characterize this syndrome as "an acquired personality disorder". See Owen, D. and Jonathan Davidson. "Hubris Syndrome: An acquired personality disorder. A Study of US Presidents and UK Prime Ministers over the Last 100 years." Brain 132, 2009, pp.1396-1406. p. 1396. Nonetheless, it is important to take with critical caution what the psychiatry community (and associated disciplines) diagnoses as syndromes and/or mental disorders. Psychiatry tends to diagnose and medicate socio-political economic problems, making them look as individually acquired diseases. A disease and a mental disorder are not the same. Yet, sometimes they are described,

political, military and business leaders, among the persons most inclined to suffer this illness. Famous political leaders, who have been accused of showing authoritarian and tyrannical inclinations, are said to show hubristic behavior. As I advanced at the outset, Napoleon's tragic Russian campaign in 1812 is counted among one of the most famous hubristic actions committed by a modern political leader.[448] Interestingly, hubris was considered a crime in Ancient democratic Athens and was subject to state's criminal prosecution. Insulting, use of violence to denigrate, violating a corpse, humiliation of a defeated enemy, and mistreatment between Athenian citizens were among the list of crimes characterized as "hubristic". [449] According to Kelly L. Wrenhaven, the law of hubris is an anti-élite law, concerning the hubris of the élites, which was considered very problematic for the stability of the democratic polis.[450] As she explains, the Athenian hubris law was a guard against hubristic anti-social behavior by aristocracy.[451] It seems that in ancient times, to leave hubris (power and blind-fearless hope, which tends to respect no boundary) unrestrained or free was bound to bring civic social unrest. Intriguingly, the Athenians hubristic actions against Melians during the Peloponnesian War, as

---

publicly discussed and even medicated as if they were the same. The use of psychiatry as a mean of social control is well known. It is also important to note that oppressed people, being subdued by a culture of fear and of hopelessness, are either incapable of recognizing the strength of their own agentic powers, or afraid of fully putting them into effect.

[448] See, Kroll, Mark, Leslie A. Toombs and Peter Wright. "Napoleon's Tragic March Home from Moscow: Lessons in *Hubris*" *Academy of Management Executive*, vol. 14, no. 1. 2000.

[449] Wrenhaven, Kelly L. *Reconstructing the Slave: The Image of the Slave in Ancient Greece.* New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 1998, pp.66.

[450] Ibid. 65-66.

[451] Ibid.

narrated by Thucydides, are said to be the cause of their own demise.[452] Several scholars also portray today's American imperialistic actions around the world as hubristic.[453]

But, before discussing the pathology of *hubris*, I want to bring to light another crucial aspect of hope; so we keep adding criticalness and depth to our examination of this category. As I have been arguing, the "Promethean blind-hope model" clearly establishes hope as a sort of complex courageous and rebellious future oriented human attitude. Equating the "Promethean blind-hope model" with optimism comes from the obvious correspondence between the human practices that these two terms tend to describe. Thus, Aeschylus anthropological gaze linked blind-hope to the acquisition of fire. Contemporary scholars point towards the evolutionary importance of the interplay between technology and (fire) optimism.[454] Studies in the area establish a link between the sort of development that Aeschylus suggests and what I earlier described as the human "optimistic-bias", which I think is a phenomenon intimately related with hubris. Optimistic bias—also known as "dispositional optimism"—refers to the general bias that humans tend to show regarding their expectations of their future as a much better and benign one than it could possibly be.[455] Researches in psychology have amply documented the existence in humans of this tendency, which amounts to positively over-valuing their probabilities for personal gain in the future. It also tends to diminish their hypothesis about their chances of

---

[452] See, Thucydides

[453] See, for example, Beinart, Peter. *The Icarus Syndrome: A History of American Hubris.* New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2010.

[454] See Brown, Kyle. S et al. "Fire as an Engineering Tool of Early Modern Humans." *Science: New Series*, vol. 325. no. 5942, 2009, pp. 859-862. See also, Stahlschmidt, Mareike C. et al. "On the Evidence for the Use and Control of Fire at Schöningen." *Journal of Human Evolution* 89, 2015, pp.181-201; see also, Harris, Peter. "Sufficient Grounds for Optimism? The Relationship Between Perceived Controllability and Optimistic Bias." *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology,* 15(1) 1996, pp. 9-52.

[455] Harris, Peter. "Sufficient Grounds for Optimism? and, Weinstein, Neil D., "Unrealistic Optimism About future Life Events." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 39, no. 5, 1980, pp. 806-820.

vulnerability to harm. This tendency, which can also be characterized as a species of overconfidence, according to researchers, became at some point in human development a positive emotional/cognitive evolutionary trait.[456] The scholarly work on dispositional optimism associates this hopeful outlook of life to humans' greater persistence towards goals and to better coping and adjustment within harsh social settings.[457] Furthermore, the notion of what is to be an efficacious agent or "self-efficacy" is also related to dispositional optimism.[458] As a matter of fact, the literature on the theme of dispositional optimism and self-efficacy includes self-control and autonomy, confidence, hopefulness, and wellbeing in general, as human qualities associated with agency, having greater persistence towards goals and coping with different situations, including the most difficult ones.[459]

Nonetheless, as the myths of Prometheus and Icarus suggest, this "dispositional optimism" or "blind-hope"—the drug that cures the fear of death in the human heart—can be intoxicating and, therefore, is what seems to prompt humans to hubris. Recall that our elpidic mind produced illusions and optimism are just illusions produced by its elpidic dynamics. It is blind because it begins by circumventing the fear and possible harm. Blind-hope/optimism is a future oriented illusion, and, therefore, it can be characterized as somehow unrealistic. People's hope inflates. The danger behind inflated hope consists in being an enabling force of actions that can be harmful. This is how the optimistic bias or blind hope, which is something originally positive and beneficial, can turn itself into something dangerous. Hubris is the product of a dynamic continuum, in which hope assumes distinct roles as a way of coping with the oddities of human reality. Yet, the dynamism of the elpidic human phenomenon that hope entails is paradoxical, especially when adding hubris as its outcome or effect. The hope and hubris divide

---

[456] See Johnson, D. and James H. Fowler. "The Evolution of Overconfidence." *Nature*, vol.47, 2011 pp.317-320.

[457] See, for example, Hanssen M. M., et, al. "Optimism, Motivational Coping and Well-being: Evidence Supporting the Importance of Flexible Goal." *J Happiness Stud*, 2015, 16:1525–1537.

[458] See, Bandura, A. *Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control.* New York: Freeman, 1997.

[459] See Ibid.

parallels the strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Yet, as in the case of Dr. Jekyll, who had to drink a sort of a serum to become Mr. Hyde, people do not necessarily get intoxicating with optimism unless other conditions are also present that allow their hopeful minds to become inflated. Let us now take a more detailed look at the pathology of hubris, according to the contemporary scholarly work on this theme.

According to Owen and Davidson, *hubris* is an acquired condition, which is not necessarily associated with a previous condition of madness. Yet, it is not born out of thin air. It is, according to them, a condition triggered by power. As Owen and Davidson argue, hubristic behavior syndrome is "a disorder of the possession of power, particularly power (…) associated with overwhelming success."[460] A hubristic personality "sees the world as a place to self-glorification through the use of power (…) loses contact with reality, resorts to restlessness, recklessness and impulsive actions, [and obviates] consideration of practicality, cost or outcome."[461] In addition, the hubristic individual exhibits excessive confidence in his/her own judgment and shows contempt for advice or criticism of others.[462]

In fact, this almost omnipotence behavior was the peculiar conduct exhibited by Napoleon previous to his tragic defeat in his Russian campaign: "unbounded confidence given his pass success and accompanying narcissism [plus] a callous indifference towards the rules that governed 19th Century geopolitics."[463] Napoleon's inflated hope or hubris, characterized by his arrogance, overconfidence, and sense of invulnerability, convinced him that "despite all the obvious obstacles, he could, through force of will, succeed in bringing down Russia [its]

---

[460] Owen, David and Jonathan Davidson. "Hubris syndrome: An acquired personality disorder? A study of US Presidents and UK Prime Ministers over the last 100 Years." *Brain* 2009: 132; 1396–1406, pp. 1397.

[461] Ibid. p.1398.

[462] Ibid.

[463] Kioll, Mark, Leslie A. Toombs and Peter Wright. "Napoleon's tragic march home from Moscow: Lessons in hubris." *Academy* of *Management Executive.* 2000, vol, *Ii.* no. 1, pp. 117-128.

knees."[464] Napoleon's actions, judged hubristic by history, had a number of concrete hazardous consequences to him and especially to other people. Now, according to the view I want to advance here, these concrete consequences are the result of hope, when hope's blindness turns extreme. Hope/optimism is good and beneficial as an attitude that allows for forward or progress movement, as it is common to all humans. Yet, hubris is, surprisingly, its most paradoxical harmful outcome.

Now, as I described above, hubris or "inflated hope" seems to be even more problematic when combined with excessive power. As the literature on the subject illustrates, one social danger that results from hubris is power abuse. Thus, hubris is a sort of hope that can turn a person or an entire nation into a dangerous delusional and self-absorbed menace. As Sigmund Freud distinguishes in *The Future of an Illusion*, while an illusion needs not to be necessarily false or unrealizable, delusions absolutely conflict with reality.[465] According to Freud, when people's desires or aspirations are far from being feasible, they can be perceived as mere wishful thinking. It is in this case, according to him, that we are, then, in the face of a delusion. But the true problem with hubris or hubristic behavior is not its delusional nature. The real social problem lies in the possibility that a hubristic powerful person, seeking to accomplish his or her delusional hoped-for goals, turns to unquestionable and arbitrary means to fetch and to secure his or her future. Indeed, hubris can breed truly delusional-utopian futures in a person's mind. The most dangerous kind of delusional futures are those where the hubristic person sees herself enjoying a world, in which everything and everybody is perfectly adjusted to her personal wishes and ideals. As I explained in the previous chapter, since contingency cannot be totally tamed and the future cannot be really secured, an effective way of circumventing this fact has always been trying to manipulate or control other people's wills and activities. The principle behind this method is to attempt to accommodate people's behavior and the choices they intend to make

---

[464] Ibid.

[465] Freud, Sigmund. "The Future of an Illusion." In, Pelikan, Jaroslav, and Clifton Fadiman, *The World Treasury of Modern Religious Thought*. Boston: Little Brown and Comp., 1990, pp. 74.

regarding the future to one's desires and hopes using arbitrary force or coercive power. This sort of power abuse translates into political conflict. Abuse and injustice are usually followed by retribution on the part of those receiving the abuse. This means resentment, discord and conflict. And as Thomas Hobbes observes, discord brings always the possibility of social catastrophe in the form of war.

Now, we can say that the paradox of Promethean blind-hope is already in full display. Hope has a dark side. This is true of Aeschylus' blind-hope and, as I have just described it, it is true for contemporary assessments of optimism. The paradox not only speaks of the demise or death of mythical heroes, but it also speaks of real down to earth political problems, such as conflict and war resulting either from specific actions inspired by blind-hope or from the dangerous delusional tendencies of our elpidic mind. Since power is the catalytic for hubris, power élites seem to have a tendency towards hubristic behavior. As I illustrated earlier, the Athenian anti-hubristic laws attest to this reality.

Nonetheless, although hubris is traditionally predicated of persons in positions of great power, this does not mean that people in general are somehow shielded from it. Contemporary literature does not seem to recognize the possible ubiquity of hubris, but I think that a critical view of hope as ubiquitous demands looking critically at manifestations of hubris everywhere. That power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely is a truism that goes way beyond the wisdom captured by Lord Acton's famous aphorism. He was seemingly referring to political power, but this human tendency is pervasive and extends beyond the boundaries of the traditional political realm. Not only those with great power are likely to abuse it, but others with less power could abuse it as well. In other words, power can be wielded regardless of its scope. They are also empowered by society's techniques and artifacts. All these powers might prompt hubris in people because they put optimism in people's hearts, and, as I reiterate, optimism can always turn itself into hubris. The following example illustrates my point.

Our automobiles are hubristic machines.[466] The idea that human technology nurtures and reproduces hubris is already suggested in both, Prometheus and Icarus myths. Automobiles are a socio-cultural phenomenon; symbol of social status and unrestricted movement. The car image, as a powerful machine, is widespread. The power of the car is structurally built into this machine, as one of its most fundamental constitutive attributes. Yet, most drivers tend to assimilate these facts uncritically; they simply use their motorcars without giving thought to the power it brings to them.

Moreover, modern cars are equipped with safety features that instill in them the feeling that nothing could ever happen while driving. There are hundreds of TV commercials that propagate such claims, aiming to disseminate a sense of security among motorists. Moreover, the laws and rules of engagement in the road are designed to provide drivers a sufficient degree of security. Yet, we know that lethal accidents keep occurring every day. Now, automobiles are not only powerful artifacts; they also furnish their drivers a set of very special super-powers built-in in the car's technological structure. Motorists drive these vehicles, unconcerned about the super-powers they can manipulate when they sit behind its steering wheel. It supplies, for example, super velocity. The car, a closed sort of inbox, sometimes with shaded windows, alienated from everyone else, can accelerate at impressive speeds. This machine may even induce many people into forgetting they are reasonable, nice and, usually, sensible persons when they are not driving it.

I am not trying to demonize this machine; on the contrary, I am simply describing it from an unfamiliar perspective. Inside these powerful devices it is also easy to forget how vulnerable we are; and, so like Icarus, we usually fall prey of the illusion that we are in total control of the auto, the road and of whatever contingent event may take place. We even forget that the odds of having an accident or running over pedestrians are not necessarily in our favor. We tend to forget how dangerous these machines are. We know that accidents do happen, but we foolishly think that they will not happen to us. In fact, some drivers tend to act as if they were not only

---

[466] Slavic, Susanne. "Horsepower Hubris." *Cultural Politics*, vol. 8, issue 3, 2012, pp. 489-494.

invincible, but also as if they were absolutely disconnected from other people around them. In other words, we behave as if the other is invisible to us as well. A kind of zombie-like automatism substitutes our rational autonomy. In sum, the wheeled box not only dehumanizes its user, but the whole car's phenomena can be described as a set of objective social conditions that somehow tend to unwillingly nurture hubris in our minds. Countering this sort of hubris is difficult because we are taught to drive and to be careful; we are taught to drive safely; but at the same time, we are fed with ideas about how cars empower us. Almost no one teaches us about the hidden concrete super-powers that the car gives us. We learn how to drive the car, but no one really teaches us anything about how to stop being driven by the car's super powers.

As I said, we have purposely built up certainty inside our artifacts and social arrangements. Thus, it is not difficult for us to fall victims of some of the illusory effects of our own social and technological constructions. It is as if optimism is already built unto our society. Hubris is somehow built into our artifacts too. This mean that we hope, imagine, design and plan to make our lives more secure and build our artifacts and society accordingly. This also means that not every security and certainty is totally illusory. But, our artifacts and methods are fallible, and so are our certainties. However, this is a fact that we tend to forget. Every time we think that we can completely secure the future by securing the present, we deceive ourselves. Hubris partakes of this self-deceptive mechanism because it proceeds from hope and hope proceeds from our elpidic mind.

Ancient wisdom portrays hubris as a flaw in the human psychosocial structure. In this section, I have tried to show that hubris is a product of the human elpidic mind; a sort of hope, whose flaws corresponds to the very vulnerabilities and limitations of hope itself. Once we look at the products of our elpidic mind as a continuum—which are the product of a puzzling dynamic relation between our elpidic faculties and the spatio-temporal reality—we begin to understand hubris and hope as two sides of the same token. Realistic hope is impossible without the availability of concrete resources of hope. This explains why ancient mythology made fire the number one concrete resource of hope. Paradoxically, a power such as fire, as well as other tangible resources associated to it, is precisely the kind of power that tends to breed hubris in the

human mind. Another puzzling problem about the dynamics of our elpidic mind in relation to the hope and hubris continuum is that envisioning, reflecting, planning and even calculating the odds and possibilities regarding the success of our future actions are still fictive mental activities. The other problem is that we dream, hope, plan and try to find paths towards our hoped-for goals within a fluid spatio-temporal context, in which fortuitous events might derail our plans. However, not all the difficulties that we find in our path to meet our realistic or unrealistic hoped-for goals are completely accidental. In fact, the social spatio-temporal landscape is a terrain where other people also hope. And these other people could accidently shatter your hopes. But they can also premeditatedly and systematically attempt to derail your hopes to advance theirs. Either way your hope ends up crushed by unexpected events. In my opinion, the systematic blocking of a group of people's hopes by another group of people defines oppression. And oppression is the kind of methodically applied techniques that seek to turn oppressed people into pessimistic and hopeless persons. Under a situation of oppression, a hopeless person might be a pessimist because he has already learned the hard way that any realistic hope for a better future will be crushed as soon as he tries to actualize it in the field of social reality. Therefore, the odd products of our elpidic minds need to be seen as reactions to an odd set of social circumstances that are nurtured or conditioned by external factors and not only as independent results of our mental wanderings. The crucial point here is that the realism or unrealism of our hope and even of our hubristic actions needs to be judged within the context in which our actions take place. The whole social structure in which our sense of hope and our hubristic tendencies are nurtured matters at the time of looking at how hubris might develop from hope. How a society nurtures these tendencies by educating their citizens on them also plays a crucial role. Education establishes ideologies, myths and shared meanings. It also establishes how desires and freedom are going to be practiced. People are educated regarding many things, through many ways and diverse methods. For instance, through religious education, a group of people or an entire nation may be driven to believe that they are a nation chosen by God to rule the world or to be the world's saviors. They might also be driven to believe in destiny and that either, destiny or fortune, always favors them and will continue to favor them in the future under any

circumstances. Yet, as mentioned earlier, education can do just the opposite. It can be used to teach a group of people or a nation that its fate has been preordained for failure. By the same token, world powerful and dominant nations are inclined by these driving forces to nurture hubris in their citizens. For instance, how can a society with so palpable strong imperialistic tendencies complain about having figures with questionable characters such as those featured by President Trump? United States is a society that not only fosters people like Donald Trump, but also it somehow justifies and even celebrates the standards that give way to hubristic personalities just like him.

It is important to highlight again that the contemporary literature on hubris seems to point in the correct direction, when noticing that external factors, such as previous success and power, tend to play a crucial role in nurturing hubris. As I suggested earlier, ideological or cultural traits in society also nurture hubris. Thucydides, again, offers us clues into both matters on hubris. His view is important because he neatly connects hope to hubristic behavior, as well as to power and resources. As he says, "the idea that fortune will be in one's side plays a big part in creating a mood of over-confidence…and she tempts men to run risks for which they are inadequately prepared."[467] Thucydides then adds that this is particularly true when it comes to nations, "…because they are playing for the highest stakes—either for their own freedom or for the power to control others—and each individual, when acting as part of a community, has the irrational opinion that his own powers are greater that in fact they are."[468] He then comments that when men set their minds seriously upon a certain course of action, almost nothing can discourage them from pursuing the intended goal. Later, in his narrative of the Peloponnesian war, when reviewing the dialogue between Athenians and Melians, Thucydides adds some odd remarks about hope that I find crucial to bring to the fore in my discussion. These puzzling remarks highlight another dimension of the praxis of hope that is completely ignored in the contemporary literature about hope. But, first, let me remind my reader that, as discussed at the

---

[467] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, pp. 220.

[468] Ibid. pp. 220-221.

outset, the Melian dialogue is premised over the idea of hope's dangerous nature. But as Thucydides also remarks, humans do not take any risk, even the most dreadful ones, without believing first that they can carry out their actions successfully. Many reasons force men to be bold. Either poverty or insolence nourishes men's ambitions. Hope makes the path, but sometimes drives them into considerable dangers. As Thucydides implies, this paradoxical disposition applies to any situation, but it does intensify when it comes down to political matters, because within the political arena, men are playing for the highest stakes. When individuals gain power or risk losing freedom, they tend to hypothesize about a favorable future unrealistically and irrationally. And thus, as Thucydides warns us, hope is "a danger's comforter".[469] Nonetheless, within the specific context of the Melian dialogue, where the Melians are holding their ground to save their freedom, hope is portrayed as a force that, although it promotes recklessness, it makes them bold enough to challenge mighty Athens. As Thucydides recaps, at a point of the war between Sparta and Athens, an Athenian expedition force was sent to the island of Melos with the mission of securing the Melians' submission to their exploits. During the war, the Melians had refused to join Athens; in fact, even as a spartan colony, they had remained neutral; yet, they had become open enemies of Athens. The Melians have little chance to resist Athens' power. The probabilities that Sparta would come to their aid were low. They certainly would lose if confronting Athens in battle; and, yet, they refused to surrender. In this specific context, however, Thucydides seems to suggest that hope is a luxury that the Melians cannot afford; at least, not in the eyes of the Athenians, who acutely assert that hope is an extravagant and "expensive commodity" that the Melians cannot afford, because they lack a "solid advantage to fall back upon it." [470] And so, they remark to the Melians that they should not indulge on hope. Nonetheless, as Thucydides also suggests in his narrative, Athens' daring, but unreflective hope (or hubris), regarding their prospects in winning the war might have been at the end the source of their own demise. While Athenians tried to inspire fear in the Melians, they show no fear of

---

[469] Ibid. pp. 404.

[470] Ibid.

failure at all. Why? Because Athenians hoped too much in such an extravagant way, that they failed to understand that their hubris had already betrayed them. At the end, history became the judge of their deeds through Thucydides' account of the war. Athens' demise was catastrophic. And elpis, according to Thucydides, is to blame.

Let me come back now to our original question about the bearings of hope. It looks that the true bearings of hope seem to be located somewhere within the dynamic continuum that makes our elpidic mind produce naïve forms of optimism (optimistic bias) and the hubristic tendencies that make us form a positive but delusional opinion on the possibility of achieving hoped-for goals in future. If these hopeful tendencies of our minds give form to our visions and opinions about the future, enabling and guiding our actions, and putting our feet and bodies into motion, it could be said that this disposition attaches to its true bearings. However, hope has a dark side. In either two of its two forms, it is a daring disposition, whose true mark is courage. Hubris is still a form of courage, which can only be judged as a flaw when it engenders evils. But, what does happen when pride, boldness and other hubristic tendencies produce positive consequences? Nonetheless, hubris also could bring the kind of dangers that, in certain specific circumstances, invite disaster. As a matter of fact, in political matters, when our most important things are at stake, hope could bring the worse kind of catastrophes. Yet, hope is dangerous and not only because of hubris.

Nonetheless, Thucydides prefers order and stability. This is a preference shown by most political thinkers. Anarchy is not necessarily a favorable political condition. Hope, when it is combined with actual political power, is too volatile. City and individuals, Thucydides tells, are alike; according to him "all are by nature disposed to do wrong" because of hope.[471] As he claims, there is no law that will prevent hope from moving men to do all sorts of wrong or foolish things and from becoming a menace to other individuals, to the city or to entire nations. As he explains, not even the fear of being punished with the death penalty can stop them.[472]

---

[471] Ibid. pp. 220.

[472] Ibid.

Then, Thucydides offers a sort of unspecified and ambiguous prescription to remedy the problem of hope's dangerous nature. Since fear counters hope, he suggests then that, "we must discover some fear more potent than fear of death, or we must admit that here certainly we have not got an adequate deterrent."[473]

As he goes on with his analysis, Thucydides does not necessarily seem certain or hopeful about the prospects of finding such a fear to dissuade individuals or nations from hoping extravagantly and put themselves and their political communities in the path of great perils. As his discussion is ultimately about how to discourage a city from revolting, the challenge seems to be ultimately about how to stop or deter a group of people from hoping to politically overthrow a government or how to stop political revolution. Thucydides, nonetheless, launched a great politico-philosophical challenge. Thomas Hobbes, one of his most important modern admirers, accepted this challenge. His Leviathan is an attempt to build in words and to give life to the sort of political power that could produce the kind of fear that could once and for all stop people from hoping to subvert a political government. Hobbes thinks that the anarchy that hope and/or hubris bring to the political arena can be put to rest once and for all. Consequently, it should not be a surprise to find in the Hobbesian Sovereign a great Monster ready to play with the human elpidic mind and to crush people's sense of hope. The Leviathan is a machine designed to take hope's true bearings away from its subjects and make them politically hopeless through several controlling strategies.

To be sure, let me finish this chapter by taking a short critical look at Thomas Hobbes's philosophical insights on hope's destabilizing effects and on what I shall call his "politics of hope". As I shall argue below, Hobbes political theory provides important clues about how modern political philosophy has come to deal and cope with the elpidic structure of the human mind and with the political tensions and perceived dangers brought up by hope to civil society. Hobbes's insights on the subject also points toward a series of perplexing anthropological and political questions about the politics of hope that he prescribes. The Hobbesian politics of hope

---

[473] Ibid.

237

has become a sort of a norm in certain modern societies. In this section, I shall bring to light some of the theoretical foundation of the approach I shall later use to explore how in concrete terms a system of organized hopelessness works.

Part II: Thomas Hobbes' immortal peace and politics of hope

> Señor: las tristezas no se hicieron para las bestias, sino para los hombres; pero si los hombres las sienten demasiado, se vuelven bestias.
>
> Sancho Panza

Hobbes is the political philosopher of fear. As Georg Kateb explains, Hobbes's work is held together by the effort to understand the true causes of civil war and his determination to offer a prescription for its long-term prevention.[474] According to Kateb, Hobbes "finds civil war the perfection of…irrationality: political passions, themselves intrinsically verging towards madness, going over the line and into wasteful darkness."[475] According to Hobbes, human psychic dispositions, such as hope are to blame. *Homo Homini Lupus*, or man is a wolf to man, is the image he uses to characterize the irrational drives that move men to act contrary to the dictates of reason and to march into the realm of anarchy.[476] Hobbes's image brings forward the human-animal divide, in which he animalizes the human being by representing political violence as the act of a madman with animal features. With such an image, he departs from Aristotle's

---

[474] Kateb, George. "Hobbes and the Irrationality of Politics." Political Theory, vol. 17, no. 3, 1989, pp. 355-391.

[475] Ibid. 356.

[476] Hobbes, Thomas. "The Citizen [De Cive]" in *Man and Citizen*, ed. Bernard Gert. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1998, pp. 89–386.

zoon politikon. The human being is no longer a natural political creature, but rather a very contradictory elpidic animal that desires peace, but that also seems to be naturally prompted to do war because of his elpidic urges. The wolf-like irrationality that Hobbes ascribes to humans corresponds to his description of the human natural condition as "a war of every man against every man."[477] In Hobbes's hypothetic state of nature—in which, according to him, human abilities are equal, and their hopes for attaining anything that they desire are equal too—competition, diffidence and glory are the causes leading humans to war.[478] Paradoxically, if fear of death is supposed to incline men to peace,[479] then it looks like other human passions, contrary to fear, incline humans to disregard this fear and behave like wolves to each other. These passions, as I am going to argue below, all are born, according to Hobbes, from hope. As I shall argue in this section, in Hobbes's view, the ultimate cause of war is a combination of the human sense of hope and ignorance and a sudden force of the passions.[480]

Despite the human tendency to engage in war, Hobbes is positive about the possibility of crafting a force capable of taming or completely suppressing the human passions that predispose men to conflict. He proposes to institute a political power that can lay down the basis for what he describes as an "immortal peace."[481] Nonetheless, attaining this sort of peace is not an easy task. Thucydides' challenge must be met. Achieving an immortal peace requires instituting a civil government capable of attaining what no other government had attained before, namely: pacifying all human irrationalities and extinguishing once and for all any possibility of war from the civic body. As Carl Schmitt observes, Hobbes' *Leviathan* needed to become the greatest artificial monster to arouse the greatest fear in men with the intention of domesticating the

---

[477] Hobbes, Thomas. *The Leviathan.* London: Penguin Books, 1985, pp.188.

[478] Ibid. pp. 184-185.

[479] Ibid. pp. 188.

[480] Ibid. pp. 186 and pp. 337.

[481] Hobbes, Thomas. "The Citizen", pp. 91.

animal within them and all their dangerous political hopes. [482] To these ends, as Schmitt suggests, Hobbes creates the image of a huge animal that he fuses with the image of a huge artificial machine and then makes it into a monster. Hobbes then portrays it as the most powerful political entity ever conceived. But, to succeed, this monster also needed to become the greatest and most dynamic illusion-creating machine that ever existed. Accordingly, as Schmitt explains, Leviathan was meant to attain the highest level of mythical force by being the greatest myth ever created by a philosopher before.[483] And, as I shall discuss below, the greatest illusion that *Leviathan* is to create is that of a civil society that has attained an everlasting-immortal peace. Hobbesian civil order is to create such an illusion, both, by creating a series of myths about the State and establishing the concrete political conditions, where citizens are forced to remain in peace among each other through coercive means.

As Schmitt tells us, to accomplish this, the first illusion that *Leviathan* needs to create is that it is a sort of god whose power cannot be contested. Since it is a "god who brings to man peace and security, [it] demands unconditional obedience." [484] This is a condition where the citizen possesses "no right of resistance."[485] The sovereign determines everything, including what people should hope or not to keep the stability of the State intact. Immortal peace can only be secured if all citizens' desires, motions, opinions, and hoped-for goals are subordinated to the *Leviathan's* primary goal, the immortality of the body politic.[486]

Indeed, Hobbes' prescription of immortal peace as a solution of the woes of war can be read as a formula for domesticating the future. Yet, as the future is not here yet, it cannot be really secured. Thus, Hobbes' immortal state can only pretend to be immortal by creating the illusion of its own immortality and by manufacturing the necessary conditions that generate the

---

[482] Schmitt, Carl. *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol.* Westport/London: Greenwood, 1996, pp. 5.

[483] Ibid. pp. 49.

[484] Ibid. pp. 53

[485] Ibid.

[486] Hobbes, Thomas. *The Leviathan*, pp. 215-216.

illusion of an already secured future. This goal can be truly achieved by constantly administering and domesticating the spatio-temporal dimension of the now. Yet, the spatio-temporal dimension of the now is paradoxical. Time is a sort of an illusion too, which can only be governed by manipulating and administering the space. Thus, the illusion of a domesticated time can only be artificially crafted by domesticating the space in which humans exists.

Nonetheless, since the goal is not necessarily to shackle any individual, at least not physically, the best way to manipulate a person's form of perceiving the illusion of time is by manipulating and/or suppressing his sense of hope. As we have seen, the sense of hope is the affective-cognitive faculty humans use to deal and cope with the future. Therefore, the illusion of a domesticated future can only be accomplished by domesticating the human sense of hope to render it passive and politically safe. Since human hope shows subversive attributes, the concrete goal is to produce the political conditions that return a politically pacified hope; this is an elpidic mind incapable of imagining, thinking or planning any meaningful change in the political time-space continuum. In sum, Hobbes's immortal peace is only possible insofar as human hope gets totally depoliticized. Yet, as I suggested, his prescription for peace amounts to a questionable politics of hope.

To see with more precision how does Hobbes approaches these subjects, let me turn now momentarily to his anthropological account of human nature in its relation to human anxiety, the future and uncertainty. According to Hobbes, the human faculties of anticipation and foresight are key factors in determining agency. He also points towards fear of death as a crucial concern that keeps humans perpetually anxious about the future. Hobbes suggests that the future becomes such a strong gravity force within the human mind that it turns into an object of desire that torments humans. But, the future, as Hobbes reminds us, is always "a fiction of the mind."[487] Therefore, as Loralea Michaelis explains, men's ardent desire for the future cannot be totally

---

[487] Hobbes, Thomas. *The Leviathan*, pp. 97.

241

satisfied, and so, it ends up causing a lot of suffering.[488] Our desire to govern the future is unachievable. And yet, humans recur to the only option available to resolve their anxieties and fears regarding the future, this is; seeking, accumulating and securing power. Paradoxically, what animates men's search for power is a fiction, for attaining total certainty of the future is impossible.[489]

Ironically, as Hobbes leads us to conclude, what appears to be a sort of an illusion or a figment of our imagination—trying to attain certainty of the future—is what triggers men's struggle for power.[490] As Hobbes suggests, man keeps hoping for more and more power because he does not feel secure with just a moderate share of it.[491] Note that the origins of civil war are also to be found in this fictive human need. Consequently, the need for securing the future through the institutionalization of the *Leviathan* rises from the concrete violent consequences of a power struggle, whose origin is ultimately a utopian desire, namely; attaining certainty by conquering and governing the future in order to appease the fears and anxieties that not knowing what it is to come produces in men's mind.

As suggested by the former account of the origins of the struggle for power among humans, the human elpidic mind and the hope/hubris continuum play a crucial role in this process, since humans' form of relating to the future is by forming opinions (or hypothesis) about it. It is in the creation of these opinions that Hobbes finds men to be prompted to error and to develop delusional states of mind, such as vainglory, which comes, as he explains, "from the opinion men have of the likelihood of attaining what they desire."[492] Recall that Hobbes defines hope as an appetite or passion (a desire) "with an opinion of attaining."[493] Despair, according to

---

[488] Michaelis, Loralea. "Hobbes's Modern Prometheus: A Political Philosophy for Uncertain Future." Canadian Journal of Political Science, vol.40, no.1, Mar. 2007, pp. 101-127.

[489] Ibid.

[490] Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*, pp. 169.

[491] Ibid. pp.161.

[492] Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*, pp. 122.

[493] Ibid. pp. 123.

his view, is the same feeling but, "without such opinion" and *aversion*, an "opinion of hurt from the object of fear."[494] According to him, a man imagines his own power and abilities, and then develops a joyful and glorifying admiration of himself, from which he also develops yet another opinion about himself that stems from confidence, the idea that he can surmount any obstacle or problem.[495] However, this confidence, when based on delusions or on the flattery of others, becomes vainglory.[496] Vainglory is a manifestation of the experience of security and comfort that motivates a man to develop the erroneous opinion that he is invulnerable and to erroneously believe that he does not need to be afraid of death any more. This opinion might turn him into a violent person as well. [497] This is the way in which a man's ego inflates, his vanity strengthens and his optimism soars to the point of becoming hubris. Hubris—a sort of delusional hope or opinion about the future—is behind men's delusional desire of conquering the future to gain certainty and appease his fears regarding the time to come. And as we saw, this delusional desire is ultimately the main cause of conflict and war.

Now, as I have showed, the human elpidic mind is a compound of paradoxical and complex faculties. Hope and fear interact with each other in contradictory ways in their response to the stimulus from an odd spatio-temporal reality. War is part of this concrete reality. And, as Hobbes claims, the atrocities that the violence that war produces are so destructive, that men end up considering war the greatest of evils. Ironically, as he argues, war also becomes the greatest of teachers, educating men about the need to institute a sovereign that can establish and secure peace.[498] But, paradoxically, war educates men through fear of death, showing men the possibility of instilling in the human heart the same sort of fear that war produces. The objective in applying such a method is to overpower the vainglorious (hubristic) opinions of humans and

---

[494] Ibid.

[495] Ibid. pp. 124-125.

[496] Ibid. pp. 125.

[497] Ibid. 126.

[498] Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*, pp. 237.

incline them to peace, leading them to consent and fully embrace the sovereign.[499] Education is key in the application of this methodology. As Peter Ahrensdorf explains, during periods of peace, men's propensities to conflict, can be overcome by educating them in a way "that artificially give [them…] the lessons they would naturally learn from…war."[500] The purpose of education is to make people who feel secure insecure, equipping them with a sort of pessimistic wisdom (or opinions about the future), so they come to appreciate the special sort of security provided by the *Leviathan*.[501] Ironically, as Ahrensdorf claims, the price of objective security "is subjective insecurity."[502]

Nonetheless, one must wonder if Hobbes' prescription of a pedagogy for perpetual peace using fear is not also the perfect road to hopelessness. The immortal peace that Hobbes's Leviathan promises is not automatic. The Hobbesian Sovereign—the mythical artificial monster—is meant to confront and crush the human wolf. This wolf is a beast that in times of political unrest crystalizes at the scale of the multitude—a body that Hobbes describes as the monster Behemoth. Hobbes' image of this confrontation is paradoxical. Leviathan or the Sovereign, which is an entity made of all people as individuals, united in one person that becomes a god with human face, must successfully confront another monster, the Behemoth. The Behemoth is who had now turned into a monstrous menacing irrational multitude that the Leviathan must fight and defeat in order to keep stability and peace. This belligerent image cannot be more perplexing for it proposes that our own humanness, which had been politically weaponized in the Sovereign's sword, must be now turn against itself; this is, against the same people that instituted the Sovereign in the first place. Irrational appetites and hopes are allegedly moving the Behemoth. While the Sovereign is supposed to embody our most rational inclinations, the Behemoth embodies a crazy mob.

---

[499] Ibid. pp. 186, 188, 251, 251-252 and 599.

[500] Ahrensdorf, Peter. "The Fear of Death and the Longing for Immortality: Hobbes and Thucydides on Human Nature and the Problem of Immortality." *American Political Science Review*, vol. 94, no. 3, 2000: pp. 579-593.

[501] Ibid. pp. 582-583.

[502] Ibid. 583.

Paradoxically, as I described earlier, the institutionalization of the Sovereign originally proceeds from the consequence of fictive and irrational desires born out of anxieties and fears. Notice that ultimately the Hobbesian theory of political order seems to suggest turning the irrational into a rational organizing principle. This is, delusional opinions about the possibility of securing the future by instilling (the irrationality) of fear into people hearts becomes a rational political principle of organization. Hobbes proposes this method as one that can secure the future by securing an eternal peace.

But there is still another greater irony. This eternal peace is not necessarily real but illusory. There is a war being fought, but just through other means at various levels. This war is fought, for instance, through education, where the Sovereign tries to refashion people's sense of hope and optimism at the most intimal level. This methodology is crucial to keep the illusion of a perpetual peace. The public square must never become an actual battleground. Yishaiya Abosch explains this clearly by analyzing Hobbes' educational prescriptions to these ends. For Hobbes, people must be educated to hope for a lasting peace, while they also need to be motivated to be fearful of themselves.[503] Civil order depends on an apparent motivational balance between fear and hope.[504] People must be taught to be afraid of the hypothetical effects of an individual's or a group's unregulated hope for power. People must be also taught to hope for the comforts of peace and must be constantly reminded that these comforts and the luxury of peace can only be attained through an unconditional obedience to the law and love for order. Therefore, any unsubordinated hope must now be feared and considered dangerous.

Nonetheless, we must also recognize that Hobbes's prescription about using the method of fear, as an educative tool with the intention to generate "reasonableness" into the minds citizens, is a two-edged sword. To instill in people the sort of fear that produces the kind of total active obedience that Hobbes proposes might need a sovereign that resorts to terrorize people

---

[503] Abosch, Yishaiya. "Hope, Fear, and the Mollification of the Vanquished in Hobbes's Behemoth or the Long Parliament." *Political Research Quarterly*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2009, pp. 16-28.

[504] Ibid.

instead of teaching people simply to be afraid of change. The product of this politics might not only be some sort of rational fear or pessimistic wisdom, but instead, a psychotic paralyzing paranoia. Let us not forget, as Carl Schmitt reminds us, that Hobbes' Sovereign imposes its peace because of the terror it induces.[505] As Hobbes says, it is by terror of the power and strength that has been conferred to this political authority that the peace at home will be kept.[506] Terror paralyses people. As I have been arguing with Paulo Freire, this sort of paranoiac paralysis is the main source of the kind of hopelessness most characteristic in oppressed people. This hopelessness turns groups of people into a weak, passive, muted and immobilized collective. Using the Hobbesian terminology, we have described hitherto a politically passive multitude, a neutralized Behemoth: a pacified and silenced people, whose wolf-like features had been totally put to rest using the repressive power of Leviathan. Paradoxically, the greatest mechanism of repression that the Sovereign deploys is not necessarily its sword, but education. Yet, in Freirean terms, the Hobbesian Leviathan's pedagogic method is education for domination, whose main objective is to lay down the basis of a system of organized hopelessness. The Hobbesian pedagogical agenda is a program to modify people's desires and hopes through fear. This program aims ultimately at stripping hope of its true bearings; this is, it aspires to take courage and optimism away from men by putting fear back in the human heart by manipulating or suppressing people's sense of hope. By neutralizing hope and, thereby, dislocating people's elpidic-mind through fear and terror, the Leviathan takes people's hopes for imagining a different political future away. But at what precise costs does the Leviathan reaches Hobbes's hoped-for goal of immortal peace?

I had characterized Hobbes's hoped-for goal for immortal peace as utopian. This characterization is not gratuitous. Manipulating or entirely suppressing people's sense of hope to create the illusion of peace is a way of trying to reach the impossible aim of seizing and domesticating time and the future. Not only domesticating time and the future is unfeasible in

---

[505] Schmitt, Carl. *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, pp. 19.

[506] Ibid. pp. 42.

practical terms, but also the methods proposed by Hobbes are morally questionable. As it is well known, Hobbes is an absolutist whose social contract theory places him in the middle of a puzzling theoretical dilemma between liberal consent as a foundation of legitimate political authority on one hand, and the need for political absolutism on the other.[507] Nonetheless, Hobbes' utopianism has been obscured by the traditional projection of his political thought as politically realistic.[508] Moreover, Hobbesian political realism amounts to a justification of a totalitarian regime. Furthermore, his utopian normative pretensions clash with a questionably anthropological theory of human nature. As I showed above, according to him, men are irrational and anxious elpidic creatures who come together through a rational pact and institute a totalitarian regime that is supposed to put reason into their minds. This alleged reasonableness is to be manufactured through fear and terror to extirpate the animality that, according to Hobbes, lies at the core of the human heart. However, as we already saw, fear of an uncertain future is the irrational emotion that turns us into animals that seek power through questionable means such as war.

But why then, despite its utopian totalitarian-illiberal contours, Hobbes's political theory became a persuasive justification for the modern state that still today seems to enjoy some validity? One important theoretical novelty that Hobbes achieved with his work was to give form to a very persuasive justification of the state that looked very scientific at the time he presented his work. He achieved this by imprinting into his political theory an aura of modern science when describing his Leviathan as a modern artificial machine, whose logical grounds were geometric and mathematical. This scientific approach imprinted to his theoretical artifact a veneer of a passionless and detached foundation. And yet, what he truly created, as I already discussed, was a mythical "artificial man", powerful enough to assume the role of becoming a

---

[507] See, for example, Baungold, Deborah. "Hobbes Absolutism and the Paradox of Modern Contractarianism." European Journal of Political Theory, vol. 8, no. 2, 2009, pp. 207-228.

[508] Hobbes, as we know, is traditionally thought exclusively as a political realist in seminal works of international relations studies, such as Hans Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Peace and Power*, New York: Knopf, 1948.

giant modern god capable of generating the most effective modern myths capable of governing modern society.

However, Hobbes's scientifically inspired political theory is supposed to be politically realistic, and yet, its ultimate end is to suppress politics. In other words, his theory amounts to a politics of neutralization of political realism. This means that Hobbes normative seeks to suppress the agonistic side of politics—the one that includes great moments of peace, but also has painful moments of conflict and war. As usual, suppressing politics amounts to removing pluralism, dissonance, partisan dispute, socio-cultural struggle and ethical diversity from the political landscape. This is not at all how the political space of a liberal-democracy should look like. To make things even worse from a liberal-democratic perspective, since Hobbes ultimate utopian goal is immortal peace, the socio-political space that his normative implies becomes one from which the modern human being could never hope to escape.

Thomas Hobbes' political theory inaugurates the modern geometry of political power. With his theory, the ancient mysticism of geometry penetrates modern political thought, laying down a mythical rational grounding for the modern state. However, the true function of his geometric logic, as in the past, is to justify the elimination of democratic politics as a rational outcome of an unquestionable and flawless logical process of thought. Hobbes' theory is supposed to be modern. Thus, one would expect him to land a theory far from the ancients. Yet, his geometrical approach seems to place him close to the same sort of mystical perfectionist, eternal and utopian thinking that characterizes Plato's phantasmagoria.

To be sure, let us go briefly into this matter. As Jeremy Valentines explains, geometry plays a key theoretical role in Hobbes' political thought because it "constitutes a vehicle through which an equivalence is established between the plenist ontology of the bodies in motion and the ordering of the body politic."[509] In this way, Hobbes's geometry turns into the modern architecture of power to domesticate the political topography of the modern civil society. It is

---

[509] Valentine, Jeremy. "Hobbes's political geometry." *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1997, pp. 23-40.

through this modern idealization of the perfection of geometry that the modern society is to tame and regulate human speed within the space of the modern city. It is also through its modern logic that politics itself is to be domesticated by ordering the political subjects regarding geometric terms understood as the science of the movement of bodies through the civil landscape. Geometry, Valentines suggests, provides the paradigm of authoritative ordering the Leviathan regards as exemplary.[510] But, as Valentines also argues, Hobbes does not provide any mathematical logical proof of his model. His use of geometry is totally utilitarian in the sense of using it to generate an allegedly passionless discursive modern grounding for the sort of political truths necessary to give form to a civil space from which political dispute could be eliminated. Accordingly, Leviathan's totalitarian political power is geometrical in two senses: 1) it puts its subjects of authority in their proper place—which is to put, as Valentines indicates, man as "the maker" in his place—by regulating self-making and excluding rival projects of political activity from the civil space; 2) the human body becomes the material dimension that this geometrical power is to shape; the human body turns in *the subject in motion* and in the material object (the matter) to be subjected to political authority.[511]

Let me now bring another crucial element of Hobbes's geometry political power that, in my opinion, is key to fully grasp the Hobbesian domesticating *politics of hope*. Hobbes' materialistic anthropology participates of his geometrical metaphysical principles through his geometric notion of physics and movement.[512] According to Hobbes, men are matter. In the political arena, the diversity of contradictory political projects (hopeful opinions about the possible political futures) is the cause of movement and conflict. All projects aim at giving some shape to men as matter. In Hobbes's view, what needs to be regulated by the Sovereign is man as the maker of political endeavors. In other words, if there is something that needs regulatory

---

[510] Ibid.

[511] Ibid.

[512] See for example, Malet, Antoni, "The Power of Images: Mathematics and Metaphysics in Hobbes's Optics." *Stud. Hist. Phil. Sci.*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2001: pp. 303–333.

political principles is man's Promethean impulse to create things, including political projects.[513] According to his interpretation, war and the dissolution of the state are the fault of men as makers and not of men as matter.[514] In Hobbes's view, matter is uniform. This uniformity links his geometrical ideations and his socio-political normative principles. For Hobbes, a body (man as matter) is always in motion. "Endeavour" (or *conatus*) is in fact the material dimension of the human body, and that, which gives man movement. Hobbes's human endeavor is a complicated notion, but it illuminates the issues I want to bring to light in here. As he characterizes it; on the one hand, endeavor constitutes the beginning of motion, and, on the other hand, it is the medium of motion, or that by which the human body moves. Endeavor is the human body in motion, its velocity and what makes it move. As Howard R. Bernstein puts it, conatus/endeavor "is not only kinematical, but also that it is dynamical, a force-related idea.[515]

Let me now call attention to yet another decisive aspect of Hobbes's geometric political thinking that comes to justify the inclusion of the subject of geometry in my analysis of the topic of hope here. Motion, Hobbes thinks, is the only true or concrete reality. This means that, beyond the surface of appearances and phantoms within the political arena, only motion is real, the rest of things are illusions. In his own words:

> [It] seemed to me that in the whole world only one thing is real...but it forms the basis of things we falsely claim to be something, though they are only like the fugitive shapes or dreams, or like the images I can multiply at will by mirrors, fantasies, creatures of our brain and nothing more, the only inner reality of which is motion.... [I] thought out the reasons for the different forms of visible things. I was forging the shackles of reason in which I could bind Proteus to force him to confess

---

[513] Hobbes utilizes the figure of Prometheus as the metaphor of man as the creator and builder of the State and of his "artificial man". Hobbes's references to Prometheus can be found in *Leviathan*, Ch. 12, pp. 169-170.

[514] Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*, pp. 363.

[515] Bernstein, Howard R. "Conatus, Hobbes, and the Young Leibniz." *Stud. Hist. Phil. Sci.*, vol. 11, no.1, pp. 25-37.

the art by which he cloaks his tricks. [516]

Motion is the only reality and, so speed is the only measurable magnitude of any motion, including that of humans. Now, Hobbes' notion of human motion, together with his doctrine of human behavior, takes our discussion immediately back to hope as the conative and cognitive causal force and kinematical expression of the human elpidic mind within the spatio-temporal political landscape. Hope and fear are unobservable causes of human motion. When there exists a favorable external object that causes pleasure and a positive opinion, a motion is produced towards that object; on the contrary, when it is unfavorable, because it may cause a future discomfort or pain, the opposite motion is produced. Hence, Hobbes definitions of hope as "appetite with an opinion of attaining" and fear as an "aversion, with opinion of hurt from".[517]

Let me now gather the main points of our analysis thus far. Hobbes' geometric power in the form of a monstrous Sovereign of mythical proportions is meant to halt the diversity of political projects that collide in the political arena and that cause conflict and war. Yet, his geometric political thinking points to human motion as the one and only important and concrete thing to be stopped because motion is the only reality that there exists. Hobbes interprets reality in geometric physical terms. Nonetheless, Hobbes does not want to physically restraint humans, but only "to educate" them into having an opinion that moves them just in those directions that he thinks politically appropriate for securing peace in the future. The aim is to totally halt collective political movement. But, my thesis is that the only way of controlling people's political movement without physically restraining their bodies is by regulating people's sense of hope; this is, by controlling people's conatus/endeavor through the manipulation of the images, phantoms and illusions that are produced within people's elpidic minds. To these effects,

---

[516] As quoted by Shulman, George, in "Metaphor and Modernization in the Political Thought of Thomas Hobbes." *Political Theory*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1989, pp. 392-416.

[517] Ibid. pp. 123.

Hobbes' proposes to create illusions of a gloomy and devastated future if the political conditions imposed by the Sovereign change. These illusions are to be created using fear as an educative tool. Within this educative program, the element of time in the form of past, present and future, also becomes a crucial tool. Time is an illusion, which also needs to be manipulated. Nonetheless, time can only be truly administered by managing the space that surrounds humans, where the only reality of the motion takes place. Thus, the socio-political spatio-temporal space needs to be structured in such a way that people's elpidic minds, temporal meanings and hopes are subjected to continuous domesticating policies. Crucially, the immortality of Hobbes's peace is possible only by freezing people's personal times, and by redirecting their elpidic-urges—their hopeful and/or fearful projections and utopian impulses—into a new illusory structure of time. In this Hobbesian immortal peaceful space, the meaning of the future is a pre-established repetitive formula of a domesticated present, in which there is no room for political novelty. In the Hobbesian well-ordered and eternally peaceful commonwealth, the human Promethean-utopian impulse is not allowed. Hobbes's civil space is one in which people need to abandon all political hopes.

Since fear is the counter-balance emotion of hope, it becomes Hobbes' prescriptive therapy to counter conflict. In Thucydides' terms, Hobbes might have found the holy grail of political wisdom to stop people for hoping as they wish. If hope is that which blinds men and moves them forward unafraid to meet their future without anxiety, Hobbes' Leviathan is to re-open their eyes by re-planting fear of death in their hearts. But, can we say that this process of opening people's eyes is a process that illuminates them by opening their sight to reason or, on the contrary, is this a process that darkens their existence by re-opening their eyes to fear, anxiety and panic?

In sum, the major task of Leviathan is not to humble or pacify the Promethean human children by adjusting their utopian impulse and hopes through education, but to completely obliterate the hopeful Promethean political substance and true bearings of hope. Dislocating the human sense of hope by playing with the human elpidic mind is to play with what we already had described as an unbalanced and odd psychic structure. Hobbes' *politics of hope* amounts to

the systematization of a set of political principles of domestication that are nothing but a well-ordered and organized system of hopelessness. The Hobbesian Sovereign must become a surveillance panoptical monster with total repressive powers that operates both, at the macro-political and micro-political level. Its violence must submerge itself into the souls of its subjects to dynamite their elpidic minds to continuously reassert its power and re-found an epoch of mythical peace in a daily basis. Only in this way can the Hobbesian state perpetuate the illusion of a well-ordered and peaceful civil society in which history is no more.

Concluding Remarks and Questions

Let me now close this chapter by shortly re-considering the traditional vulnerabilities of hope and the attacks upon this category, as advanced by its detractors in the light of what I have discussed thus far. Let us note first, however, that when the Hobbes' Sovereign directs its violence towards the people's sense of hope, it is meant to suppress or even to completely obliterate the people's utopian impulse and hopeful outlook of life. I described this hopeful outlook of life as optimism. Hope, as I have discussed, has a rebellious political side, which is also captured by the myth of Prometheus. And therefore, the Hobbesian Sovereign aims at rendering the politically subversive and dangerous substance of hope ineffective. But what is this substance? The subversive dangerous substance in the human elpidic mind is the very "blindness" that our sense of hope gives to our intellect to motivate us into action. This dangerous substance is what turns our mind into the optimistic creator of an illusion (in the form of an hypothesis, opinion or belief) that, in its turn, transforms us into courageous agents who dare to take actions despite risks. Paradoxically this is the same substance that can potentially turn our naturally illusory optimism into an array of delusions of grandeur that the ancient called hubris and that I have also named "inflated hope". Inflated hope not only (partially or completely) clouds our judgment, but also does not allow us to perceive future potential objective dangers and consequences of our actions.

However, can any political system realistically attempt to take the subversive substance of our elpidic mind away without infringing upon other crucial human agentic capabilities? As I made clear, the attempt to take the subversive substance of our elpidic mind away amounts to turning off the true bearings of hope. And by doing this, only paralysis and hopelessness ensue. Yet, the paradoxes that our elpidic mental activity creates do not end with the odd continuum/divide between hope and hubris. Some of our mental illusions realistically translate into concrete (individual and collective) actions within the puzzling social spatio-temporal landscape that we call social reality. The fact that the political landscape is always a contested space, where different powers operate at various levels imprints yet another odd dimension to the products of our elpidic mind and the actions coming from them. In the political sphere, this complexity makes judging the value of hope and adjudicating all manifestations of hubris something subjected to interpretation after the actions motivated by our mental force have already been done. Our elpidic mental processes cannot be judged separately from the results of the actions that came from them. Furthermore, the ethical judgment and value of these actions are not made in an ideological or power vacuum, and, therefore, are also impacted by ideological views and the interplay of power politics, which also include oppression and domination.

Hope, we need to recognize, is an illusion, which certainly invites all sorts of dangers because it is blind. It is at the very least risky. Now, is hope as Simon Critchley argues, a "form of *moral cowardice* that allows us to escape from reality and prolong human suffering"? Critchley arguments invites us to ask about his personal and political motivations to see hope in this way. But I will not do that in these concluding remarks. Instead I want to only point to the fact that hope is just the opposite of cowardice. Yet, paradoxically there could be all sorts of hopeful human actions that could be judged as coming from cowardice, depending on the context and on the politics of the person passing judgment and on other concrete facts of life. Hope gives us strength to do many things, including making a political revolution, where people's heads are going to be cut off. If everything is done by hope, then even the worse crimes come from our "hopeful hypotheses", regarding the future. A twisted mind also hopes. Now, hope can become something "submissive", "passive" or "lethargic" as Fernando Savater argues, only when it has

lost its bearings. And, as we saw, a system of organized hopelessness aims precisely at turning hope into a submissive attitude.

Let me wrap up this chapter with the following observation. We have arrived here at a crucial demystifying principle of hope that should put our understanding of this subject and its practice in a complete different light. First, as explained in the previous chapter, the human elpidic mind is the mother of some of the most crucial illusions that come to be part of the ideas and values that people share as part of their culture in any society. Ideas such as certainty, security and people's reliance on religious beliefs, and ideas such as prudence and foresight partake of the illusory nature that our elpidic minds had put upon them. Hope, as an elpidic illusory product of our minds, produces and fuels in its turn many of these illusions. Second, as I argued in this chapter, in the political field—when the highest goods, such as power upon other people or freedom from domination, are at stake—hope seems to become the number one concern of both, political powers and political thinkers. The reason for this is that hope's mercurial subversive nature, when translated into action within the political field, is the source of conflicts, war and anarchy. As I have shown in this chapter, the former is a fact very well explained by figures such as Thucydides and Thomas Hobbes. And therefore, as we saw with Hobbes, hope also becomes the human faculty that autocratic or totalitarian political regimes seek to manipulate, control and/or suppress the most. Consequently, within the political arena, the effort to manipulate the human sense of hope is probably the reason behind the development of the most oppressive myths-creating political technologies that humankind has ever developed in order to make domination possible.

In the next chapter, I intend to go even deeper into the philosophical and ideological grounds and the concrete practices of an organized system of hopelessness to see how such a scheme works in concrete terms. I want to bring to light how does such a system attempt to strip hope off its true bearings by playing with people's minds. Yet, the true bearings of hope have always a way of bouncing back in some paradoxical, but extraordinary ways.

Chapter 5

A System of Organized Hopelessness: the Domestication of People's Hope in Plato's Utopia and Beyond (or What does it Mean to Hope Realistically within a System Designed to Crush your Hope?)

How can we talk about the domestication of hope? In the previous chapter I discussed Thomas Hobbes' "immortal peace" as a utopian theoretical model of domesticating people's sense of hope through fear. Hobbes' ultimate hoped-for goal was to find a political mechanism to freeze time and stop history from happening. He aimed at securing a perpetually peaceful future. Nonetheless, as Paulo Freire claims, invading, owning and securing the future to make it look like the present has always been a persistent, yet unfeasible goal of tyrannical power élites.[518] Indeed, it will be naïve to think that this goal belongs only to the realm of wishful thinking. Historically, some power élites have attempted to achieve impossible political aims. For instance, modern totalitarianism is a historical product of this kind of utopian hopes. Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" thesis, which is a philosophical defense of today's global neoliberal politico-economic program, also appears to partake of the utopian ambition of stopping history from happening. As I shall explain below, according to Freire, in oppressive societies, this ambition is put into effect through mechanisms of control directed at making the present times as identical as possible to the past, and on the other hand, by systematically atrophying the people's sense of hope, The rationale behind this system is to take individual and especially collective hope away from people, in order to stop them from forging a new feasible collective future through alternative socio-political means.

The Freirean notion of "organized of hopelessness" harbors substantial exploratory and empirical possibilities to address these issues. And so, I shall bring its full explanatory potential

---

[518] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 154 and 173.

to light in this chapter. A system of organized hopelessness entails a politics to domesticate hope. This is the use of a wide variety of political disciplinary powers to govern and shape the vitality and the diverse affective-cognitive registers of the human elpidic-mind. It also governs and shapes the individual and, especially, the collective sense of hope. The question I seek to answer in this chapter is: what sort of matrix of domination—pedagogies, discourses and methods—does a domesticating politics of hope supposes when a political system aims at regulating this attitude to stop people from hoping in certain specific ways?

By addressing this issue, I will explain how a utopian political regime operates. This would be a regime based on moral metaphysical ideals such as Plato's; a regime that aims to produce a perfectly healthy collective body, to have a flawless harmony and maintain a timeless-immortal peace. With this, I also intend to demonstrate why such a utopian order amounts, both in theory and in practice, to a system of organized hopelessness. This is a system in which hoping for socio-political change collectively and taking assertive transformative actions in that direction are inadmissible. Within such an order, any intention of transformative actions from the oppressed is usually portrayed as a sin, or even as an illness or madness. Thus, it becomes necessary to evaluate the socio-political and cultural context in which hope is deemed or portrayed as dangerous or as evil, and identify the political ideological basis of these accusations. My examination of these matters requires digging into the grounding of some philosophical views that have historically served as justifications for these sorts of regimes, such as Plato's utopia. Some of these views are the basis for a series of beliefs and discourses that help to reinforce and justify oppressive practices that systematically produce and deepen conditions of hopelessness at different spheres of our society today.

As I argued previously, hope is an affective and cognitive faculty that contributes to humankind flourishing. According to Paulo Freire, hope is not a given, but always a social-collective force socially constructed trough praxis. As a human praxiological activity, hope opposes fear. I stated in Chapter IV that hope *is a sort of courageous-self-confident attitude*. In fact, Thomas Hobbes defines courage as the feeling of "…hope of avoiding…hurt by [way of]

resistance."[519] In Hobbes's analysis hope overtakes fears of being hurt, death or both. Hence, hope emancipates humans from this sort of agonizing fear, opening thereby a future full of promising possibilities and novelty. Yet, as Paulo Freire explains, fear damages and distorts hope. Fear distorts the human sense of courage up to the point of changing fear into a sort of intellectual panic that manifests itself as an irrational-paralyzing pessimism. Fatalism also contributes to this sort of pessimism. The combination of pessimism and fatalism becomes the perfect recipe for a hopeless immobilized existence of those who would benefit the most from acting, and moving collectively out of the very situation causing their despair. These are namely the oppressed. This state of generalized hopelessness is in fact perfect for the political élites insofar as it secures the political passivity of the oppressed.

If human freedom could be broken down into different moments, hope would be its initial moment. In other words, hope is not only conatus (Hobbes's endeavor) but also, freedom for action itself; namely, optimism, which as I described earlier, is, sort of blind. This is the kind of creative and courageous (Promethean) freedom that advances the human mind into the future towards newness. Hope makes a human being into the maker, the initiator and, also, the utopia seeker, which can turn a person or a group of people into the sort of free entity that disregards risk, ethics and another people's well-being. No serious social change or political revolution (of the left or of the right, authoritarian or democratic) can take place without being ignited and motivated first, both, by a sense of hope and by a practice of actual unbound freedom. This sort of unbound freedom unified into a collectivity of people can become a political force that puts in motion the wheels of social change. Socio-political novelty results from this (com)motion. These are the concrete set of reasons why hope is validly accused of being a subversive attitude in all the spheres in which it operates, including the political sphere. And, therefore, it is a human attitude that genuinely involves risks and could even bring actual dangers to a people.

---

[519] Hobbes, Thomas. *The Leviathan.* London: Penguin Books, 1985, pp.123.

Paradoxically, it is also a force able to bring transformations for the better, either through a series of small but steady changes, or through rapid and radical ones.

Now, the elpidology of the oppressed assumes with Paulo Freire that oppression and domination are impossible without putting into place a program of organized hopelessness. Totalitarian and/or despotic regimes are manufacturers of hopelessness. Yet, contemporary liberal-democratic societies have not proved to be more devoted to promoting socio-collective transformative hope for all their citizens. Beyond the participation in the electoral/voting model every few years or the controlled protest scenario, contemporary liberal-democracies have demonstrated to be incapable of creating authentic conditions for democratic collective-political hope. In a true democratic society, all citizens are supposed to participate in the process of imagining and building the socio-political future that they may like or desire together. On the contrary, a considerable number of contemporary scholars across different disciplines have called attention to the reduction of hope in our contemporary societies due to the neo-liberal global phenomena. Some have named this condition "a crisis of hope."[520] Gassan Hage describes the situation as a "shrinking in hope".[521] Steffen Boehm is bolder in his appreciation of this crisis, characterizing it as a condition of "hyper-hopelessness".[522] As I previously argued, a generalized sense of hopelessness among people is a recognizable sign of oppression.

A political realist approach to hope from the standpoint of the oppressed obliges looking at hope from an empirically concrete point of view. As contemporary political realists, Raymond Geuss suggests in *Philosophy and Real Politics*, within modern societies people are driven by a sort of:

---

[520] Holloway, John. "A Note on Hope and Crisis." *Sociology* 2014, vol. 48(5), pp.1070-1072.

[521] Hage, Ghassan. Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society. Annadale, NSW Australia: Pluto Press Australia, 2003, pp. 3.

[522] Böhm, S. "Hyper-hopelessness: Of Work" accessed at https://www.academia.edu/3186097/Hyper-hopelessness_Of_Work (June 25, 2016).

[…] desperate hope that they might find some way of mobilizing their theoretical and empirical knowledge and their evaluative systems so as both, to locate themselves and their projects in some larger imaginative structure that makes sense to them, and to guide their actions to bring about what they would find to be satisfactory (or at any rate "less unsatisfactory) outcomes or to improve in some other way the life the live.[523]

Geuss adds that people look for a meaningful imaginative narrative or a dream that works as a compass for their actions. Yet, people want to be guided by principles that have "contact with reality." In other words, they want their hopeful compass to be realistic and sound and not deemed as absurd. Geuss also says, "the extent to which this hope is present in a certain group and the extent to which it can be realized are empirical matters."[524] Practical hope, as I have suggested earlier, is always kind of desperate because it tries to bring forward a much-needed future that it is not here yet. Nonetheless, from the standpoint of the oppressed, being patient is also a virtue much necessary for concrete-practical hope being truly effective. The problem with hoped-for goals from the standpoint of the oppressed is that oppressed people are systematically kept away from hoping. Under this sort of condition some oppressed people might no longer even be desperate, or not even in despair, but "desesperanzados"; i.e. without any hope at all.

Thus, other set of questions I shall pursue here are the following; what does hopelessness exactly mean in the context of oppression? How does the absence of hope translate into a circumstance in which the possibility of freezing or stopping history from happening, or of creating such an illusion, arises? How does it specifically happen that people find themselves alienated, partially or completely, from having their own imaginative constructions, dreams and

---

[523] Geuss, Raymond. *Philosophy and Real Politics.* Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, E-Book/I-Tunes Ed., 2008, pp.41-42.

[524] Ibid. pp. 42.

own structures of meanings within where to locate themselves as human beings in a meaningful way? How are people alienated from taking their own meaningful actions and finding their own paths in life towards the future? Paradoxically, we find people held under certain socio-political and economic (ideological) frameworks where they cannot even locate themselves as humans. How can these people have realistic dreams and think credibly to realize their visions in certain strategic and meaningful ways if they appear to be kept from imagining a different life and a different future? No doubt, these alienating conditions are in fact empirical matters that demand attention from a realist perspective.

A system of organized hopelessness is a system organized to take hope away from people. As Geuss informs us, the key purpose of any progressive and realistic political theory is to provide a conceptual framework that plays "the role in combating ideological illusion". My analysis here seeks a path into the category of hope from a configuration of power designed to withhold people from hoping and from thinking about themselves as historical actors and bearers of futurity. As suggested at the outset, answering these questions demands digging into the puzzling terrain of utopian thought. The goal is to unearth the intricate relation between hope and the politics of domestication of the human soul that runs underneath any utopian political project that fantasizes about stopping time, ending history and eliminating futurity. Despotic and totalitarian societies tend to be utopian in the sense of trying to achieve impossible fantastical aims, such as creating the socio-political conditions in which an immortal endless and unquestionable peace become possible. These unattainable purposes require placing into effect a series of disciplinary powers and discourses that aim at regulating people's minds to domesticate their hope. These mechanisms work therefore at the level of the most inner life, determining human drives. If, as Michael Foucault says, "…it is over life, throughout its unfolding, that power establishes its dominion"[525] Then domesticating the individual and collective sense of hope becomes a decisive logical demand of any life determining politics that aims at regulating human life most vital driving forces.

---

[525] Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978, pp. 138.

As analytical tools in this chapter, I will rely on the ancient triad of medicine, philosophy, and political power. This triad is central to my analysis because it unveils a curious and problematic connection among these three disciplines and the justification of totalitarian political tendencies that runs deep into the history of Western political thought. Although contemporary scholars have given attention to the analogy between medicine and politics, the ancient roots of this connection are often missing from today's analysis.[526]

As I shall discuss below, ancient philosophy opened the horizon for the medical gaze into politics and, therefore, the possibility for the medicalization of political and ethical problems. The relation between medicine, philosophy and politics cannot be merely metaphorical. We are not considering a mere analogy, but an ancient transdisciplinary convergence of domains, epistemic views and discourses that demands attention. Plato's idealist political philosophy perfectly incarnates this triad. His entire system of thought, including his views on how politics should be conducted, is grounded on Pythagorean metaphysical geometric principles. Since the governing principles that rule Plato's Ideal City and morals are grounded on geometry, I call his political delineations coming from his political theory, a "geometry of power." Curiously this geometry of power is also crisscrossed by medicine. As I shall illustrate in my analysis below, Plato's geometry of power also comes to determine what we may hope or not. Perfection and timelessness require humans not hoping to disrupt or to subvert the flawless stability of the Ideal-City. Thus, this sort of utopian blueprints demands a totalitarian form of government, aiming at, either, controlling or suppressing the human sense of hope. But, why is it so crucial to control hope? As we saw in Chapter IV, hope might be a disease or a manifestation of a mental disorder. Therefore, it could be something subjected to medicalization, as a social problem. Thus, my discussion makes necessary to locate Plato's notion of hope within his theory of the soul. Pursuing this, shall help to locate what possible principles within Plato's political theory may

---

[526] See for example, Reilly, Gregory, R. and Martin McKee. "*Decipio*: Examining Virchow in the context of modern democracy." *Public Health*, 126, 2012, pp. 303-307.

apply to hope and how this emotion is supposed to be governed by the philosopher-king. Thus, I pursue this task in section three.

In section four, I shall further scrutinize Plato's geometry of power regarding hope, using Paulo Freire's conceptual framework in order to engage in a full critical diagnosis of the true totalitarian objective of the Platonic totalitarian political normative.

In the last section of the chapter, I will analyze the American Antebellum slave-plantation system as a concrete example of how a system of organized hopelessness operates. I shall also consider the running slaves phenomena to see how the practice of human hope as resistance surfaces as an alternative way of hoping within conditions of oppression. Thus, in this last section I shall also introduce the notions of "epic hope" and "fugitive hope" as examples of hope as resistance to oppressive systems.

A brief note on the Medicine-Philosophy-Politics triad

In 1847 Rudolf Virchow made the now-famous statement that "medicine is a social science and politics is nothing but medicine in a grand scale."[527] But, where exactly is the philosophical-theoretical connection between medicine, philosophy and politics found? Joel Warren states in *Medicine as Metaphor in Plato*, "Greek philosophy can be adequately understood only if one recognizes that it arose in conjunction with ancient medical theory."[528] Further, as C.T. Ricciardone argues in *We are the Disease: Truth, Health, and Politics from Plato's Gorgias to Foucault,* "the physician is frequently invoked in Greco-Roman philosophy as an analogy for the philosopher…there is [indeed] a deep resonance between the doctor,

---

[527] Virchow, Rudolf as quoted by Reilly, Gregory, R. and Martin McKee. "*Decipio*: Examining Virchow in the context of modern democracy." *Public Health*, 126, 2012, pp. 303-307, pp. 303.

[528] Warren, Joel, "Medicine as Metaphor in Plato." *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 20, 1995: 527-541.

politician, and philosopher in the very bones of Indo-European languages."[529] Additionally, according to Emile Benveniste, linguistically speaking within the Indo-European culture, "the doctor was a sort of genre of leadership, and moreover, the authority of both, physician and king, was underwritten by the capacity of reflection and discernment; by the capacity of the philosopher."[530] Thus, the epistemic robustness and practicality of medicine's methodology became paradigms for both, philosophy and politics.[531]

Another distinctive practice of medicine that also migrates into politics and that ancient philosophy strongly supports is medical paternalism. According to Artur Jerzy Katolo, for ancient medicine "the situation of a sick person was similar to the condition of a child or even a slave; [and, thus] to be sick meant to be devoid of…moral abilities…[and of] discernment (*phrónesis*)."[532] Ancient medicine thought of the unhealthy person as someone with diminished moral responsibility and also lacking suitability, beauty, vitality, goodness and virtue, and therefore the medic-doctor relation acquired a special moral meaning.[533] It was thought that the patient was unable to restore health to himself. The assistance of the doctor was absolutely required. Moreover, the "disease was always perceived as something ugly and bad; every disease was comprehended as something immoral."[534] As the ethos of the physician demanded and embraced health, as well as good and beauty as givens, he was usually considered a virtuous man. Medical paternalism is also substantiated and justified by the Hippocratic oath. Therefore, since antiquity, treating the ill patient as the father treats his own child, this is, as an immature

[529] Ricciardone, C.T. "We are the Disease: Truth, Health, and Politics from Plato's Gorgias to Foucault." *Epoché*, vol.18, issue 2, 2014, pp. 287-310.

[530] Ibid.

[531] See for example, Levin, S.B., *Plato's Rivalry with Medicine: A Struggle and its Dissolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

[532] Katolo, Artur Jerzy. "Paternalism: Moral Duties of Physicians in the Ancient Medical Ethics." E-Theologos, vol.1, no. 1; pp. 12-20.

[533] Ibid.

[534] Ibid. pp. 15.

person, was a normal justified practice.[535] The patient has no choice but to surrender his or her judgment to the advice and prescriptions of the doctor if he wants his/her health restored. As Katolo affirms, the "obedient ill patient is a good sick person."[536]

In sum, paternalism lies at the heart of medicine. Yet, this paternalism goes beyond the physical medical treatment by assuming a moral role. In this way, physical good translates into moral good. Then, it should not come as a surprise then that this is precisely the kind of moral paternalism that we find in Plato's philosopher-king. Yet, Plato's model adds absolute-totalitarian ruling power to his governing principles. Plato's paternalistic medical-philosophical-political model comes to validate strong limitations upon human freedom. In general, medical paternalism is a model still in effect today.

To recapitulate, politics and medicine cross-pollinate each other since antiquity. Philosophy also embraces medicine. Medicine also relies in philosophy to hold its paradigmatic epistemic and moral authoritative status. Philosophy sets both, medicine and politics, in a common rational language helping to establish common ends among these disciplines to give legitimacy to them. The disciplines also share a discourse of health and disease and of good and evil that creates a common justificatory epistemic and ethical ground from which each discipline validates and advances their practices. This shared framework has also allowed a unique transdisciplinary flux among them, which had also facilitated the health and disease discourse becoming common among these three different domains. The discourse also helps to demarcate the sphere of action in which the doctor, the Sovereign or the technocrat legitimately intervenes. This tends to justify that the intervention is conducted in an authoritarian and paternalistic fashion, especially when the intervention is meant to restore wellbeing and to prescribe a new regime of health or a new political or economic regime. Thus, invoking the medical metaphor in the political arena has always been legitimate. This shared epistemological and ethical discourse tends to validate the believe that if something is harmful in the socio-political sphere—in the

---

[535] Ibid.

[536] Ibid. pp. 19.

same way that an illness or an infection is—the malady needs to be medicalized and/or even extirpated. Therefore, the medicalization of socio-political issues can be traced back to this ancient triad too. As Peter Conrad argues, most scholars agree that medicalization pertains to the process and outcome of human problems entering the jurisdiction of the medical profession and/or into the gaze and supervision of the physician's domain.[537] Yet, in my opinion, looking at medicalization from the point of view of the convergence of these three domains that I have just described, problematizes even more the issue of the doctoring socio-political problems. From this perspective, the issue of medicalization cannot be seen any more as a simple transgression of disciplinary boundaries by medicine into politics or by politics into the medical domain. It is actually a very complex socio-political phenomenon that requires a much deeper approach that recognizes this complexity.

Again, the invocation by politicians of medical analogies in the socio-political domain and the medicalization of political problems are practices often portrayed as appropriate. Yet, as I shall argue below, this practice is profoundly problematic because it mystifies the ideological-political substance that the medicalization of socio-political attitudes, dreams and hopes have always had within a contested political context or within an oppressive social system.

A Totalitarian politics of domestication: Plato's Divine-Geometric-Medical gaze into the Human Soul and the City

As I explained earlier, for Plato *god is always doing geometry*.[538] The ancients thought geometry was divine.[539] In fact, Pythagoras—the father of geometry—was the head of a peculiar

---

[537] Ibid. pp. 210

[538] Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* VIII. 2, in his *Moralia*, as quoted in Levy, Silvio., *Flavors of Geometry*. New York/Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. vii.

form of Greek mysticism, where ecstatic-spiritual practices, healing, and mathematical reasoning came to be connected.[540] This connection passed on directly, but concealed, onto other disciplines that he also performed, such as medicine and philosophy.[541] Pythagoras's medical gaze was geometric in the sense that he wanted the human bodily-psychic health and lifestyle to emulate the perfection of geometric forms. Accordingly, a healthy human soul was one adjusted to this sort of divine-geometric perfection. Symmetry, mathematical ratios and physical measurable phenomena got intertwined with metaphysical ideations of divine truths and timeless ideas and morality.[542] This mixture produced the most abstractly metaphysical ideal of all; namely the belief in the existence of a perfectly ordered and harmonious cosmos that expresses itself through flawless geometric patterns. Geometry became the conduit through which humans could get access to god's realm. Likewise, geometry was the language of god.[543]

Greek intellectuals, including Plato, embraced the stable logic of Pythagorean geometry, seeking to transcend the fluid nature and the plurality of the world. Geometry also helped to surpass the fallibility of the human senses by enabling mortals to understand goodness as an objective fact of the cosmos and as a compass for human behavior. Thus, the objective good embedded in geometry became the core and *telos* of Plato's moral, political and educational theory. This ideal conceptualization of goodness founded in the divine order from which

[539] See for example, Koetsier, T. and L. Bergmans, *Mathematics and the Divine: A Historical Study.* Boston: Elsevier, 2005. See also, Kasten, Len. "Opening the Door for Sacred Geometry: The Science of the Ancients Is Finding New Applications." *Atlantis Rising*, Num. 63, 2009; pp.38,66-67.

[540] Netz, Reviel. "The Pythagoreans", in Koetsier, T. and L. Bergmans, *Mathematics and the Divine: A Historical Study.* Boston: Elsevier, 2005, pp. 79. See also, Francini, Antonietta. "Egyptian Numerology: The Pythagorean Triangle and its Esoteric Meaning." *Rosicrusan Digest*, No. 1, 2009: pp.xl-xlviii.

[541] Tzeferakos, Georgios, and Athanasios Douzenis. "Sacred psychiatry in ancient Greece"; pp. 2.

[542] See, DeVogel, C.J. *Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism.* Netherlands: Royal VanGorcum Ltd, 1966, pp. 196.

[543] Not all ancient scholars accepted geometry as a firm rational method of logical knowledge. The Cynics and the Skeptics confronted geometry with doubt. Pyrrho, for instance, accused reason to be just the servant of desire. Yet, despite opposition, geometry rose to intellectual prestige in ancient Greece. See for example, Sextus Empiricus. *Outlines of Scepticism,* edited by J. Annas and J. Barnes. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

geometry proceeds, became the epistemic basis of Plato's theory of the forms. Then, this theory became the foundation of his ideal City, his politics and even his moral views. Furthermore, it is through the philosopher-king's knowledge of geometry that the abstract objective realm found in the *Topus Uranus* is brought down into the human realm. But in my view, the *Topus Uranus* is utopia, which is understood as the non-physical-groundless-eternal world of metaphysical ideas that exist independent of the physical world. It ultimately denies the changing-fluid reality and plurality of the human world. It is brought back into the cave by the philosopher-king's knowledge of a geometric-divine order.[544]

Thus, Plato's metaphysical theory of the forms—*eidos, formas, morphes*—conforms to geometry. In his view, the cosmic-divine order or god imposes the "forms" upon the matter by geometric means.[545] In Plato's view, knowing the forms becomes crucial not only for moral goodness, but also for the health of both, the human soul and the soul of the State. At this juncture Plato's geometric philosophic-moral gaze becomes medical. First, in Plato's moral philosophic terms, the caring of the human soul amounts to a regime of mental health rooted on the divine-metaphysical geometry described above. The caring of the soul is also equivalent to the medical care of the human body by a physician. As Plato advances, for example, in *Crito*, just as the human body is improved by health and damaged by illness, there is a part of the

---

[544] In the *Timaeus* Plato describes the creation of the world by god who makes the world as similar to the forms as possible. As Ian Muller explains, following Plutarch, in this dialogue Plato distinguishes three principles (god, matter, and form) that makes and maintains the cosmos. Accordingly, god imposes form onto the entire quantity of matter, and this is like solving the central geometric problem (Euclid, *Elements* VI, 25) of constructing a geometric figure equal to a given one and similar to another. For Plato, as explained by Muller, the cosmos is alive and this means that it has a soul and intelligent mind. As Muller explains, for Plato, our physical world gets its intelligibility and reality from this ideal world; a world that is fundamentally mathematical. See, Muller, Ian. "Mathematics and the Divine in Plato." in Koetsier, T. and L. Bergmans, *Mathematics and the Divine: A Historical Study.* Boston: Elsevier, 2005, pp. 104 and 111.

[545] Ibid. pp. 111.

human soul that it is improved my moral goodness and damaged by immorality.[546]. Immorality is considered unnatural. According to Mark Moe, in *Gorgias*, Plato singles out two crafts concerned with the treatment (*therapeia*) of the body and two concerned with the treatment of the soul, which are gymnastics and medicine and legislation and justice.[547] In Plato's moral-medical gaze, the art of legislation becomes the moral counterpart of gymnastics. The lawgiver and the judge are like doctors.[548] In other words, the philosopher-king becomes a physician whose specialty is the maintenance and restoration of good moral disposition of the soul in both, the individual and the State.

Geometry, thought as an objective ground, also becomes the basis for Plato's moral educative platform. Geometric metaphysics becomes the didactic tool through which the philosopher-king, as an educator, will train and give form to the guardians' souls and to the rest of the political body. In this way, the entire moral character of Plato's Kallipolis is subjected to the philosopher-king's philosophical-ethical-medical gaze and prescriptions.

Plato's Kallipolis is not a liberal political regime. Different contemporary scholars have denounced the totalitarian tendencies of Plato's moral and political prescriptions. Karl Popper's *Open Society* stands as the most prominent critique of Plato's totalitarian utopian propensities.[549] Yet a much more detailed and refined analysis of the totalitarian features of Plato thought are found in C.C.W. Taylor's *Plato's Totalitarianism*. Totalitarianism is characterized by two features, which are both clearly present in Plato's Ideal City. First, Plato's regime is authoritarian. Authoritarianism here is understood as a system in which the ordinary citizen has no share in the political decision-making process. Second, Plato's Ideal City is also characterized by ideology— "a pervasive scheme of values intentionally promulgated by some person or

---

[546] Plato *Crito*; 47e–48a.

[547] Moes, Mark. "Plato's Conception of the Relationship Between Moral Philosophy and Medicine." Perspective in Biology and Medicine, vol. 44, no. 3, 2001, pp. 353-367.

[548] Ibid.

[549] Popper, Karl, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966.

persons and promoted by institutional means to direct all or the most significant aspects of public and private life towards the attainment of the goals dictated by those values."[550] The philosopher-king's power is undisputable and absolute. As Taylor claims, "the locus of political power is identical with the source of the ideology."[551] The guardians of the Kallipolis are under the absolute moral obligation to disallow any deviation from the ideology and moral values that the ruling power has instituted through education and other means.

The philosopher-king's knowledge of the objective divine forms is what determines and gives specific form to the content of this ideology. This knowledge, in its turn, also provides the justification for the absolute political authority of the philosopher. As I have established, this ideology finds its philosophical ground on geometry. And, the tridimensional use of geometry creates the theoretical knot that justifies the transdisciplinary wielding of specialized knowledge and power among a disciplinary-jurisdictional continuum formed by medicine, philosophy and politics. In my opinion, this trans disciplinarian triad constitutes the ancient kernel of totalitarianism.[552] This totalitarian political order includes a politics for the domestication of the human soul, which, in its turn, also calls for a politics to domesticate hope. At the level of the human soul, Plato's discourse clearly points towards administering and giving shape to the most vital-life supporting affective and conative drives that form part of the human physic stock. In his view, all parts of the human soul must conform to his perfect metaphysical blueprint. And therefore, the total life and soul of the individual must be optimized in that direction. The picture that emerges here is that of an autocratic and paternalistic politics for the human soul rooted on the philosopher king's medico-ethical exercise of disciplinary powers upon the life, health and moral wellbeing of the citizenry.

Now, if we understand hope as the most vital affective-conative forces within the human soul, and recognize its subversive nature, we can easily understand why a totalitarian regime

---

[550] C. C. W. Taylor. "Plato's Totalitarianism," *Polis* 5, 1986: pp. 4–29.

[551] Ibid. pp. 5.

[552] Here we also find the ancient kernel of bio-politics.

would like to device a way of controlling this human drive. Nonetheless, perfect, unchangeable and perpetually peaceful socio-political conditions, as Plato portraits in his Kallipolis, are utopian precisely because they are unattainable. Therefore, the exercise of the philosopher-king's disciplinary power over the human soul is utopian too. And, as I suggested above, the way in which Plato envisions to force goodness, beauty and harmony upon the citizenry to make them comply with his utopian blueprint is essentially totalitarian. Plato's metaphysical-utopian desires are totally ingrained in his socio-political and moral theory. His whole utopian system of thought was historically passed down through Platonism into a variety of philosophic systems and practices, such as the Christian religion and, even unto the subsequent development of medicine.

Even the modern-contemporary developments of the medical discipline do not escape Plato's epistemic authoritarian discourse. In fact, as Mark Moes argues, contemporary scholars have rejected Plato's analogy between politics and health based on its authoritarian nature. According to Moes, Plato's prescriptions about how health and mental harmony are to be forced unto patients have undermined moral deliberation and threatened personal liberties in mental health and other medical fields.[553] In fact, practices of micro-fascism—the desire to order, rank, control, repress, direct, and impose limits—as described by Deleuze & Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* are common in the entire medical field, especially in psychiatry.[554] Therefore, within both, the medical and the political field, Plato's geometry of power, medical-gaze and moralizing discourses helped to cement the epistemological and ontological grounds upon which the most authoritarian aspects of modern totalitarian politics have been justified. Consequently, my inquiry into Plato's politics of hope is an inquiry into the singularity of the exercise of micro-totalitarian practices that are specifically designed to give shape, administer and domesticate people's elpidic-minds. This is achieved, as I shall show below, by shaping, domesticating or/and suppressing partially or entirely the people's desires,

---

[553] Moes, Mark. "Plato's Conception of the Relationship Between Moral Philosophy and Medicine", pp. 363.

[554] Deleuze G. and F. Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 1987.

imagination, movement, fears and ideas about the future. The ultimate hoped-for goal of these sorts of totalitarian processes is always utopian, because traditionally, most despotic political élites' unrealistic definitive objective is to extend their current ownership and full administration of the present into the future. This is what I have described, with Paulo Freire, as the attempt to domesticate, secure and own the future. Yet the future is something impossible to own. For Plato, securing the future requires a perfectly harmonious and perpetually peaceful, where variance, conflict, divergence and plurality are suppressed. This project is essentially anti-democratic because the desires of the majority are supposed to be controlled by the desires and the wisdom of a superior minority—the philosopher king or kings. Indeed, neither the project nor its goals are realistically possible without submitting most of the society's population to actual conditions of oppression. And even by oppressing them, the aim might not be truly accomplished. According to the elpidology of the oppressed, the success of such a utopian totalitarian project depends primarily on domesticating people's hope. Correspondingly, implementing a system of organized hopelessness becomes a vital mainstay of any totalitarian project. And therefore, a *domesticating politics of hope*—where hoping for socio-political change is portrayed as problematic or as an unhealthy behavior—becomes an essential feature of such a system.

Locating hope as a malady in Plato's Theory

of the Human Soul and Ideal City

Plato's tripartite conceptualization of the mind emotions and appetites is characterized by an unstable equilibrium, in which the upper functions of the soul, reason and will, are to rule upon the lower parts of the soul, emotions and appetites. Socio-political and personal health requires regulation from above; that is from reason. In Plato's political theory, this ruling principle applies both, to the city and to the human soul, meaning that philosophers, who are the

272

embodiment of truth, should rule the City in the same way that reason is supposed to rule the soul. Plato's political blueprint delineates a rigid structure of power, in which the philosopher-king regulates not only the people as a body that constitutes city, but also their souls. The philosopher-king governs the city and its people through the careful (medical) administration of everyone's cognitive capacities (the rational part of the soul), spirited emotions (such as courage, ambition and anger) and urges (appetites). Plato has "a negative view" of emotions. Emotions affect reasoning for the worse.[555] For Plato, emotions are "inferior, (…) primitive and disruptive to the normal and optimal function of mind […and, therefore they should…] be under the control of reason for the sake of our normal activities of thought and action."[556] In Plato's view, emotions are a distinct source of human motivation capable of ruling the soul as a whole.[557]

To better guide my discussion on the medicalization of hope, I will refer to Plato's chariot allegory in *Phaedrus*, as he provides a detailed graphic characterization of the human soul and its governing principles. This portrait considers his notion of hubris and its negative effects. Recall that, in my view, hubris is a manifestation of hope when this emotion becomes inflated. Therefore, I am going to assume that wherever we find hubris, we also find hope underneath. In *Phaedrus*, Plato's draws the image of a Charioteer, who represents reason and intellect in the human soul, driving a chariot pulled by two strong horses with wings. The first horse is noble and of good breeding. It is white with black eyes and "on the more honorable side." The white horse aims at "glory," although his pursuit of it is temperate. He remains obedient to the charioteer, showing a perfect bond with moderation and modesty. This horse "needs no whip, being driven by the word of command alone." The second horse is ignoble and of poor breeding, black with gray eyes, and described as "a massive jumble of a creature." He

[555] Evans. D. "The search hypothesis of emotion" in: *Emotion, Evolution, and Rationality*. Edited by D. Evans & P. Cruse. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 179.

[556] Zhu, J. and Thagard, P. "Emotion and Action." *Philosophical Psychology* 15, 2002, pp. 20.

[557] Johnstone, Mark. "Anarchic Souls: Plato's Depiction of the Democratic Man." *Phronesis*, 58, 2013, pp.139-159.

aims at the satisfaction of sensual desires or pleasure. This one is rash, "hot-blooded," **and tending toward hubris**. This horse is an animal "hard to control with whip and goad."[558]

Now we have a sort of a rubric for locating hope in Plato's characterization of the human soul. The irrational part of the soul—the black horse—is always tending towards hubris. It is interesting that this part of the soul, as he describes it, is tending towards hubris, but still not fully there, at least not yet. This description invites us to think about the human traits that we have already described as associated with optimism/hope, such as self-confidence and self-pride (traits that are associated with the optimistic bias). As discussed earlier, in the presence of excessive or ill-used power, the affective-cognitive attitude of optimism (that is a form of hope) could turn into hubristic behavior; a behavior that we also described as inflated hope. Hoping excessively in an untamed or unrealistic fashion is the path towards hubris. As Icarus, the extremely optimistic or the blindly hopeful person is always in risk of hubris. Since Plato describes the black horse as tending to hubris, we can then interpret that, in his view, hope is the sort of emotion belonging to this side of the human soul. Let us assume, then, that hope is, according to Plato, an irrational emotion that, by way of imagination, seeks and finds the pleasure of imagining pleasant futures, in which desires are obtained in the most enjoyable complete way. As I discussed earlier, it is an opinion about the future, an expectation. It is a hypothesis regarding a positive expectancy in the future. Nonetheless, this usual elpidic setting of the human mind tends to be unrealistic in many ways. Our mind leans toward distorting reality and practical calculations of our prospects in the future.

As Lain-Entralgo argues, Plato possesses a skeptic view of *elpis*.[559] In Plato's view, *elpis* can accommodate both, confidence in the future happiness and fear of future pain. It manifests itself as a prospect of good or of evil. Either way, in Plato, *elpis* remains in the realm of illusion; one that distorts our rational comprehension of what is truly real and what is not. As his allegory of the Charioteer suggests, when the human elpidic mind seeks pleasure and happiness in the

---

[558] Plato, *Phaedrus*.

[559] Laín-Entralgo, P., *La espera y la esperanza*, pp. 31.

future, indulging itself in pleasant conjectures about the time to come, unadvised by reason, constitutes a feeling disposed to excess, which, as I have suggested before, could be characterized as hubris. Hope has a mercurial nature. It is, in my view, a shape-shifting multiphase trait of the human psyche. In Plato's view, then, the emotion of hope seems to be always inclined towards its corrupted phase. If this phase is not tempered by reason, it will always derail the chariot. It seems that this emotion, when it is not tempered by reason, will also correspond to Plato's depiction of the democratic soul.[560] Therefore, I will assume for the sake of my argument, that for Plato, once irrationality has taken over the soul or once the soul has been corrupted by unreasonable ideas about the future, hope inflates and transforms into hubris. Further, in Plato's view, hope in the form of hubris, seems to be a democratic emotion because it is the sort of emotion that makes the soul a slave to a tyrannical irrationality. Correspondingly, as this democratic soul corrupts itself, becoming tyrannical, we find support within Plato's own psychological theory to justify looking hubris as a kind of a disease or malady, upon which the Philosopher-king-medic must judiciously apply a medical treatment. Still, I must admit that this interpretation might show its difficulties. My portrait of hope in the form of hubris as a malady in Plato's theory could be objected. Nonetheless, I have already shown how Thomas Hobbes also characterizes Promethean hope as tending to be a powerful politically destabilizing force, which he associates with hubris and with a sort of sickness too. Furthermore, hope has been characterized as an evil precisely because, as a human force, it enables humans to go ahead with questionable actions that might result in all kinds of dangers. Furthermore, I have also portrayed hope as freedom; and as we know, some kinds of human liberties or practices of freedom have also been portrayed not only as unreasonable or undesirable, but have also been characterized as

---

[560] Republic 561c6-d8. Let's not forget, however, that the view of hope/optimism that I have been portraying up to this point, this human attitude is much more than an emotion and that I am only contrasting my notion to Plato's notion of the soul and his view of the democratic personality, with which I do not agree with. And, yet a democratic personality admits including courage, and all other spirited part of the soul as part of the traits belonging to the democratic soul.

dangerous.[561] In Plato, hubris is a sort of illness. Next, I will design a thought experiment in which I place hope and hubris within the framework of Plato's Ideal City model, and locate where exactly hope becomes a force to be domesticated or an illness to be medically administered by the philosopher-king, or both.

Thus, here I am then designing Plato's perfect "healthy" Ideal Polis from the point of view of "hope". Plato's Ideal City is a City that accommodates human desire because it is not a society of pigs. Yet, it just accommodates human desires by carefully administering them. It allows some desires to flourish, while suppressing undeserving ones. Should the philosopher-king-medic allow optimism or hope to subsist in his perfect city? Of course it should, but not in its political subversive form, only it its proper amount and constantly tamed by reason. Any expression of hope or optimism in Plato's perfect City, it would be handled with strict care by the philosopher-king only and dispensed in perfectly regulated doses to those who might need it most and only when they need it. The guardians are probably the members of the city who need optimism the most, as I have described it, a victorious attitude. Nonetheless, in as much as optimism/hope is a subversive attitude that has motivated mortals to breakaway from all sorts of boundaries and constraints, I shall assume that the philosopher-king-medic must, either, domesticate every subversive substance of hope or totally suppress it. The administration and domestication of hope should also involve politically bureaucratization of all cultural resources of hope most closely related to this human trait. Pedagogy is one of the most important resources of hope. It is one of the social assets most heavily guarded by states and the most important political tool in Plato's ideal city. Note, that all the prescriptions that Socrates gave, as well as all the precautions that he takes at the time of designing and creating his perfect city, take place with the goal of regulating the future of the city or the future of everyone within the city. The picture of the city, in Plato's mind, is precisely a utopian blueprint of life, in which change and progress

---

[561] Isaiah Berlin's famous characterization of positive liberty includes describing some ideals of this kind of liberty as psychologically treacherous, because they can gain momentous of power of their own upon our minds, leading our actions towards unexpected or unintended consequences. He uses the fictional character of Frankenstein as an example.

do not exist because the city is already perfect. It is toward these ends that Plato's proposes the strict control of the workforce, a rigid class system, and even the censorship of music, poetry and art in general, among other mechanisms.[562]

Therefore, Plato's ideal City is perfectly stable, static and devoid of a true dynamic (historical) structure. As Arlene Saxonhouse claims, Plato's perfect city "imposes unchanging forms on inhabitants …*The Republic* portrays a city of exact forms with no escape from them."[563] As Saxonhouse explains from an epistemological standpoint, there is no contestation of these forms in this city. This is a "frightening city where unchanging forms dominate the political landscape."[564] Interestingly, as Saxonhouse suggests, Plato's critic of imitation or mimic as tending to shift, modify or pervert the forms by taking multiple forms is what prompt him to censor poetry and expel imitation from his perfect city.[565] It is obvious that creative freedom and unconstrained imagination are crucial element in poetry and other arts. It is also obvious that hope, as I have described, is a shape-shifting human trait that is intimately related to the human activities that Plato wants to censor, suppress or even eliminate from his city because of their imaginative-cognitive nature and possibly subversive character. Indeed, Plato aims at diminishing or eliminating entirely the mercurial and subversive nature of hope. Why? As I explained earlier, as Plato seems to also suggest, hope tends to be blind. The human imaginative and creative forces, which are fueled and enabled by blind-hope has a very strong political substance within. As in Prometheus, blind-hope in the form of courage is a tremendous force

---

[562] 400e-401b- Poets, according to Plato, must be supervised and censored. Poets' imagination and creativity should be supervised and compel "to embody...the image of the good character…" "Licentious, mean and graceless" images should be prevented in all crafts and arts. Plato's idea is that everything in the society, including arts, should bring health to society and to its Guardians. So, everything unhealthy is to be put to rest or suppressed.

[563] Sanxonhouse, Arlene W. "Freedom, Form, Formlessness: Euripedes' Bacche and Plato's Republic. *American Political Science Review*, vol. 108, no. 1, 2014: 88-99.

[564] Ibid. pp. 89.

[565] Ibid.

capable of subverting Plato's perfect forms and the political order created by them. Consequently, it is obvious that blind-hope—in any of its untamed forms—has no place within Plato's ideal state. Thus, in the framework of Plato's Ideal City, hope should be domesticated, suppressed or even banished, just like music, poetry, and imitation for the sake of the enduring peace and perfect stability of the City.

A Freirean assessment of Plato's perfectly

peaceful and immortal well-ordered society: the contours of a system of organized hopelessness

Let me advance now my Freirean assessment of Plato's perfectly peaceful and immortal well-ordered society. What does the philosopher-king-medic should prescribe to lay down the basis of a system of organized hopelessness that will keep the perfection of the city? Paulo Freire's theoretical framework provides a series of notions useful for this examination. For instance, his notion of "bureaucratization", that describes how oppressive systems tend to fragment every human activity to coerce people into behaving in certain specific ways,[566]is useful for examining how the philosopher-king-medic attempts to domesticate hope at various levels of society. Creating the conditions that aim at freezing time and at stopping history from happening requires bureaucratizing people's spirit, courage, appetites, desires and hope. My discussion here, however, does not pretend to be exhaustive. I only offer a glance upon the most obvious aspects of what I have defined as the domestication of people's sense of hope to offer a theoretical portrait of it.

Since hope is an attitude oriented towards the future, we suppose that men's elpidic mind process regarding the not-yet becomes an element subject to the philosopher-king's regulatory

---

[566] See Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York; Continuum, 2000. pp. 19. See also, Freire, Paulo, "Reading the World and Reading the Word: An Interview with Paulo Freire." *Language Arts*, vol. 62, no. 1, 1985, pp. 15-21.

medical gaze. Domesticating and adapting people's way of looking at, desiring and relating to the future naturally becomes a crucial part of the methods for domesticating hope. From this perspective, the bureaucratization of hope entails the bureaucratization of the future. This means that the people's perception of the future is to be manipulated to change their perceptions of time. Instead of perceiving time as moving forward, this system wants to make them to perceive time as remaining still.

Before moving any further, let me bring forward Paulo Freire's view regarding the category of the future in its relation to hope and history for contrasting purposes. In Freire's perspective, the future is supposed to be undetermined. History is possibility. The future is open to, and full of a variety of undetermined prospects. Epochs are not closed periods of time or static compartments within which people are confined, but a dialectic temporal relation between the past, present and future.[567] Furthermore, as I explained earlier, hoping is the way in which our human elpidic faculties cope with the anxiety that the future creates in our psyche. Desiring the future and the set of pleasures that come with imagining attained hoped-for goals form part of the whole elpidic syndrome. Thus, as Freire suggests in his analysis of oppression and organized hopelessness, if hope is to be domesticated, the future must be invaded with the purpose of dividing the individual "between and identical past and the present, and a future without hope".[568] Domesticating people's sense of hope requires domesticating people's sense of time. In other words, domesticating the sense of hope of individuals and people in general entails what I shall call a chronopolitics.[569]

---

[567] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 101.

[568] Ibid. pp. 154.

[569] Freire does not use the term chronopolitics, but he points to it in several ways. I am not going, however, to examine in length this term in this chapter. Nonetheless, I do point below toward to what I see as a very important paradoxical dimension of any totalitarian politics of hope in its relation to the administration or bureaucratization of people's times by power élites.

For Freire, a basic element of the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed is *prescription*.[570] Every prescription represents the imposition of one individual's choice upon another. The oppressor's prescription has the intention of "transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms to the prescriber's consciousness. Thus, the behavior of the oppressed is prescribed behavior; it follows the guidelines of the oppressor."[571]

Now, let us take a close look at Plato's philosopher-king-medic's prescriptions to domesticate people's sense of hope to own their consciousness, minds and future. First, since hope has a subversive substance that can disrupt, perturb, or alter the present to subvert it, so the possibility of a new/different future results from any activities in line with those subversive hopes, then, it is obvious that this substance needs to be minimized and or subdued. A future without hope requires a hopeless present. Now, drawing from the wisdom contained in our previous analysis of Prometheus "blind-hope", I must remember that hope was offered or proposed by Aeschylus as a cure for fear; especially, as a cure for fear of death. Fear opposes hope. Thus, in a way, courage is but a manifestation or one of the forms that hope assumes within certain contexts. So, as discussed earlier, an obvious way of counter-attacking or suppressing the human sense of hope in any of its forms, courage or hubris, is by using fear or even terror. And, if hope is taken as a social malady, fear looks as the perfect remedy to counter it.

It looks medically logical that in the same way that hope is a medicine for fear, fear could be thought as a medicine for hope. As discussed in previous chapters, the politics of fear is the prescription to counter hope suggested by both, Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes. Thus, as Freire suggests, instilling fear in a systematic form and producing and reproducing conditions where oppressed people become afraid even of being free becomes part of a system of organized hopelessness. Fear of freedom amounts to be afraid of concretely hoping for the possibility of—and acting in line with the hope leading to— changing the socio-political conditions that oppress

---

[570] Ibid. pp. 46-47.

[571] Ibid. pp. 47.

them. Oppressed people are so afraid of being free that they might even end up believing that advancing a concrete hope to become free of domination is a dangerous activity leading to disorder and anarchism.[572] Thus, oppressed people might even be afraid of being actively engaged in changing their own social conditions. They are afraid of being historical agents. In other words, they are afraid of actively and realistically hoping for a better world for them. As Freire states, the oppressed end up securing the very chains that maintain them oppressed as a means of achieving an illusory security.[573] Therefore, a very effective way of manipulating, controlling and/or suppressing people's sense of hope is by instilling all sorts of fears upon them, especially the fear of being free from oppression.

Machiavelli and Hobbes made patently clear that domination requires fear. Hobbes portrays an attractive theoretical picture of fear as a sort of necessary precautionary wisdom or enlightened pessimism mutually shared by the citizenry as a source of stability and peace. And yet, he stresses the fact that this is not a benevolent view of the exercise of power. Moreover, he insists that only through the energetic and effective use of political power to interfere with, and reduce the individuals and people's liberty can a well-ordered, peaceful and lasting society be achieved. In practical terms, Hobbes' totalitarian politics of fear ultimately produces a perverse sort of pessimism masked as a sort of collective wisdom.

Now, it should be noticed that in Plato's ideal geometry of power, while everybody else in the Ideal-City might share an ethos where this collective pessimistic/cautionary logic is the norm, another sort of more optimistic logic regulates the philosopher-king-medic's life. This is a crucial element of analysis that brings to light an aspect of a totalitarian and despotic chronopolitics that usually remains unexamined. While fear is the emotion that rules the many, a much more optimistic outlook of life might certainly rule the life of the few who are in charge. The power élites are in charge, precisely because they estimate and regulate the time to come. While the philosopher-king-medic rules everyone else's times, no one rules his. In other words,

---

[572] Ibid. pp. 35.

[573] Ibid. pp. 35, 45 and 48.

his geometry of power prescribes a chronopolitics that does not apply to him. He is above his prescriptions, including those regarding time. As a matter of fact, two different conceptualizations and administrations of the spatio-temporal landscape of the Ideal-City emerge. I will be back later to this specific point to offer a detailed account of this argument, and will offer a concrete example that will illustrate with accuracy what I mean.

The point I want to advance at this stage of my analysis is that any political power aiming at achieving an immortal peace or at an end-of-history condition will benefit from hindering people's sense of hope by instilling fear in them. Fear not only inhibits hope, but also discourages liberty. As I argued earlier, reaching an immortal peace is not actually feasible because controlling the future is not concretely possible. Thus, stopping history from happening is impossible too. Yet, humans could create the illusion that a perfect-flawless harmony among people does exist and the future is secured through devising and disseminating myths and through other mechanisms of oppression. From this perspective, oppression is about dominating people's inner agentic capabilities. As Freire insists, instilling fear is the perfect tool for oppression if the objective is attempting to silence and immobilize people. The only true path into having a shot at domesticating the future is through devising a way of domesticating people's sense of hope, to domesticate the way people cognitively access and bring the future forward. Making people as afraid as possible about hoping for, and bringing socio-political change, is a very effective way of keeping people politically immobilized. This helps to create the illusion that time has stopped from coming.

Now, as a political tool, fear pursues paralyzing people politically in more than one form. As Freire advances in his work, when uncertainties and fears over the future dominate people's collective imagination, it becomes difficult for the oppressed to have the necessary political courage for assuming total responsibility for deliberation, and take their own decisions over their future. People, instead of showing a courageous sense of hope—which might sometimes even require being blind to probable future dangers—show apprehension or fear of taking their own decisions and their future in their hands. No fear could be successfully introduced in people's minds and collective imaginary without concrete interference in people's material life first. As

explained previously, taking optimism away from people is about alienating them from their most proximate and concrete resources of hope. For instance, in the specific context of war, or of armed combat, if someone has a sword or a firearm with which to defend himself, disarming him becomes a simple, but very compelling way of taking a resource of optimism from his hands. By a single move, the precarity of being empty handed to defend himself against an enemy who is armed is enough to instill in this person the fear of being at the complete mercy of his enemy. Given that his most handy, most needed and concrete means has been taken away from him, his optimism has also suffered. His hope is not intact; it has been weakened.

Since fear weakens hope and hope enables our agentic capabilities, human agency debilitates whenever fear is present. The more the fear the less true agency is possible. Being a subject of history requires courage. It also requires knowledge of what concretely entails to be a true agent of change within a specific context. Yet, what the politics of fear, as a mechanism of domination over oppressed people, pursues is precisely to stop people from being subjects of history at the collective level. Fear takes collective audacity and courage away in a variety of intricate ways. Drawing on the Hobbesian politics of fear that I described above as a sort of perverse wisdom, we could say that fear and pessimism get interlocked in a hopeless state of mind. The tragic results of this state of mind can be portrayed as a collective debilitating anxiety, collective paranoia and panic, corrosive self-doubt, mutual mistrust, quietism, immobilization and helplessness. This is indeed a set of incapacitating and crippling conditions, which, in its turn, helps to reproduce impossibility, and, therefore, oppression. An oppressive system in which all these collective attitudes become integrated into the shared discourses and cultural performances of people's everyday existence will certainly spiral into an evil system of organized hopelessness.

Yet, my description of the whole spectrum of attributes and conditions that a system of hopelessness produces is still incomplete. Let me now move into a more detailed account of Freire's notion of "invasion of the future" by power élites to have a comprehensive picture of what a system of hopelessness entails. In his analysis of fear, immobilization and hopelessness, Freire also emphasizes the way in which élites attempt to domesticate the future as part of their

enterprise of conquest and domination. This enterprise contains a program of what he refers as cultural invasion,[574] which entails conquering and controlling the present with the aim of having a future that reproduces as best as possible, "the domesticated present".[575] The objective is to make the time to come look like the present time in order to create the impression that it is a sort of an "inevitable fate".[576] As I mentioned above, this whole process entails a chronopolitics.

But, what specific guidelines should the philosopher-king's chronopolitics should follow to perpetuate his Ideal-City in time? To begin with, the time to come should be carefully planned by the philosopher-king-medic. His prescription must be one which considers a future full of and open to a diverse range of possibilities rather than one limited to a few prescribed and pre-determine potentialities that have been already planned for. Taking Plato's own prescription for his Ideal-City as a point of departure, we can speculate that human imagination, dreams and the mind should also be domesticated; so the individuals perceive the present as fated and unaltered as possible.[577] Indeed, the philosopher-king-medic's mission seems to be to find a way to anesthetize the subversive substance (or substances) that hope carries within. Domesticating the people's sense of hope by draining it of all its rebellious substances to own and secure the future amounts to depoliticize hope. In other words, attempting to domesticate and own the future can only be achieved by a continuous "depolitization therapy" administered to all human feelings and inner capabilities associated with hope. The main goal of this therapy is the depolitization of the future. A domesticated future is an immobile and well-behave future, in which good behavior is measured by how close to the present the incoming time looks. Nonetheless, the future cannot be neither invaded nor secured or owned. So, the methodology to accomplish such an impossible task is to create a series of illusions in the people's minds that will eventually take hold of their sense of hope and make them believe, among other things, that neither futurity nor futurization

---

[574] Ibid. pp. 152.

[575] Ibid. pp. 38.

[576] Ibid.

[577] See Ibid. pp. 85.

are possible. Both, futurity and futurization, become a sort of disease that needs to be prevented if a well-ordered and everlasting society is to prevail.

Paulo Freire explains how this set of illusions is to be created, and how the depolitization of the human sense of hope as therapy works in achieving these end-results. Following Freire, this therapy begins by extracting the dialectics out of the relation between people's own consciousness and the present, the world's reality and the future. The bureaucratization of people's minds aims at reducing human thought "to a state of naïveté" by depositing prescribed contents into people's consciousness.[578] Human consciousness is to be taken as an empty space statically opposed to the world and to the future. Thus, domesticating the mind starts by "negating the power of reflection of the consciousness" transforming it into an empty space. According to Freire, pedagogy is the mechanism through which this social-engineering process is carried out. I want to remind that, as Freire suggests, education is a process that goes way beyond school. Education is a ubiquitous activity that is present at almost all levels and in every context of society. Paradoxically, in Plato's Ideal-City, all people need to be educated if desires, emotions, hope and the future are to be fully domesticated and rendered in accordance to the philosopher-king's desires and hoped-for goals. Obviously, if Plato's Republic is to endure forever, everybody, including people at the bottom of his Ideal-City's intellectual hierarchy, is going to be trained to hope in a certain non-political way or not hoping at all. Paulo Freire's banking model of education—defined by him as "an act of depositing, in which the students [or the people] are the depositories and the teacher is the depositors" [579], becomes the ideal educational model to depoliticize people's sense of hope. In the banking model, communication and dialogue are excluded from the pedagogical scenario. Instead, the philosopher-king—the educator in the very same way that a medic does—instead of communicating through a dialogue,

---

[578] Freire, Paulo. "Education: domestication or liberation? *Prospects*, vol. II, No.2, 1972, pp. 173-181.

[579] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York; Continuum, 2000, pp. 72.

prescribes communiqués, or memos, trying to make "deposits which the students patiently receive."[580]Freire also describes this educative process as "cultural action for domestication".[581]

Thus, the philosopher-king-medic's cultural-political actions for domesticating the present to domesticate the future include prescribing immobility, censorship and the permanent silence of most people in the Ideal-City. Silence becomes another potent medicine in the philosopher-king's drugstore. Indeed, where there is silence there are no questions to be asked, and where there are no questions there is no denunciation of any wrongdoing, unjust situation or evil. Plato's utopian society is an oppressive system in which denouncing injustice is not even contemplated as a possibility, because society is supposed to be perfectly just. In a perfectly just society there is nothing no be denounced, and, therefore, the possibility of hopefully announcing a new alternative reality to the present condition is illogical and closed *ab initio*. The very seed or possibility from where futurization is supposed to grow as a cognitive process is never present in this social scenario. In Plato's perfect-city, the future, as a set of open possibilities, is something never to be announced. Since the Ideal-City amounts to a closed society and a closed society is a society of cero new possibilities and no history or eventful moments, hope needs to lose its true bearings. As time has been frozen and history has ceased, neither futurity nor newness belongs to Plato's perfectly harmonious and ordered society. Nonetheless, time has neither been frozen nor domesticated. The philosopher-king-medic's chronopolitics is about creating the illusion of a frozen time through bureaucratizing and domesticating people sense of hope. The domestication of people's minds and of their sense of hope is an instrument of

---

[580] Ibid.

[581] Freire, Paulo. "Education: domestication or liberation?" *Prospects*, vol. II, no.2, 1972; pp. 173-181. As already mentioned, Freire's cultural action for domestication signals the process of education/domestication as a much broader cultural process that goes beyond the school. As previously suggested, there are teachers everywhere. The medic, the minister, the lawyer, the politician and even your auto-mechanic assume the educator role. There are cases, as in the religious minister, the lawyer or the medic, where the discipline itself, because of its own nature, has a very strong educative content.

domination aiming at imposing "the mythification of the world [that ultimately means] the mythification of the consciousness of the world."[582]

Notice that we have arrived here at a theoretical blueprint of hopelessness. At the heart of this blueprint, there is a set of illusions created by myths, which are then prescribed and deposited in people's minds through educative means. As I have been arguing following Freire, mythologizing human life has always served questionable motives along human history. Unfortunately, instead of unveiling myths, philosophy has also aided in masquerading human reality by wrapping myths with rational veils for equally questionable intentions. In fact, Plato's infamous Noble Lie belongs to a dark area of political philosophy that advances the idea that myth-creating narratives are beneficial to the order, stability, and health of the state. For Plato, the dissemination of myths and falsehoods are useful to the city. The telling of lies holds a crucial place in power relations, playing a decisive role in establishing oppressive or despotic political relationships. As Hannah Arendt remind us in *Truth and Politics*, "lies have always been regarded as necessary and justifiable tools not only of the politician's or demagogue's, but also of the statesman's trade.[583] She notices that given that "lies…are often used as substitutes for more violent means, [they] are apt to be considered relatively harmless tools in the arsenal of political action."[584] Arendt recognizes the traditional political practicality of lying, so she is

---

[582] Ibid. pp.181.

[583] Arendt, H. "Truth and Politics." In Peter Baehr (ed.), *The Portable Hannah Arendt*. New York: Viking 2000, pp. 545. In this work, right in her first footnote, Arendt is reluctant to recognize Plato's "noble lie" as a lie per se, at least not in the modern sense of lying. She prefers, as she unclearly explain it, to interpret as a sort of "fiction" or "error". She recognizes, however, two key facts that legitimize her analysis of lying (or truth) in politics in my interpretation of Plato's noble "fictional-myth-creating tale"; 1) that Plato's noble "story" is a sort of a myth creating tale; 2) that Plato's favors lies as a sort of a medical treatment to the insane by the expert, the philosopher-medic. Arendt does not suggest anything else regarding these facts. One can only speculate that, for Plato, emotions make people kind of crazy or insane and that hope, within the Ideal City's framework is an unwelcome "disruptive" emotion, it should be properly medicalized by the medical expert.

[584] Ibid. pp. 546.

reluctant to totally condemn this politics in view of its political practicality. Paradoxically, in her view the opposite of lying, truth, "has a despotic character", especially within the dynamic of a democratic society because of the potential to preclude the democratic political debate.[585] Nonetheless, lying is also despotic, especially when institutionalized as a mechanism of oppression and as an enabler of tyranny. This is the utilitarian nature of myth-creating stories that I am criticizing here. Thus, as Arendt herself suggests and I established at the outset, I am trying to find out what kind of injury political power is capable to inflict upon people's sense of hope and its practices through prescribing domesticating policies, oppressive educational models, lies, myths and illusions.

Paulo Freire's criticism of myth-creating processes to subdue people's consciousness through the creation of illusions to anesthetize or destroy human hope can be interpreted as a critique of Plato's utopian vision of society and of its medical-totalitarian administration of human life from above. Thus, it should not be a surprise to find out the myth-creating "Noble Lie" is, in Plato's own words, "a form of a medicine" to the citizens of the Republic.[586] According to his narrative, the Noble Lie, concocted in a moment of need, is supposed to be incorporated very early into the culture of the Ideal-City to persuade first the rulers and then the rest of the members of the society of a series of myths that are made to secure the stability of the regime. This "medical treatment" consists in telling everyone that their childhood upbringing and education was just imagined by them, that they were formed and nurtured under the ground, and later released from there unto the surface.[587] The aim of this lie is to create love and loyalty for the land and a strong fraternal bond among men. Yet, the noble lie has a second interesting, hierarchy-manufacturing, part. The lie aims at justifying inequality and authoritarianism. For these purposes, the lie specifies that men were created unequal, because their souls were forged

---

[585] Ibid. pp. 556.

[586] *Republic*, pp. 389b.

[587] Ibid. pp. 414d.

with varied materials. Those competent to rule were made of gold; the guardians' souls were made of silver, and the souls of the rest of the people were made of iron and bronze.[588] Sons would be most of the time of the same metallic constitutions of their parents. It could happen however that a newborn would bear qualities of a different metal, in which case it would be important to educate the individual according to the material showing in his soul. The myth-creating noble lie includes a stipulation to instill fear of total destruction of the city upon all citizens, if ever the character of these metals is overlooked or disrespected and someone with iron or bronze in him is allowed to rule.[589] Thus, in Plato's view, prescribing a lie is suitable to the skilled and wise philosopher-king-medic who, in order to establish a solid city with a solid unchangeable future, must absolutely and solidly rule over everyone and everything, including the time to come by way of telling "noble" myth-creating tales.

Note that this myth-creation scheme is part of Plato's chronopolitics: a politics formulated to administer and bureaucratize the human spatio-temporal reality. As Paulo Freire implies, power élites want to reduce everything, including "earth…the creations of people, people themselves and time…to the status of objects at [their] disposal."[590] Bureaucratizing time to own it becomes a political administrative tool meant to normalize the present and the future to come. It aims at making every next moment of time emerge as a well-behaved-normal time to which everyone must immediately accommodate or adapt to.[591] This sort of bureaucratization of time denies historical time, because instead of transforming the current reality, it seeks to re-arrange and re-allocate people's memories of the past and their entire notion of time to administrate their notion of the future.

Devising a chronopolitics adjusted to the objective of normalizing and freezing time, as well as denying historical time, is a crucial aspect in the systematization of a program of

---

[588] Ibid. pp.415b.

[589] Ibid. pp. 415c.

[590] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 58.

[591] Ibid. pp. 92.

hopelessness. It is important also to bring to the fore that this sort of chronopolitics does not seem to apply to the power élites. By devising the politics of time, they remain out of the timeline that needs to be programed, prescribed and pushed forward as a controlling mechanism of those under their rule. In other words, a chronopolitics always implies two different sets of regiments of time or two different spatio-temporal realities: one to be prescribed for the people, whose sense of hope is to be administered, manipulated or controlled according to the desires and hopes of the governing class, and, the other, to be creatively mastered and freely lived by the one governing and prescribing the models of times to be administered. The former suffers the enactment of the timeline that the later imposes to define the contours of the present and of the future. Under this scheme, the power élites are free to desire, hope and bring their future forward, while the rest of people see their hope either controlled or stolen, and their sense of time distorted. The following example will illustrate with precision this argument.

Plato's philosophy and Platonism had a profound influence on Christian theology and practices. Thus, Christian religious utopias share similarities or parallelism with Plato's Ideal-City and his philosophy in general. This influence is found in several utopian modern experiments advanced by different religious movements. One example is the 17th and 18th centuries Jesuits/Guaraní-Indian Reductions (*reducciones de indios*) in South America. The Reductions, also known during that period as Jesuit Republics and Utopian Jesuit Missions, were settlements founded by the Jesuits to evangelize, promote and protect the betterment of the Guaraní Indians, enduring for over 160 years in harmony and peace.[592] Although *Las*

---

[592] According to Thomas O'Brien, Las Reducciones "…consisted of communities that spread well beyond the borders of present-day Paraguay, circumscribing areas of Eastern Argentina, Uruguay, southern Brazil, and the frontiers of Bolivia. By 1767, the year of the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Spanish provinces, 113,716 natives lived in 57 Reductions. At one time, the area under the sway of the Jesuit Reductions was almost as large as Western Europe and included the finest ranches and plantations in South America…The streets of the Reductions were paved a century before the streets of Lima and Buenos Aires, and some of the churches were as large and splendid as their European counterparts…The towns, which consisted of wooden homes and enormous stone churches, were shocking to those visitors who were familiar with the conditions in other missions, where the villagers lived in straw

Reducciones were a social experiment in self-sufficiency, the prime objective of these autonomous settlements was civilizing and converting the Indians into devoted Christians and ensuring their welfare. The Jesuits sought to accomplish this by founding a perfectly peaceful Christian state, in which only the Indians and the missionaries would live and prosper together without any interference from, or contact with other Europeans to avoid being corrupted by European morals and practices.[593] Only the peaceful preaching of the Gospel, they thought, could effectively convert the Indians.[594] The converted Indians of these Reductions became model Christians and the prosperity of the settlements generated the envy of visitors, of the *criollos* of the region, and the European colonial powers. The *Las Reducciones* were viewed as masterworks of reason and justice. Still, they were just a social experiment modeled in the light of "European Catholic culture, which framed utopia according to Biblical stories."[595] They were a kind of benevolent despotic patriarchal autarchy, where the Jesuits functioned as the despotic overseers. Many of their practices and methodology would be seen today as oppressive and abnormally restrictive.[596] The priest maintained oversight and control of virtually all aspects of communal life, while the native caciques oversaw discipline and punishment over the natives. The priests kept tight control over and mediated all contacts of the Indians with the exterior, including all commerce and trading their communities carried out with the rest of the Europeans in the region. This practice was of crucial importance to keep the people isolated and far from any corrupting ideas, practices and vices from the outside. The Jesuits insisted in keeping the Indians innocent

---

and mud huts and still largely engaged in hunting and gathering activities. The sophistication of the Reductions was both a source of edification and scandal." O'Brien, Thomas. "Utopia in the midst of oppression? A reconsideration of Guaraní/Jesuit communities in seventeenth and eighteenth century Paraguay", *Contemporary Justice Review*, 7:4, 395-410, DOI: 10.1080/1028258042000305875; pp. 395.

[593] Cro, Stelio. "From More's Utopia to The Jesuit Reducciones in Paraguay." Morena, vol. 42, 164, 2005; 93-117, pp. 104.

[594] Ibid.

[595] O'Brien, Thomas. "Utopia in the midst of oppression?" pp. 401.

[596] Ibid.

and pure. They also kept information and news away from the Indians to keep the outside time away from the petrified perfect time in the Reductions. While the rest of the world changed with times, the Reductions were supposed to maintain their original perfect utopian form.

Therefore, the missioners divided their times accordingly, living two different times within two different spatio-temporal realities that separated their existence between governing the utopian rightness of their settlements and administering their relationships with the whole outside world, including the Spanish Crown. To keep their power over the Reductions and expand their settlements, they had to play a double life with a double set of times, one for them as the masters and one for the Indians. They managed for a very long time to keep the Indians frozen in time in a normalized future. They achieved this by keeping European from introducing myths to the Indians; they exaggerated the bad qualities of Europeans by telling how corrupted these colonists were and how any contact with them could corrupt their souls and make them fall out of God's grace.[597] The Jesuits also used the European ideology regarding the Indians' childlike and docile nature in their benefit at the time of dealing and negotiating additional terms with the Crown. As O'Brien explains, the nature and scope of the revolt of the Guaraní Indians against the Jesuits and Spaniards cannot be understood without understanding first how the Jesuits kept playing with lies, myths and distorted views of realities in their relationship with the people at both sides of their lives.[598]

Getting back to the analysis of Plato's ideal and perfect city, it illustrates how lies are supposed to work in his system to keep time frozen and normalized, and prevent history from happening. In the case of the Reductions, revolt could not be deterred because of external factors. The Crown ordered the Guaraní to leave the towns and the Jesuits could not contain their reaction. Yet, in the same way that Jesuits intended with the Indians, in Plato's perfect and well-ordered society the Noble-Lie is prescribed as a treatment to create collective shared meanings, upon which the members of the city construct their ideas about what is possible or not, about

---

[597] Ibid. pp. 406

[598] Ibid. pp. 406-407.

292

what is desirable or not, and what they should or should not expect in the future. From the Platonic medical interpretation, in this deceptive stratagem, lies and myths become the medicine to cure people from desiring, imagining, dreaming and concretely hoping for a future, that is not contemplated by the narrative of past, present and future possibilities. This is the reality that the myth has created. Myths become another sort of medicine to cure the illness of freedom; a disease that can rapidly become epidemic and grow into collective-political transformative freedom.

Indeed, as Popper emphatically points out, "nothing is more in keeping with Plato's totalitarian morality than his advocacy of propaganda lies."[599] Surely, the Noble Lie theory cannot be taken lightly. As Bertrand Russell argues, Plato's Noble Lie, is "incompatible with philosophy, and involves a kind of education which stunts intelligence."[600] But, even more harmful, this lie is invoked to sanction pedagogical programs, whose function is to legitimize, ordain and lay down anti-democratic-fascist practices; its goal is to erect a totalitarian political regime that gives absolute power to a few. Because the Noble Lie has the practical goal of making people forget their actual upbringings, to convince them they were all formed and nurtured deep inside earth and to ignore the true origin of their own makeups, I want to describe the pedagogic program of Plato's Ideal City as a pedagogic program of oblivion. Now, notice that all the other myths and illusion-creating processes to domesticate the people's sense of hope that I have described above require educative mechanisms and artifices directed to make people forget and overlook the vitality and true character of hope and to also ignore the fact that change is but an actual primary condition of human life. By applying the necessary treatment to make people forget the true nature of hope and by manipulating and distorting the whole spectrum of attributes of their elpidic minds at the individual and collective level, Plato's educative programs end up obliterating most of people's agentic capabilities, alienating them from a crucial part of their own inner mental complexion, especially from their free will. Consequently, establishing a

---

[599] Popper, Karl, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, pp. 141.

[600] Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy*. New York, Simon and Shuster, 1945, pp. 113.

despotic or totalitarian oppressive system of organized hopelessness requires above anything else the development of a pedagogical program of oblivion directed to make people forget that they could be free.

I take the term, "pedagogy of oblivion" from Puerto Rican poet and philosopher Juan Antonio Corretjer. He uses this notion to describe the whole spectrum of educative programs and mechanisms, inside and outside school, systematically used by the United States' colonial regime in Puerto Rico directed to make Puerto Ricans forget about who they were, who they are and who they can be by manipulating material recourses, historical facts and cultural trends. [601] The method of pedagogy of oblivion has the manifested objective of keeping the people of Puerto Rico, at the collective level, politically immobilized and hopelessly silenced under a colonial yoke that never ends. As Paulo Freire's work made patently clear, all the oppressive practices comprised in modern colonialism are concrete examples of how a system of organized hopelessness operates. Colonialism is not a system that only functions at the level of material exploitation—taking material resources and material life away—but worse, it is a system whose most dramatic and pervasive damage is the spiritual impoverishment of the colonized, because it aims at taking humanity away from them. The purposive and systematic dehumanization of whole groups of people is but a process of oblivion, where human beings end up either forgetting or never appropriately learning what to be a fully human being is about. Oppressed people are continually being taught lessons through violent means. These lessons aim at making them forget, for instance, to be men, to be women or to be courageous, to be self-asserting, to be proud, or to respect themselves. In other words, the oppressed either never learn to be humans or are viciously taught that the values, rights and humanity that their oppressors practice and enjoy are not for them, so they must also forget about these rights. For Freire, dehumanization is not only an ontological possibility, but also and above all a historical reality.[602] A system of organized hopelessness is but a system ultimately intended to dehumanize oppressed people by

---

[601] Corretjer, Juan A., *Para que los Pueblos Canten*. Puerto Rico, 1970, pp. 5.

[602] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 43.

taking their individual and collective hope away and thereby taking their agentic capabilities to be subjects of history and agents of change away too. Paradoxically, by violently negating and suppressing hope, an organized system of hopelessness affirms through this very negation the socio-political importance, strength and value of this human attitude.

Hopelessness marks not only those whose hope have been stolen, but also those who have stolen it, and, therefore, it also accounts for the unjust and oppressive system that engenders the sort of hope for domination and violence in the oppressors that move them to take hope away from other people. As I have tried to demonstrate here, Plato's utopian socio-political theory serves as the intellectual justification of totalitarian regimes. In sum, totalitarianism, as well as other sort of despotic regimes, tends to try to perpetuate its perfect order as long as possible in time. Consequently, instituting an array of mechanisms aiming at freezing time and stopping socio-political change and history from happening becomes crucial. Since stopping history from happening as if nothing novel never really happens is an illusion, developing and organizing a system to take hope away from people appears as the ideal device for creating the illusions necessary to control people elpidic minds and perception and meanings of time. Hope's subversive nature is then conceived as a menace to stability if shown in the oppressed. Given the political-medical liaison, assigning hope and freedom the same attributes of an illness or of madness that needs to be cured and kept in check is almost as natural as exercising political power itself. As I said at the outset, the main purpose of this chapter is to bring to light the specificity of some of the methods through which a system of organized hopelessness delivers the medicine of hopelessness to people to cure them from desiring, dreaming and hoping newness or novelty. Nevertheless, this task would be totally incomplete without providing concrete actual examples of how specifically an organized system of hopelessness violently constructs and reproduces the socio-cultural and objective conditions in which collective and individual hope is systematically taken away from people. Indeed, Plato's utopianism might look harmless is looked only from a theoretical point of view. But, Plato's utopian geometry of power—which includes an idealistic moral view of human life and paternalistic political and ethical practices—have not only informed many despotic and politically totalitarian practices

throughout time, but it has also become a justificatory basis for believing that ideal, eternally well-ordered and perpetually peaceful socio-political regimes are desirable and entirely possible to attain. Thus, distinct set of people, at various times throughout history, have hoped-for, designed and actually established socio-political arrangements with clear Platonic utopian characteristics.

My account of organized hopelessness would look incomplete without integrating into my analysis at least one concrete example of how an organized system of hopelessness works and how in concrete terms human agency and hope struggle to cope with the spatio-temporal anomalies that such a system manufactures. In the following and last section of this chapter, I offer an assessment of the history of running slaves in America antebellum South and their slave history of resistance to the slavery system from the standpoint of the elpidology of the oppressed. I shall also offer and account of what human hope is concretely about within a system designed to crush or to steal away most or all the resources of hope.

Paths to hopelessness versus paths of resistance:
a note on epic and fugitive hope through the history of running slaves in America antebellum South

In the famous American television series, *Roots*, Kunta Kinte, a young African man is captured, brought to America and sold to a Virginia plantation as a slave.[603] The story portrays a brave man who, non-conforming with his new status as a slave, tried to escape from this reality many times. But every time he tried to flee, he was recaptured. By the third or fourth time he tried to escape and being recaptured just once more, his hope of fleeing away from captivity

---

[603] Roots (ABC-TV Series, 1977) Based on a novel by, Haley, Alex, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1976.

assisted by his running abilities came to a tragic conclusion. The men that recaptured him decided to cut off the front part of his right foot to put an end to his escaping desires. Once this procedure was completed, Kunta's optimism was gone and his hope severed. Until this tragic moment, he had trusted his feet to get him away from captivity. He hoped for freedom and he acted in line with his desires. He knew he could accomplish this. Kunta had tested his running abilities before. Others before him had escaped successfully. So, he planned and executed his plan, confident he will accomplish his hoped-for goal. He did not give up when failing the first or second time. His agentic capabilities seemed intact. He kept trying. But now, once his foot was cut off, his optimism was broken. Indeed, Kunta's agency was mutilated and fragmented too, for he could not trust his feet anymore as a reliable resource of hope and as a concrete path into the future. The man was now forced to conform and adjust to his inescapable reality. He was taught a lesson through pain. The system put its sense and rationality upon him through suffering. This was a traumatic experience intended to break the slave's spirit and hampering his agency with a sadistic disciplinary action that was violently imprinted upon his body. The process was a very painful and a tragic learning experience. Yet, this was not a pedagogy intended for good. This was a pedagogy of suffering or *pathei mathos*—an ancient idea from the Greeks tragedies of Aeschylus (c. 525BCE)—which in this case, and contrary to the original Greek idea, had vicious negative objectives. Being Kunta a previously free man, one of these objectives was to make him forget about his former freedom. He was also forced to forget about any actual possibility for him ever escaping this reality by running away by his own physical means. The lessons being taught to him were a pedagogy of oblivion through suffering intended to break him, to fragment him and to make him even forget he was a man. The intention was to demolish him. Further, this was a pedagogy to make him forget about hoping for anything else but surviving day after day as a slave.

The story underlined that Kunta never really forgot who he was and where he came from. Yet, paradoxically, his diminished sense of hope, instead of looking forward to a bright and better future forged by him, for him and for his family, had to be somehow heavily anchored in

the past. This was a very strong nostalgic longing that he later passed on to his descendants. In a way, Kunta's free will found a path to assert his agency and to keep his will alive, through hoping in a different way from what he could hope before as a free and complete person. Under conditions of oppression, a person hoping becomes truly paradoxical. The world prohibits hoping for any better future but the one people already experience. As Kunta was now forced to adapt to a situation against his will, his elpidic mind considered the future as a sort of struggle with his oppressive situation. It could be said that living through and within this condition of struggling was a sort of active hopeful process or hope as resistance. And yet, paradoxically he could not realistically and optimistically hope for anything better than the life of resistance he was forced to live as a slave. Nonetheless, by hanging to the past, he could extend himself and his will into the future. But now he did so in a less optimistic way, in a more realistic way than before, adjusting his will and his futurization to a sort of inescapable tragic and painful reality. This less optimistic way of hoping took into consideration his lack of concrete reasons and material resources required to be truly hopeful about the positive prospects for a different and better immediate future for him and his people. The only truly realistic and concrete way of hoping for true freedom and a better future for him was cut off once his foot was chopped off his body. What sort of hope was left for him to practice then? What sort of futurization was allowed for him and his fellow slave-people to work out together within such tragic conditions? What kind of a hope a slave is left to practice within a system that is organized to continuously and systematically deliver hopelessness upon him or to take hope away from an entire group of people? Is it even possible to have any meaningful and realistic way of hoping within such a radically tragic situation? The catastrophic life and spiritually threatening context in which African-American men and women and their descendants got into was not the product of fate or bad luck. This reality was the direct outcome of a system hoped-for and instituted by people who thought that slavery and the socio-political system necessary to sustain it was good, desirable and totally reasonable to attain. Whatever sort of good, better or different thing a slave could hope for within such excruciating circumstances became a way of resisting a system that delivered into his life tons of hopelessness. Notice that under this situation, hoping assumes forms that might

298

not even been deemed realistic, and yet hoping realistically or unrealistically is always an illusory process which primary intention is to escape for, or change reality. Running away was but one of these forms of hope. Nonetheless, it was only a way of escaping a reality and leaving family and friends behind attempted by individuals or small groups of individuals, precisely because changing the bondage reality in the antebellum South was something almost impossible to attain. The slave's hopeful resistance and the slave-owners' answer to their longings for freedom are a part of American history worth addressing here as one of the archetypes of the phenomena of the organized system of hopelessness I want to describe.

As American history attests, running slaves were habitual in America's antebellum days. According, to Loren Schweninger, even when blacks had not good prospects of avoiding being eventually recaptured and severely punished, many slaves built the habit of making frequent efforts to escape from their captivity.[604] The runaway problem became so severe and the recapturing and continuous punishment of the slaves became so common that the masters thought the slaves were crazy. Simply the slave-owners could not understand why slaves could not stop trying to escape even after being so cruelly and viciously punished.[605] It was obvious the slaves were only asserting their will to be free and denying thereby their imposed condition. But the slave-owners did not want to acknowledge their slaves as humans capable of agency. So instead, they preferred to think that the slaves were non-humans. Consequently, it felt naturally reasonable for them to conclude that Negroes were suffering from some sort of mental illness. And so, their immediate answer was to whip their bodies in order to put sense back into them. Given the urgent need for slaveholders to have a reasonable explanation for this dangerous madness their slaves were exhibiting, it should not be a surprise that in 1851 American medical doctor, Samuel A. Cartwright, diagnosed and termed this illness, "Drapetomania."[606] Cartwright,

---

[604] Schweninger, Loren. "Counting the Costs: Southern Planters and the Problem of Runaway Slaves, 1790-1860." *Business and Economic History*, vol. 28, no.2, Winter, 1999; pp. 267-275, pp. 267.

[605] Ibid. pp. 268

[606] Ibid.

a New Orleans medic, described this condition as *the runaway slave madness*.[607] The word derived from the Greek words; *drapetes*, meaning, a runaway slave, and *mania*, meaning mad or crazy. Cartwright diagnosed the slave as having an extreme urge to run away. According to the medic, this illness was curable if the owners provided the slaves with adequate housing and fuel (food).[608] If the illness persisted, he would prescribe to whip those afflicted vigorously until they fell back into a submissive natural state.[609]

In Cartwright's mind, the motivations and/or hopes of the slaves to try to escape were not grounded on a legitimate longing for freedom or on their agentic capabilities—such as self-confidence or courage. Rather their desires for freedom were only the product of a mental disorder that needed to be medically treated. For Cartwright, the natural condition of Negroes was to be submissive, because of their natural inferiority. Thus, any hope for emancipation on their part was deemed illusory, crazy or the product of madness. The philosophy that informs Cartwright's logic is an ancient paternalistic and fatalistic one, meant to ideologically support the system. Consequently, the fatalism imprinted in the system ran both ways. White people were meant to rule upon the Negroes and care for them because of their evident superiority, established by nature and God's design. Like in the Platonic blueprint of the Ideal-City, the myth placed the white masters morally above the Negroes, who in their turn were meant to be under their spiritual and moral guidance. This ideology allowed the masters to assert their alleged moral superiority upon the slaves with an air of legitimacy and little or no remorse. Consequently, under this ideology, the naturally free masters could legitimately hope to improve their livelihood. Paradoxically, they could also hope to extend their total unchecked freedom and mastership upon the incoming future in order to conquer it and seize it, while the Negroes, on the contrary, should remain hopeless regarding their own situation. In relation to the slaves, to imagine a still better future to come and to concretely hope for it becomes a power to be

---

[607] Ibid.

[608] Ibid.

[609] Ibid.

monopolized by the white élites. Under this logic "hoping for a better life or better times", could be viewed as an exclusive right of those in power. Accordingly, a slave was denied the right to hope for freedom and to hope for many other things attached to what freedom was meant to be for the community comprised by the white masters in this social context. Thus, it should come as a surprise that Cartwright justified his medical diagnosis on the Pentateuch, where, according to him, the "true art of governing Negroes was stated in the Creator's regard for the Negro as the submissive knee-bender".[610] And thus, as he concludes, "[if the planter] keeps him in the position that we learn from the Scriptures was intended to occupy the Negro is spell-bound, and cannot run away."[611] In fact, Cartwright's prescription for curing the illness included a more drastic treatment besides whipping the illness out of the slave. To really teach him a lesson and getting complete hold of his mind, he proposed to surgically remove the running Negros's health problem by "amputation of the toes".[612] It is obvious that by amputating the runaway slave's toes or part of his foot, the slave-owners made sure that the amputee slave stop fleeing from his captivity without entirely rendering the slave unproductive. The slave owner's investment was protected and the running danger of the slave in question resolved. What might be less obvious is the effect that the cruelty of this act had on the mind and spirit not only of the person who saw his foot severed, his body mutilated and his hopes clipped away, but also on the rest of the slaves who knew what sort of punishment awaited them if caught trying to run. Hope, it has been said, dies last. Yet, by chopping off someone's foot, whose first and only hope to put a resolute end to his condition of captivity was to run away as fast as he could for as long as it took to reach his hoped-for goal, the system was violently killing his hope. Evidently, now he could not realistically hope to fly away from captivity. He was not only enslaved; he was also mutilated. Now his future was already encrypted in his body.

---

[610] Cartwright, Samuel A., as quoted by, Haller, John S., "The Negro and the Southern Physician: A Study of Medical and Racial Attitudes." *Medical History*, vol. 16, issue 3, 1972, pp. 238-253.

[611] Ibid.

[612] Eze, Emmanuel C. "On Double Consciousness." *Callaloo*, vol. 34, no. 3, Summer 2011, pp. 877-898. See endnote, 9.

Given the situation described above, let us ask once more about the nature of the practice of hope under a calamitous condition of hopelessness by an oppressive system. Yet, this time, in revisiting again the question of "what hope is supposed to be", I propose to put our hope of locating a more realistic practice of hope in getting physically in touch with hope by anchoring our feet as firmly as we can upon earth. With the following down-to-earth approach to this category I aim at placing hope in a fully physical-geographic-spatio temporal context. Nonetheless, I must recognize that this way of looking at this category might strike my reader as odd. And yet, it is this oddity what makes it not only astonishing revealing, but also amazingly productive at the philosophical level, especially if we keep in mind that I am trying to reveal the whole spectrum of the practice of hope from the standpoint of the elpidology of the oppressed. Precisely, the demystification of the human practice of hope requires no metaphysics, but to dig into the very concrete terrain of the human practice of hope, which means to consider this phenomenon as a concrete human method of praxis. As humans use words to describe and to give meaning to their practices examining the etymology of words as a method to excavate into humans' practices has always been a very useful tool.

The word for hope in Spanish is "esperanza", very similar to the word "esperança" in Portuguese, and the word "esperance" in French. Their similarity comes from the fact that these words are directly rooted in Latin. As usual, the etymology of words is philosophically illuminating because they reveal lost meanings and hidden backgrounds that are nonetheless still present in the words. In his Book on Etymologies, famous medieval Spanish etymologist, St. Isidoro de Sevilla, reveals a fascinating fact about the etymologic origins of the word "esperanza" (hope). According to him, the word *esperanza* is called that way because it comes to be as "*el pie* para caminar" (as the foot for walking or moving forward).[613] In his view, when we

---

[613] The English version of Sevilla's Book of Etimologies offers the following translation of the whole passage quoted above: "Hope (spes) is so called because it is a foot for someone going forward, as if it is est pes ('there is foot'). Desperation (*desperatio*) is its contrary, for in that term the 'the foot is lacking' (*dees…pes*) and there is no

say *spes* (hope in Latin) it is as if we were saying *es pie*; i.e., it is foot. In other words, *el pie es esperanza* (the foot is hope). From this perspective, de Sevilla tells us that, the opposite of "esperanza", "desesperación" (despair, or better to say, desperation) would mean "without foot" (*dees...pes*), because when the foot is lacking all possibilities of having the actual ability for moving forward are gone.[614] In other words, without our feet we lose the capacity to move; we become slow or, even worse, we become paralyzed. This is obvious. Yet, the following fact is less obvious: the word "esperanza", which comes from the Latin word *spes* is, in its turn, linked to the Indo-European root, *spē*, which originally meant, "to expand".[615] Equally illuminating is the ancient etymological relationship between the verb "to prosper" and "hope", which according to the *Online Etymology Dictionary,* comes from the Latin *prosperare*, meaning, "cause to succeed", which it its turn comes from prosperus "favorable, fortunate, prosperous". As the dictionary indicates, it means literally, "agreeable to one's wishes"; which comes from the Old Latin, *pros spere*, "according to expectation" or according to one's hope".[616] Our feet give us movement allowing us to *pro-sper*—to project us into the future by moving forward. In other words, our locomotion allows us to concretely act and move forward towards our hoped-for goals. Hence, we act, move and choose our paths and strategies in accordance to our expectations—or in line with our positive hypothesis about how the future should turn out to be. When the end-results of our actions are similar to our hypothesis about the future, we could say that we have prospered. No doubt, physical movement is an obvious sign of freedom. Even the idea of liberty as not interference comprises this simple and basic idea. Many things in human existence can interfere with our movement and therefore, constrain our freedom. Yet, when our feet or our movement are lacking because an entire social system has purposely created the conditions to subtract or obstruct this capacity from us, then our ability to move is no longer

---

ability to go forward..."; see De Sevilla, Isidoro. *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*. Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006. pp. 173.

[614] Ibid.

[615] Esperanza, http://etimologias.dechile.net/esperanza

[616] Prosper (v). *Online Etymology Dictionary*. http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=prosper.

something depending on ourselves alone, but on an entire political condition, in which domination determines our capacities and, therefore, the entire scope of our possibilities regarding the future. Under this circumstance, the question of hope translates into a gray area in which the very possibility of hypothesizing about the future has been crippled *a priori*. Hoping becomes instantaneously an asymmetric political struggle, where the dominating forces coercers the oppressed agents in order to disable their very capacity to hope. Under these circumstances, hoping is but absolute resistance, in which the possibility of concretely dreaming, planning and strategizing at the collective-political level become the specific target of the dominating powers, in their quest of taking the people's resources of hope away. The entire process of hoping, as a method, becomes dislocated and the oppressed people own personal and collective development crippled in such a way that their very humanity is lost. Their journey, as human beings, is hindered because their feet have been mutilated and their movement restricted.

As previously explained, in Paulo Freire's critical process philosophy, human beings are unfinished creatures in a process of becoming; a process that could be appreciated as a need to develop, to expand and to move forward. Human life is not completed. The human historico-cultural, social, political and ethical reality is not finished either. For Freire, this is no mere metaphysical theme discovered by philosophy in its ivory towers. Humans are historical beings and "know themselves to be unfinished [and] aware of their incompletion."[617] Both, the conceptualization of the human being as the walker, the traveler, the wanderer and even the nomad and the notion of human lifespan as a journey evokes the unfinished character of human life. Wayfaring and human life as a journey are universal metaphors with a long symbolical history. Yet, the power of these ideas is not metaphysical. These metaphors are not merely present in our minds as symbols. They are concretely linked to the human body's bipedal locomotive structure. So, we can find not only a socio-cultural link between the ideas and our physical reality, but also a bond between our locomotive functions and powers, our legs and feet and our relation to the spatial ground. Likewise, the geographic aspects of our perception of how

---

[617] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 82.

we transport our bodies through the space from one point to another and the passing of time are linked to our notion of materially existing upon earth. Our movement, our walking and actual getting forward, moving backwards and staying still in particular place have a conceptual relation to our perception of time and our perception of the future to come in our expansion in a geographical space. And therefore, our elpidic capabilities and the human sense of hope play a crucial role in the human process of becoming. Considering the notion "of prospering" once more in relation to the unfinished character of humankind stressed by Paulo Freire, we can see how the notion of hope is intrinsically related to the idea of the human ontological need of becoming, and, therefore, of human development. Most curiously indeed is that the word "speed" is also associated to the Latin word *spe*. According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, the word speed, which means "rapidity of movement, quickness and/or swiftness, emerged in late Old English (at first usually adverbially, in dative plural, as in *spedum feran*). Intriguingly, in Old English the word used for speed was *sped*, which meant, "success, a successful course; prosperity, riches, wealth; luck; opportunity, advancement." The word speed ultimately came from PIE *spo-ti-*, from root *spe,* meaning, "to thrive, prosper," which in its turn came from Latin *sperare* that means, "to hope."[618] Thus, the popular idiom *Godspeed* throws some light here. *Godspeed* is a phrase used as a wish of success to a person starting a journey. It seems to suggest that a traveler's journey making her way at "the speed of God" (a super-power) is one who finds no trouble or contretemps in her path. As argued earlier, the word "optimism" comes from the Latin, *optimum*, which means "best", and that it is probable related to ops, "powers, resources"; which PIE root is *op-*, "to work".[619] For this reason, I argued earlier that optimism is a function of hope intimately related to the human confidence on her own powers, resources and work—self-confidence.

Now, coming back to the runaway slaves and their alleged madness or illness, it is obvious that by chopping someone's foot off, the amputee will instantly see his movement and

---

[618] Speed. *Online Etymology Dictionary.* http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=speed.

[619] "Optimum", Online Etymology Dictionary, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=optimum.

speed reduced, and, thereby, his prospects for a better future as a free person are accordingly reduced too. In the mind of the slaveholders, the madness of the slave will in this way be cured, when, what they did was to amputate from the slave a vital and concrete resource of optimism. They simply took a concrete means away from him. It is easy to see how his agency and freedom were crippled or even amputated too. Who would have said that with one single blow someone could cut off not only a person's foot, but also his journey in life, his speed, his good fortune and his expectative for success, his optimism, hope agency and freedom, all at once?

Indeed, the etymology of the word "esperanza", advanced by Sevilla, offers us clues about the specific physical and measurable relation between the human body (as a personal-material asset) and hope as an imperative category of human life. Sevilla's interpretation closed the gap between the word hope and concrete reality. Further, Sevilla's analysis also provides another important entry point into the specificity of how exactly slavery constituted a system of organized hopelessness. The institution of slavery, as we know, is an extreme form of asymmetrical relation of power and domination in which one group of people exercise unconstrained personal power over another group of people. As with other extreme systems of domination, slavery is brutal, and so, if hope is, as I have been arguing, something that can be limited, anesthetized, suppressed and/or even killed, it is within such of a system of domination, that we can observe in high definition the boundaries and contours that draws what hope is from the concrete condition of its very denial and negation. Therefore, considering this specific system of organized hopelessness shall also shed light upon some definite marks particular on the nature of the elpidology of the oppressed and its inherent pedagogies.

Now, we should not forget that cutting the slave's foot (or toes) was in the list of doctor Cartwright's "prescriptions" to cure the slave of his/her mental disease, *Drapetomania*. Evidently, Cartwright's racial attitudes were cloaked behind his authoritative medical and scientific understanding of the Negro as a biologically different creature in need of a specialized medical science. He could tend to the Negro's medical wants, for he was a professional who was familiar with this needy population. And so, his medical science and voice, as that of many other

physicians of that era, became part of the medical-scientific Southern community that delivered theories, medical and socio-political categories that helped to justify and solidify the prevailing social structure of the Antebellum America. But what exactly was this Southern doctor trying "to medicalize" here?

Cartwright was in the peculiar authoritative position to medicalize the Negro's "unusual" pathologies, including his or her deepest longings for freedom; i.e., he was in the position of "medicalizing hope". Since the mental disease's pathology was related to the Negro's abilities to run, it looked obvious that this problem could be resolved by applying a specific treatment to his/her extremities. Cutting off the slave's foot, attaching iron balls to their ankles, as well as many other brutal disciplinary treatments, became a normal part through which black bodies were violently turned into objects. It is obvious that by taking freedom away from a person and making him a slave was not enough to render him adapt to slavery. Something else was needed to make the slave peacefully conform to its state. Cartwright's *Drapetomania* and its accompanied medical categories, pathology and guiding prescriptions reveal the need of the American chattel slavery institution to device a way of mastering and domesticating the slaves' emotions and affective mental state. A political system of domination is not complete without calculating and seeking how to totally control and transform human life.

Paulo Freire taught us that education was everywhere. Medical doctors, politicians, and authorities in general (including slaveholders themselves) are most of the time in the business of "educating" their subordinates. A pedagogy for domestication was part of Cartwright's medical model for controlling Drapetomania. His prescriptions included the administration of food and even the way in which the slave should be approached and specifically treated by the slaveholders. Even the slaveholders' affective expressions towards his slaves felt under Cartwright's medical gaze. Accordingly, planters and overseers were not only expected to control the slaves' bodies, but also their own emotions, words and body language around slaves. The system aimed at reaching as deeply as it could into the most intimate zones of the slave psyche in order, not only to control his/her present, but also his/her future. Thus, domesticating

the whole slaves' emotional-affective terrain required not only to inspire awe and reverence in the slave, but also to remove the causes and any sign of sulkiness, dissatisfaction and resistance to the system and his/her master's forms. Scholars, such as Gretchen Long, who have amply studied and documented the phenomena of Southern America medical community's intention (before and after Emancipation) of practicing social control and disciplining the Negro through medicine, have suggested these practices as being a sort of "medicalization" or "doctoring of freedom".[620]

Yet, I want to argue, as I have been suggesting all along since the start of this section, that the real and primary target of this practice is not necessarily to domesticate freedom, but targeting a more primal emotion; namely, hope. As I suggested, Cartwright's insistence in medicalizing the runaway's so-called urge to run is an attempt to kill the slave's desires and longings to be free from its base root. It looks to me that Cartwright's idea was to device a sort of "preventive medicine" in order, not only to keep the symptoms of *Drapetomania* at bay, but also and primarily to prevent its pathology from even showing. I call this "preventive medicine", taking my queue not only from Cartwright's dubious "medical" purposes, but also from the traditional political realist school, from Thucydides to Sun Tzu, from Machiavelli to the contemporary field of security studies. Let's remember now Sun Tzu's famous military advise: "the greatest victory is that which requires no battle." Now let me introduce the following story, so we can see the complexity of the argument I have been advancing since the beginning of this chapter from another perspective. Thomas Cleary, in his introduction to his edition of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, retells an ancient Chinese story to illustrate Tzu's point. He tells us that a noble man from ancient China asked a medical doctor, son of an old family of physicians, who was the best medic of his family. The doctor, who was so famous in China that his name was synonymous of medical science, replies that his older brother sees the disease and eliminates it before it takes form, so his fame does not transcend the door of his house. The second older

---

[620] Long, Gretchen. *Doctoring Freedom: The Politics of African American Medical Care in Slavery and Emancipation.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

brother, the medic proceeds, "cures the disease when it is still mild, so his fame does not go beyond his neighborhood." About himself, the medic declares, "I puncture veins, prescribes medicines and gives skin massages, so every now and then my fame spreads and reach the ears of the nobles."[621]

As my analysis indicates, since ancient times, preventing social illness has been a legitimate effective way of stopping infectious socio-political conditions that could spread and lead to uncontrollable revolutionary outbreaks. Here, the political-medical-philosophical triad surfaces as a way of looking at and legitimizing the medical treatment and medicalization of socio-political problems. For a despotic system, such as race-based slavery in America, the health of the system depended on keeping things running as usual. In the terms, I have been describing throughout this chapter the imperative of such a system laid the basis for a perpetual peace. As I explained earlier, freezing time becomes essential to stop futurity from becoming reality. Yet, running slaves disrupted this perfect and utopian peace in many ways and brought to the spatio-temporal scenario of the plantation a happening; i.e., a historical event. This event can be interpreted as historical in one important sense regarding hope. If the slave was successful at escaping, as many slaves in fact were, then each similar event instantaneously becomes an eventful-hopeful moment, which will be immediately attached to the collective imagination of the slave community. In turn, this event will also become part of a hopeful narrative that slaves would have as a historical milestone in their collective imaginary. A single eventful moment can trigger futurization.[622] An event marks the moment in which something new happens where

---

[621] Tzu, Sun, *El Arte de la Guerra.* Edited by Thomas Clearly; Translated by Alfonso Colodrón. Madrid: Editorial EDAF, 1999, pp.9.

[622] As discussed earlier, in Freirean terms, futurization or constructing the future is the active cognitive dimension of the human sense of hope or the utopian function of hope. This utopian function of hope when politically charged becomes an active praxiological process through which people critically engage in a conscious process of, on the one hand, questioning and denouncing concrete oppressive socio-political-economic circumstances, and on the other hand, imagining, theorizing, creating and publicly announcing and working towards viable alternatives to these circumstances.

nothing was happening or where nothing was supposed to happen. In a system methodically arranged to prevent futurity in the life of slaves, a single successful evasion of a single slave was a happening bringing novelty to the life of the Negroes. Therefore, many hopeful events such as the uncountable successful evasions of slaves in the antebellum South became a crisis precisely because, in the eyes of the community of white masters, these cases turn out to be the sort of new virulent uncontrollable situation that threatened to destabilize the slave plantation system completely.[623] Cartwright's diagnosis of hoping for freedom as an illness demonstrates the kind of fear the masters felt about the problem of runaway slaves becoming an unstoppable generalized disorder. Yet, it also served the purpose of re-enforcing the foundational myths upon which the institution of slavery was built. Notice that the Platonic connection between philosophical theorization, medical expertise and politics converge again as a rightful rational methodology to fully support and re-legitimize the desires and hoped-for goals of the masters, which included keeping the slaves in captivity and hopeless.

But, what about the creation of conditions of hope despite the constraints created by power élites to stop this process from happening? Within this sort of conditions of oppression, when certain human endeavors turn into eventful moments, such as the successful evasion of a number of slaves, each of these events generates conditions for hoping. In other words, these sorts of events immediately became resources of hope and concrete reasons for optimism. Let me now focus briefly on the familiar equation of optimism. I shall use the singular case of the runaway slaves and other similar cases, to illustrate the specificity of what it means to create conditions of hope within conditions of oppression. Optimism, as I explained earlier, could be described in terms of human self-confidence built out of a process of being successful at doing or accomplishing specific goals in life, little or big. If I have done something before, I could be

---

[623] For a look at how critical the problem of runaways became for the slaveholders in Southern States in the Antebellum period see; Link, William. Chapter III, "A Uniform Spirit of Lawlessness: The Problem of Runaways." In, *Civil War: Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics on Antebellum Virginia*. North Carolina: University of North Carolina, 2003, pp. 97-119.

confident and, therefore, hopeful about achieving that very same goal again. I also built sureness and have faith in myself and in my self-efficacy, and so I can be optimistic regarding my own capabilities to reach other similar goals. This cognitive process also helps build some sense of certainty about accomplishing tasks in the future. Even when this certainty, as I have argued before, is illusory, I can still be realistically optimistic about it, and, therefore, be inclined to be positive about me reaching my hoped-for goals based on this certainty. Remember, that hope is, after all, a hypothesis regarding the future. Now, what about very difficult to attain goals about which we have no empirical evidence regarding the actual possibility of attaining them? Here the specificity of the context in which this question is to be answered matters greatly. As I have explained before, oppressed people are systematically taught not to trust themselves in accomplishing certain specific deeds. In other words, they are taught not to think of themselves as able historical agents, as their oppressors are. Being a historical subject requires trusting and believing one can make history. Yet, as Paulo Freire and others have advanced in their work, oppressed people learn not to think of themselves in this way. As I have explained before, immobilism and fearfulness could be partially interpreted as an outcome of a domestication process, whose tendency is to deprive people of their agency. Furthermore, an oppressive system tends to inculcate mistrust among the oppressed. In the case of the slaves in the antebellum South, the hierarchies and limitations of the system taught slaves not to trust anyone. And yet, paradoxically, fugitive slaves were in much practical need to trust and have faith in other people to successfully reach freedom up North. For instance, Frederick Douglass' famous account of his life as a fugitive slave accounts for his mixed contradictory feelings regarding the issue of trust. As he noted, "The motto which I adopted when I started from slavery was this— 'Trust no man!' I saw in every white man an enemy and almost every colored man cause for mistrust."[624] What sort of political freedom can a group of people achieve if they cannot even trust each other?

---

[624] Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*. New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 1845/2003), pp. 93.

Now, coming back to our equation of optimism; when a person has not attempted an action before, or when that person has no empirical data of himself as being able to succeed in accomplishing an action, that person can still gather knowledge and hope from the deeds and accomplishments of other people. Again, given what I have explained above, it is important to recognize that, for people in oppressive situations, what might look as an obvious and/or as a trivial logic, for some is not that obvious for the oppressed. Within highly oppressive systems, even great deeds or glorious actions accomplished by the oppressed could be easily diminished, played-down and/or even usurped by oppressor through a variety of discursive mechanisms or concrete actions. Thus, describing deeds as flukes, or as silly happenings—as products of madness—or as events that the oppressor allowed to happen for enjoyment or other reasons, are common discourses to downplay other people's actions. The appropriation of the actions and cultural creations of oppressed people are also common ways of taking history away from their hands. They can also make their eventful deeds completely disappear from (official) history. That is part of the role that a pedagogy of oblivion has within a system of organized hopelessness.

Yet, when the slaves in the Antebellum South made running away an almost everyday occurrence, the slaveholders found themselves with a big growing problem in their hands. They simply could not avoid the deeds of these fugitive slaves to be interpreted by the slave community as what they exactly were, actual acts of subversion against the system and, therefore, eventful moments that had black slaves as protagonists. Hence, when a considerable number of slaves who were not supposed to be able to escape had, in fact, escaped, then it became possible for other slaves to realistically hope escaping. This hope or hypothesis motivated and enabled the slaves to seek freedom; something that was predetermined by the system as impossible to be attained by them. Within this system, these events turned out to be epic. This is, in the very same way that victorious people do construct hopeful narratives or epics on their accomplished deeds and victories, oppressed people also see sometimes the opportunity to create theirs.

I want to name this sort of hope building process, *epic hope*. Of course, as any other hope, epic hope is a kind of an illusion. And yet, this sort of hope is not necessarily unrealistic. In any society, epic hope uses knowledge of human historical past deeds to create the concrete basis for forging realistic and credible positive hypothesis regarding the possible accomplishment of very difficult to attain hoped-for goals. Of course, as I have said, hope, to be realistic, requires awareness and some degree of certainty of the actual means and resources at hand that facilitate or enable our concrete actions.

Nonetheless, even when building hope out of epic deeds is possible, for the oppressed, creating hope is an immensely extenuating and radical emotional-cognitive project. The main reason for this is that the struggle is against a system that is designed to take hope away from the oppressed. Under oppression, hoping in a practical way to change the system is not merely a matter of having to work tenaciously against the odds or of, "hoping against hope". It is not only a matter of having a vision about the future, and conceiving and having a plan to achieve future goals either. To hope within oppressive circumstances is rather a matter of finding or creating a safe pocket, where hope can be re-gained successfully to be able to practice it. Under oppressive circumstances, hope becomes both, a method and a strategy of resistance and a path leading to personal and collective empowerment. As I argued earlier, hope is a praxis of which optimism is one of its functions. Optimism is not a penchant of the human mind that inclines us towards having an unrealistic cheerful positive outlook of live, but, on the contrary, a very effective and powerful confidence and self-reliance building psychological process. Optimism is the product of a pedagogic process or what I termed earlier, a pedagogy of hope.

In the specific case of the runaway slaves, escaping became a feasible and completely practical possibility. Running away could be planned, because it was possible. There was a method and a strategy that could be taught and learned, and passed on forward to people in an effective educative way. Talking, reflecting and passing down the knowledge, strategies and skills necessary to successfully escape slavery in the antebellum South was the most fundamental and important part of this giant hopeful project. Escaping successfully from bondage was a

radically dangerous pursuit that required skills on the part of the people desiring to escape and the one helping them. Some of these skills were gathering information and knowledge, learning to read and write so information could be passed on, making friends, building trusting relationships and disseminating information in a concealed way. Indeed, the radicality of this educative enterprise was imprinted in the severity of the system with the slaves and especially with those caught trying to escape and their helpers. For example, as Thomas Buchanan explains in *Levees of Hope,* the unusual mobility of free African Americans, slaves, and some white steamboats laborers along the levees of the Mississippi River, allows these workers to become a mobile fraternal network of communications, connections and support for all sort of fugitive slaves.[625] Their geographic mobility from one busy dock and urban levee of western cities to the next, gave them the opportunity to help the running bondsmen and bondwomen in transforming theirs lives from slave to free people, by; a) carrying information to, connecting and educating people about the possibilities the steamboats offered along the cities and shorelines of the river; b) risking their own freedom in providing aid, safe passage and quick transportation to riverside fugitives.[626] As the mobile labor and life culture of the river became radicalized and politicized, it also became a great threat to the goal of total slave control designed by the élites.[627] The Memphis political system responded to this menace by passing a law that prohibited northern steamboats with free black workers on board from docking at the city's levee for more than three hours at a time.[628] Under this law, foreign free blacks that stayed beyond this period of time risked imprisonment for thirty days.[629] As Buchanan suggests, the whole river's cultural and political landscape became a very dynamic communication network that provided concrete hope and practical possibilities of freedom to slaves seeking to leave behind the brutality of the day-

---

[625] Buchanan, Thomas. "Levees of Hope: African American Workers, Cities, and Slaves Escapes on the Antebellum Mississippi." *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2004, pp. 360-377.

[626] Ibid. pp. 361-363.

[627] Ibid. pp. 360 and 361.

[628] Ibid. pp. 361

[629] Ibid.

to-day life of slavery.[630] The radical nature of the network itself requires a very democratic approach to the whole communicative enterprise that Buchanan fails to directly point out. Because of its very fluid dynamic, using the river network as an escaping path required certain radical form of democratic leadership to take place and hold to succeed. It would have been very difficult indeed to build the friendship, the trust and faith that this enterprise required through the same authoritarian methodology that the system used to govern the slaves.

In sum, once slaves gather knowledge of the possibilities of freedom the river offered, the very view of the coming and going of boats and the rest of the fluid commercial scenery became a matter of wonderment and hope that concretely motivated the slaves to escape. Thus, the radically clandestine hopeful dynamics of the river and the actual radical possibilities of freedom that it offered to the slaves encouraged many to risk their lives, to act radically and take a steamboat north. Of course, those already with experience and better knowledge of the river industry had a much better chance to succeed. Yet, the river was a realistic hopeful fluid vehicle to freedom for all slaves that dared to take it.

Before I proceed with my theoretical account of the process of hoping within circumstances in which hope is systematically denied to oppressed people, it is important to clarify one crucial aspect of this reality. Contemporary scholars on hope usually invoke the notion of "radical hope" to describe the situation or predicament in which an individual or a group of people have "lost hope" for some reason. As I previously suggested, we must not look at the human sense of hope outside specific contexts, because humans never hope in a void. Thus, we must look at the phenomenon of losing hope as the loss of something inside people within a context. The way I have been describing hopelessness from the standpoint of the oppressed points to a situation in which the oppressed are systematically deprived of hoping in certain way, by denying them opportunities to desire, imagine and think realistically of a better different future for them. Yet, when one reads the contemporary literature on hope, one finds

---

[630] Ibid. pp. 365.

315

superficial descriptions of hope, in which losing hope is often associated with the loss or decline of the human mental deliberate state, a condition leading them to intentionally desire and hope for something, so that they no longer see their wish or desire as something attainable or likely to obtain. For instance, a peculiar way of losing hope, as Jonathan Lear has advanced, is the situation where a person or a group of people have lost the framework or map of meanings and possibilities that their activities and way of life had until drastic changes in their cultural context occur. This is, in Lear's view, an abyssal situation. In a society in which, for some reason, the socio-cultural reality loses its traditional intelligibility sense of hope of the members of this society; it becomes shattered because the whole purposefulness of their most significant activities collapses. Lear uses the Native American Crow Nation's last chief, Plenty Coups' testimony, to draw a distinctive portrait of this peculiar condition.[631] After the United States government forced the Crow Nation to move to a reservation, banning most of their important cultural activities, this people saw their entire system of beliefs and culture collapse. After this cultural catastrophe, as Plenty Coups asserted, "nothing happened."[632] In other words, in this catastrophic context, the Crow Nation's sense of hope lost its content. In Lear's assessment of the human sense of hope, however, this extreme or radical condition does not necessarily amount to a total loss of hope in people. An exceptional sort of hope that he calls "radical hope" remains inside people's hearts. Yet, as he explains, in this radical situation, people still lack the conceptual and emotional resources to come to terms and understand what hope needs to be under such conditions.[633] At the end, the Crow carried on believing that something good will eventually emerge and new possibilities will arise.[634] Although I do not completely disagree with Lear's overall assessment of the phenomena of hope, I do believe that his idea of radical hope falls short of actually grasping the actual radicality of this faculty. Furthermore, his idea of radical hope also fails to fully capture the radicality of the human sense of hope under an abyssal

---

[631] Lear, Jonathan. Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.
[632] Ibid. pp. 2.
[633] Ibid. pp. 103.
[634] Ibid. pp. 94-98.

situation of oppression, in which the human will struggles to prevail, even against other elpidic urges—such as the sort of fear the whole oppressive situation is meant to instill upon people. In the case of the Crow Nation, this fear included that of total annihilation. The United States Government was an actual menace. It is within the concrete constraints imposed by the new oppressive political reality that Plenty Coup's process of recuperating hope and instilling hope back into his people that his story and mental state should be appreciated. Within oppressive conditions hope tends to manifest in variety of peculiar forms, one more drastic or radical than others. Nonetheless, what Lear loses from perspective or at least what he does not make completely clear in his account of radical hope is the fact that the catastrophe that hit the Crow Nation was the intended product of a political oppressive intervention. He fails to clarify that this oppressive situation did not end with the devastation of their system of beliefs and culture and the loss of hopefulness; it became part of a system of domination. Therefore, he also fails to bring forward into his analysis the crucial fact that this new system of political domination that felt upon the Crow Nation included the continuous domestication and suppression of their agency, their freedom and their sense of hope. In other words, in the very same way that the slaves were denied experiencing the future as open possibilities, the Crow Nation were systematically denied experiencing the incoming time as an open fan of possible different futures, in which the meaning of those futures would be imagined and created by them without the influence of a superior power watching upon them and eliminating possibilities. As in Plato's Ideal-City, their future was already arranged and given to them, almost already made, from above.

Now, under this specific context, hope turns radical when hoping shows signs of being, not only a mechanism for resisting an oppressive situation, but also a practical-enabling force that moves an individual or an entire group of people to take concrete actions to change an oppressive situation. In this case, hoping is not only radical, but it also takes a radical political form. As we can appreciate, this sort of process or method of hoping is not radical because the agents in question "hope radically or truthfully", but because it is a praxis of hoping within

specific radical circumstances of oppression that precludes hoping to transform the system. It is even more radical because the agents of hope are putting their wellbeing, their bodies' integrity and lives at stake. The image I want to convey here is that of a warrior fighting an immense monster with a metal straightjacket around her torso and arms and one big shackle-ball holding one of his legs down. Now, multiply this situation by a multitude of souls comprising a collective mind. This collective mind amounts to an ethos of hopelessness and fear, a product of a domesticating educative system organized to instill hopelessness upon people. Correspondingly, the system has taught them to be silent, to be fearsome, to be motionless—frozen in time—and to think fatalistically about their own future.

With all these features in place, the image of an oppressed group of people upon which hopelessness has been violently imposed as a fated reality, clearly surfaces. This is the radical or abyssal reality in which hope struggles to grow. The radicality of the methodology of hope, under these sorts of circumstances, is not only given by the individual struggle between reason and unsatisfied desires, within the despairing mind of a sole individual when his integrity as a person is threatened or his culture has been devastated. The radicality of the struggle for re-defining and re-constructing hope and agency under such a situation is specified precisely by the presence of existing difficulties and obstacles systematically laid down by a social organization that seeks to stop people from desiring, imagining, hoping and looking for a better and different future. The actual impediments that the system of organized hopelessness places around and upon the existence of oppressed people—in this specific case upon the slaves—is what concretely define their circumstance of life as an abyssal, radical and almost inescapable one. And as a matter of fact, for most slaves, the inescapability of the situation was very real indeed. This was not a figment of their imagination. It is also true that the slaves found a hopeful way of escaping oppression. Yet, this was still a way in which just few numbers of slaves could escape and change their lives for good, while the actual conditions that the rest of slaved people left behind remained basically untransformed. And, nonetheless, there was a radical empowering process boiling within this entire community that injected a novel hopeful political subversive

substance into their ethos. In other words, the rebellious substance of hope was introduced in the life of the plantation. In fact, the whole enterprise of running away, evading slave catchers and the states' authorities and escaping to the North became the concrete basis for a practical dream that in the process of being built created a colossal transformative community of people that was radically empowered and concretely effective in crafting realistic hopeful pathways of social change for many individual slaves. As it is well known in American history, the Underground Railroad movement was a huge freedom network of people comprised by slaves, former slaves, free African-Americans and many white anti-slavery activists who provided food, care and shelters along miles and miles of trails that expanded from the lower corners of the United States South to Canada.[635] This project formed part of a colossal community that make the runaway dream possible, saving thousands of lives. This community of people formed part of a bigger enterprise, yet; namely, the resistance to slavery and to the geometry of power, matrix of domination and designs established by the masters that included the laws established to protect the system. As the runaway problem became larger, the matter became an issue of security that put in danger more than just the property rights of slave-owners. Indeed, the whole runaway experience became a hopeful learning process that gained so much momentum and speed that it became a menace to the system. The masters did become very worried indeed. As a matter of fact, different states enacted different sort of fugitive laws to try to stop the runaway movement. In 1850, President Fillmore signed the controversial Fugitive Slave Law, that greatly expanded the federal judicial and law enforcement authorities role in guaranteeing property rights and the security of the slave system.[636] Besides specifying that fugitive slaves will be denied a trial by jury, denied the right to speak on their own behalf, and denied legal counseling, the law also provided for a $1,000 fine and up to six months imprisonment for citizens aiding runaways.[637] The severity and impact of this law made patent the insecurity and anxieties of the masters. At

---

[635] To a concise description of the Underground Railroad movement and its mayor features see Fears, Barbara A., "Freedom Train: The Underground Railroad as a Model of Christian Education, Antiracism, and Human Rights Advocacy." *Religious Education*, 112:1, 2017, pp. 19-32.

[636] Hairston, Eric. "Fugitive Slave Act of 1850." *The Social History of Crime and Punishment: An Encyclopedia vol. 2*. Online Sage Publications, Inc., 2012, pp. 657-659.

[637] Ibid.

this point, the system showed signs of fatigue. The masters' grip upon the future looked wobbly. From the perspective, I have been advancing here, the need to strengthen the judicial provisions regarding fugitive slaves demonstrated that the master's utopian world could not be sustained anymore. Keeping the plantation as a hope and history free reality was no longer a realistic goal. The Underground Railroad project was a great beacon of hope and, therefore, a titanic history-making process that gave an entire community of oppressed people the capacity to think of themselves as historical agents and therefore as agents of hope and transformation.

Now, let me wrap up my analysis in this section by emphasizing a series of fundamental facts about the runaway slaves. It is obvious that runaway slaves and the whole collective enterprise that followed it—the Underground Railroad project—not only became an extraordinary symbol of hope for the slave community and beyond, but also turned out to be a practical hopeful path to freedom for thousands and thousands of individual slaves during an extended period. This subversive enterprise broke with the normalized frozen time, that in the eyes of slave-masters was supposed to characterize the utopian spatio-temporal reality of the plantation. As this initiative transformed itself into a huge collective enterprise (involving an innumerable amount of people), it took the form of an epic, a politically radical social movement running at the interior of a system that was strictly designed to block any hope, action and movement that the slave could autonomously generate. My description of the enterprise as "epic" might not even entirely capture the nature of a venture that required taking whatever concrete meaning any action of "collective resistance" might have to an unqualified new level. Yet, "epic", as an adjective used to describe monumentally heroic set of actual actions and accomplishments, is probably the best word to describe the sort of audacious individual and collective deeds that such a movement demanded.

Hence, my portrait of the sort of hope that this process generated in the slave community and beyond as "epic hope"—a practical and realistic collection of historical actions that serve, among other things, to foster hope in individuals and groups of people. It is necessary to recognize and highlight, however, the following two crucial facts about the sort of hope that I am

trying to bring to light here to qualify it with some sort of rigor. First, as I have previously argued, any sort of hope is, in the final analysis, a sort of illusion, and so it is "epic hope". Therefore, as in any "epic" story—in which human deeds quickly tends to become something larger than life—could also be accused of belonging to the realm of myths. Therefore, "epic hope" could also be deemed as illusory. Yet, this is no different for any other epic or historical narrative of any other nation or group of people. The real difference might rest in the fact that this specific epic was a narrative grown within a system of oppression as a mechanism of "resisting" the power of forces designed, not only to dominate people, but also to crush their agentic capabilities and their will almost entirely. It will be then appropriate to ask how much individual and collective (inner) force in the form of "resistance" the slaves needed to generate in order to gather enough power to enable the actions that evading the organized system of hopelessness of the antebellum slave-plantations supposed? Answering this question in empirical terms is probably impossible. Yet, if we would be able to gather the empirical facts with which to give a concrete answer to this question it would be possible then to estimate the magnitude and scope of concrete hope that this collective had to gather to successfully pull off the actions that became epic in the first place. Being unable to get such information, we can only speculate and conclude that the magnitude of this hope had to be proportional to the magnitude of oppression and hopelessness that the system exacted upon the slaves. Hence, the radicality of the slaves' hope.

Now let us move to the second fact I want to bring forward about the sort of practical and realistic hope generated among the slaves—which manifested itself in the form of the Underground Railroad project. It is crucial to recognize the fact that this sort of hopeful socio-politically enterprise was not necessarily meant to totally transform the social-political conditions of the slave plantation, but instead it sought to evade it. In other words, the runaway slaves and the clandestine subversive movement that eventually grew out of this phenomenon was not necessarily directed to radically change the slavery system, but it was instead a way for several thousands of slaves to escape or evade the system. Notice that this fact does not make the

whole enterprise of escaping the system less radical, or less hopeful. This fact does not mean that other forms of hopeful resistances to the system—including the conscious planning of rebellions by slaves—were not also being practiced within the slave communities of the time. On the contrary, what I try to bring to the fore is the fact that most probably the system was so harsh, intractable and unbreakable that one of the few rational and practical hopes for slaves who strongly desired to be free was to try to escape it, instead of trying to change it from within.

The kind of system of organized hopelessness that the Antebellum South established and tried to keep running at all cost was a brutal organization, which provided little socio-political room for contestation. Some slaves, being agents of history and hope, felt ready to do something. Yet, what they did was only what the system allowed them to realistically hope for and accomplish; namely, running. Therefore, like their own condition as running slaves, their realistic hope ended up being sort of fugitive too. Notice that this kind of hope—fugitive hope—is a way of escaping or evading reality and yet, it is a judicious way of coping with the spatio-temporal anomalies that such a system produces in the mind and body of the slaves. In a system of organized hopelessness such as slavery, the practice of some sort of realistic and meaningful hope is only possible within very little spaces. So, the spaces left to practice hope are always like small pockets carved out almost from thin air. Only within these pockets of hope can the human will be free. These pockets of hope tend to be clandestine. And so, the hope practiced within them is always fugitive. Sometimes the only pocket of hope available is the human mind. So, our elpidic mind wanders and produces all sorts of pleasurable pipe-dreams and fantasies. These are manifestations of hope. Of course, they are far from being realistic. They are, nonetheless, a legitimate way to cope with the sort of oppression that gives no room or opens no space to practice hope in any other meaningful way. Fugitive hope is always subversive, and, yet, it does not always assume a straightforward approach to action, because most of the time it cannot. However, slaves found a concrete way of turning their fugitive hope into a realistic path to freedom, and so they did, transforming their lives and that of many others through their fugitiveness. Fugitive-hope allowed futurization, and futurization triggers change.

The response that the slave-masters brought to the game to block fugitive-hope was precisely a federal law especially designed to counterattack the hopeful pathways, the paths of communications, the pedagogies and monumental networks of solidarity and friendship behind this hopeful enterprise. Every law designed to counter fugitive-hope insisted in bringing back the possibility of freezing time and stopping history from happening once more. Yet fugitive-hope had already become epidemic. The disease called hope turned thousands of slaves into optimistic agents of history ready to put their mark in the world. Dr. Cartwright got it right when he prescribed cutting one of the slave's foot off, because by amputating a foot, they would render fugitive-hope impractical by annihilating the optimism that the slave could place in his own body to carry his will away. Realistic hope is practical precisely because the agent can be optimistic about the existing resources of hope available to enable his actions and the future that his actions shall try to bring on.

Therefore, as I have shown above, a system of hopelessness—such as the Antebellum slave plantation organization—would tend to device an array of mechanisms, including dubious medical diagnostics and all sort of draconian laws, to try to reduce or take concrete and intangible resources of hope away from people. The historical process that gave life to the Underground Railroad movement and its fugitive hope became factors and resources of hope because they brought newness into a system in which futurity and futurization for the slaves was something denied or suppressed. By bringing futurity into the closed society and culture of the plantation a new possibility of a much more politically effective form of resistance to the system was opened for the slaves. This new possibility of freedom opened the door for a radical form of politics of resistance. Given the despotic, totalitarian and closed character of this system, the nature of the politics generated by fugitive hope could not be but one radically democratic. In dialectical-praxiological terms, fugitive hope turned into a clandestine radically democratic sort of politics. Therefore, the whole enterprise of escaping slavery became an extraordinary hopeful process precisely because it allowed for the return of politics to a spatio-temporal landscape that was not supposed to accommodate the political in the first place. Slaves were not supposed to be

political. Indeed, the plantation was supposed to be a politics-free-zone. Nonetheless, epic-fugitive hope brought a radical and subversive sort of politics and conflict into the plantation. Fugitive hope also broke the silence and brought a radical cry of open denunciation where there was supposed to be only quietism and peace. In sum, within this specific context of oppression, politics turns into a praxis hope and to hope becomes a politics of resistance: or into what I will like to call, *politics as hope*.

The system of organized hopelessness imposed by slavery was not perfect. Yet, it was successful enough to keep functioning and being profitable until the abolition of slavery in 1865. The system was eliminated, but unfortunately some of its practices and the ideologies that sustained it remained intact. Thus, American society incorporated and reproduced part of the moral constructs, racist ideology, politico-judicial mechanisms and pedagogies designed to keep former African slaves hopeless. Even today, some social institutions still appear to be devised to keep African Americans and other minorities in some degree of hopelessness. As I mentioned in a previous chapter, contemporary African Americans scholars, such as Cornell West, raise their voice regarding the absence of hope among minorities groups in general and black people, in particular, arguing that the socio-political Americans institutions and culture is biased against African Americans. One of the topics he keeps always bringing to the fore, when discussing the category of hope is the way in which the resources of hope seems to be either hidden, obscured or non-existent for minority people. His discussion points to the precarity of hope in our contemporary societies due to the absence or inaccessibility of resources of hope as a direct consequence of oppression. Cornell West belongs to an intellectual tradition among oppressed people, whose work could be considered part of what I could like to name, *a politics of resistance as hope*.

Concluding Remarks and Further Questions

The system of organized hopelessness I have described hitherto presupposes despotic or authoritarian or even some sort of totalitarian ruling, these are: socio-political regimes, where domination and oppression are the fundamental logic behind the exercise of socio-political power. Yet, this analysis does not exclude *a priori* the existence of the actual implementation of this sort of devises and methods at different spheres or levels within liberal socio-political regimes such as our contemporary societies. In any event, such a system is always devised as a despotic and repressive mechanism to manipulate, control, suppress or to entirely crush the human sense of hope. Its immediate objective is to keep people away from hoping subversively and from having optimistic expectations regarding actual possibilities of transforming their current reality into a more desirable one. Realistic hope is about, desiring, dreaming (imagining or envisioning) the future and about concretely planning for, and trying to attain hoped-for goals by strategizing and finding actual pathways toward their consecution, despite possible obstacles in the way. Hoping in a realistic fashion has a political collective dimension that could be turned into a politically subversive methodology as soon as people gather together and organize to imagine, plan and strategize about how realistically bring actual social change in the future.

In this chapter, I have portrayed the intention of freezing time and stopping history from happening on the part of despotic power élites, as a utopian attempt of invading, conquering, owning, domesticating, and securing the future with the express intention of making the future look as similar to the present as possible. Nonetheless, freezing time, stopping history from happening and securing the future through a creation of some sort of everlasting condition of perfect peace are utopian, irrational and impossible to attain goals. The future cannot be invaded nor secured or owned. Characterizing these intentions as utopian is meant to point to the factual impossibility of attaining this goal and to highlight the fact that attempting to achieve this objective amount only to try to force humans to exist under unbearable and irrational set of social structures. Yet, the actual existence of socio-political endeavors that have systematically intended to force upon actual people such utopian conditions of life throughout history, points towards a shared historico-political reality, in which the utopian and the irrational—such as the

idea of total political stability or of a perfect peace, in which the possibility of conflict does not exists, or uncontested political authority, and so on—have carved their place into our social imaginary, political institutions and political life.

Plato's utopian philosophical project, which included a highly authoritarian and paternalistic moral and political theory, has served as a set of rational principles to justify not only actual utopian pursues, but also to legitimate despotic and totalitarian methods in the exercise of political power across many societies. Plato's utopian metaphysical conceptualization of political life validates what I termed the implementation of a "geometry of power" upon earth, city and humankind; this is, a conceptual political-ethical framework that seeks to impose flawless political guidelines based on idealized geometric principles upon human beings. Both, an idealized city and an idealized human, become the landscapes upon which these ideal and perfect guidelines are to be imposed. They seek to measure, fragment, distribute and govern both spaces. The product of the politics that imposes this geometry upon these two spaces should perfectly correspond to the idealized geometrical guidelines. This is a geometrical politics, which coordinates of perfection extend its axis of power in time to expand its control to the whole spatio-temporal landscape including the future. Indeed, since its geometrical guidelines are universal, neither the past nor the future can escape them. The spatio-temporal landscape of the City must be "squared" by geometry. Time must be in line with the architecture and forms of the City's plaza. Thus, the past should perfectly correspond with today. And, the future should be a perfect geometric reproduction of yesterday. In Plato's Ideal City, the rapid river of history does not flow. The pure spatio-temporal reality of Kallipolis must not be tainted with the accidents, variety, uncertainty and transformations that the unchecked flow of history produces. The former explains why perfect geometry does not welcome fortune, diversity or change. These features are considered internal diseases and the actual causes of intestine disorder and violence. And this is precisely the reason why Plato's City's agora must be free from politics. Therefore, the geometry of political power is meant to nullify history in order to get rid of fortune, plurality, alteration

and their political manifestations. Therefore, the well-ordered spatio-temporal reality that results from the implementation of this geometry of power exhibits features of a perfect immortal peace.

Hope, as I have tried to demonstrate along this dissertation, has a mercurial nature. In Plato, we discovered hope as hubris (a black horse), which he describes as a force that puts a sort of crazy-foolish velocity inside the souls of humans. Thomas Hobbes' conceptualization of the human sense of hope is also in line with this description. Both, for Plato and Hobbes, this sort of hope represents a political problem and is considered a sort of malady. Yet, as I have been arguing, hope is actually the first moment of freedom. It is the spark that ignites and enables the capabilities inside the human mind that turn men into makers. Therefore, stopping hope becomes the path into stopping men and women's (Promethean) urge of becoming makers; including makers of their own history and destiny. Nonetheless, perfect-ideal geometry, when translated into political and moral guidelines, attempts to give shape to the human soul and, therefore, it also attempts to shape human most inner emotional, intellectual and moral faculties, including freedom. The human sense of hope becomes a suitable human faculty to be molded by geometry in so far as it is the actual first moment of freedom within the human soul.

In sum, hope becomes the primal target of a political program that seeks to create the conditions for an immortal peace through freezing time, stopping history from happening, stopping socio political change and securing the future. Yet as I argued, these goals are impossible to attain, but making people hopeless through an oppressive system is not. Thus, power élites have trying to make people hopeless: 1) by taken material economic means and other sort of resources away from them (their land, tools, wealth and even their bodies—or part of them). These are tangible resources of hope; 2) by dislocating or removing other less tangible resources of hope from people, such as means of communication, knowledge and pedagogies. Both processes have the primary intention of taking certainties and self-assurances away from people. Once certitude is gone, people's optimism languishes; 3) hope is also controlled or manipulated through the creation of a series of illusions in people's minds that will eventually take hold of their sense of hope, and the way they perceive the passage of time. Manipulating the

human sense of hope belongs to what I called a chronopolitics, whose ultimate objective is to make people believe the illusion that neither futurity nor futurization is possible or desirable. The illusions that a chronopolitics entails are crafted by using lies to create fatalistic myths that place men and women outside the realm of history. Fatalism is a myth. Fear and terror are also used to create a sort of irrational pessimism intended to discourage people's heart. This pessimism, however, might even take the form of wisdom, especially when its logic produces silence and immobilism. The sort of pessimism born out from fear as the result of is not prudential, judicious or intelligent. On the contrary, it belongs to the category of obscurity and oblivion; 4) finally, in a long run, a pedagogy of oblivion and domestication becomes the perfect systematized technique to make people hopeless. A pedagogy of oblivion collects all the above-mentioned methods and systematize them into a curricular program, whose ultimate purpose is to make people forget about hoping realistically for socio-political change, and, instead, make them adapt and conform to the status quo. These sorts of programs of education for socio-political hopelessness account and provide for all sorts of resistances on the part of the human being taught to forget how to hope, by canalizing their elpidic urges in many different sophisticated ways.

The picture of how sophisticated or extreme can an organized system of hopelessness and its pedagogies become would be totally incomplete without looking at a contemporary example of how the methods described above are implemented in our societies today. As Paulo Freire and other contemporary scholars warn us, neoliberalism seems to have a political agenda tending to a sort of totalitarian-uncontested domination in the world that not only precludes democracy, but that also tends to take hope for socio-political and economic change away from people. The sophisticate methods that the current system had devised to keep socio-political and economic change out of the question has gotten to the level in which realistically hoping for change has become almost impossible.

As a matter of fact, contemporarily the ancient medicine-philosophy-politics triad shows even more relevance than in the past, because its unique and complex (geometric)

transdisciplinary discourses are being used more than ever (in an array of ultra-sophisticated ways) to intervene, fragment, bureaucratize, and regulated many different spaces of our lives. These transdisciplinary discourses, relying on the intervention of different specialists, with a particular knowledges and set of techniques, is necessary; these specialists paternalistically regulate our fragmented lives and our fragmented hopes. More than ever before, the medicine-philosophy-politics discourse helps to demarcate the legitimate landscape of action in which the doctor, the Sovereign or the technocrat should intervene to define for us (and even against our own desires) what our legitimated hopes and expectations for the future should be. If necessary, the doctor, the Sovereign or the technocrats will also prescribe for us what are the appropriated pathways we should take to restore our lost heart, optimism and hope. However, we should always beware when the medical metaphor is invoked to portray hoping for political and economic change "a sort of foolish or dangerous madness" because it is usually an ideological form to diminish or suppress the human capacity for hope.

Bibliography

Anderson, Ben. "Transcending without Transcendence." *Utopianism and an Ethos of*

      Hope, Antipode, 38(4), 2006.

Aquinas, Thomas. *The Summa Theologica*. London: Burns Oates, 1927.

Aramayo, Roberto. *La elpidología eudemonista en Kant*. Diss. Complutense,

      University of Madrid, 1984.

Araujo-Freire, A.M. Ed. *Daring to dream: Toward a pedagogy of the*

      unfinished. Transl. A.K. Olivereira. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2007.

Arendt, Hannah, "Freedom and Politics: A Lecture." *Chicago Review* 14(1), 1960.

---. "What is Freedom?" *Between Past and Future*. New York: Viking Compass Books, 1968.

---. *The Human Condition*. New York: Doubleday, Anchor, 1959.

---. "Truth and Politics." *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*.

      Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1968.

Aronowith, Stanley. "Paulo Freire's Radical Democratic Humanism." *Paulo Freire: A Critical*

      Encounter. McLaren, P., ed. London: Routledge, 1992.

---. "Foreword." In: Macrine S. L. Ed. *Critical Pedagogy in Uncertain Times: Hope and*

      Possibilities. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009.

Averill, James, George Catlin and Kyum Koo Chon. *Rules of Hope*. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1990.

Baderin, Alice. "Two forms of Realism in Political Theory." *European Journal of*

      Political Theory 13, (2), 2014.

Barber, Benjamin. "The Politics of Political Science: Value-free Theory and the

      Wolin-Straus Dust-Up of 1963." *American Political Science Review* 100 (4), 2006.

Bartlett, Leslie. "Dialogue, knowledge, and teacher-student relations: Freirean

330

pedagogy in theory and practice." *Comparative Education Review*, 49 (3), 2005.

Bar-Tal, Daniel. "Why Does Fear Override Hope in Societies Engulfed by Intractable
Conflict, as it Does in the Israeli Society?" *Political Psychology* 22 (3), 2001.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Times, Living in an Age of Uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity,
2007.

Benzein, E, and Saveman, B. "One Step Towards the Understanding of Hope: a
Concept Analysis." *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 35, 1998.

Berlin, Isaiah. "Does Political Theory Still Exist?" in Henry Hardy, Ed. *Concepts
and Categories: Philosophical Essays of Isaiah Berlin*. Oxford: Penguin
Books, 1979.

Bhattacharya, Asoke. *Paulo Freire: Rousseau of the Twentieth Century*.
Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2011.

Blackburn, James. "Understanding Paulo Freire: Reflections on the origins, concepts
and possible pitfalls of his educational approach." *Community Development Journal* 35, (1),
2000.

Bloch, Ernst. *The Principle of Hope*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995.

---. *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988.

Bovens, Luc. "The value of hope." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*
59 (3), 1999.

Braithwaite, John. "Emancipation and Hope." *The Annals of the American Academy
of Political and Social Science* 592, 2004.

Braithwaite, Valerie. "The Hope Process and Social Inclusion." *The Annals of the
American Academy of Political and Social Science* 592, 2004.

Brown, Nik. "Shifting Tenses: Reconnecting Regimes of Truth and Hope."

    Configurations 13(3), 2005.

Browne, Craig. "Hope, Critique, and Utopia." *Critical Horizons* 6 (1), 2005.

Browne, Craig. "Shifting tenses from "regimes of truth to regimes of hope." *Science*

    and Technology Studies Unit. University of York, UK, 2006.

Brunsson, Nils "Reforms, Organization and Hope." *Scandinavian. Journal of Management*

    22, 2006.

Carmen, Raff. "Paulo Freire 1921–1997: A philosophy of hope, a life of practice."

    Development in Practice 8 (1), 1998.

Carlson, Dennis. "Hope Without Illusion: Telling the story of democratic educational

    Renewal." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 18 (1), 2005.

Chopra, Dennis. "Radical hopelessness." *Tikkun*, 19 (6), 2004.

Clarke, David. "Faith and hope." <u>*Australasian Psychiatry*</u>, 11 (2), 2003.

Connolly,William, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political*

    Paradox, expanded ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

Connolly,William, *Pluralism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.

Connolly,William, *The Ethos of Pluralization*. Minneapolis: University of

    Minnesota Press, 1995.

Crapanzano, Vincent, "Reflections on Hope as a Category of Social and

    Psychological Analysis." *Cultural Anthropology* 18, 2003.

Dahl, Robert A. "The Behavioral Approach to Political Science: Epitaph for a

    Monument to a Successful Protest." *The American Political Science Review* 55 (4), 1961.

Dauenhauer, Bernard. "Hope and Its Ramifications for Politics." *Man and World*, 17,1984.

The Politics of Hope. London: Routledge, 1986.

Day, John. P. "Hope." *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 6, 1969.

    http://www.jacquesderrida.com.ar/textos/democracia.htm,

---. *Hope: A philosophical inquiry*. Helsinki: Philosophical Society of Finland, 1991.

Davies, Alan "Varieties of hope." R. Fitzgerald. Ed. *The sources of hope*. Rushcutters Bay:

    Pergamon Press, (1979).

Deneen, Patrick. "The Politics of Hope and Optimism: Rorty, Havel, and the Democratic Faith of

    John Dewey." Social Research 66, 1999.

Derrida, Jacques. "Entrevista de Elena Fernandez con Jacques Derrida". *Jornal de Letras, Artes e Ideias*,

1994.

---. *Políticas de la amistad*. Madrid, España: Editorial Trotta, 1998.

Dood, James. "The Philosophical Significance of Hope." *The Review of Metaphysics*.

    58 (1), 2004.

Dowman, Thais H. "Hope and Hopelessness: Theory and Reality." *JR Soc Med*,

    101, 2008.

Drahos, Peter. "Trading in public hope." *The Annals of the American Academy of*

    Political and Social Science 592, 2004.

Duggleby, Wendy, et. al. "Metasynthesis of the hope experience of family

    caregivers of persons with chronic illness." *Qualitative Health Research*, 20

    (2), 2010.

Duncan-Andrade, J. "Note to educators: Hope required when growing roses in

    Concrete." *Harvard Educational Review* 79 (2), 2009.

Dussel, Enrique. *Ética de la liberación en la edad de la globalización y de la exclusión.*

Madrid, Trotta, 2002.

Edey, Wendy and Ronna E Jevne. "Hope, Illness, and Counselling Practice:

Making Hope Visible." *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, vol. 37, 2003.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. ''Pathologies of Hope.'' *Harper's Monthly*, 1 February 2007.

Elias, John L. *Paulo Freire: Pedagogue of liberation*. Malabar, FL: Kreiger Press, 1994.

Elkin, Stephen L. *Reconstructing the Commercial Republic: Constitutional Design*

after Madison. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Escobar, M., Fernandez, A., Pablo Freire and G. Guervara-Niebla. *Paulo Freire on*

higher education. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

Fitzgerald, Ross. "Hope, Meaning and Transcendence of the Self." Ross Fitzgerald. Ed.

The Sources of Hope. Rushcutters Bay, NSW: Pergamon Press, 1979.

Fournier, Valerie. "Utopianism and the Cultivation of Possibilities: Grassroots

Movements of Hope." M. Parker ed. *Utopia and Organization*. Oxford:

Blackwell, 2002.

Freire, Paulo. "A letter to a theology student." *Catholic Mind,* 70, 1972.

---. "Conscientization." *Cross Currents,* 24 (1), 1984.

---. *Conscientization.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1975.

---. Conscientizing as a way of liberating. Washington, DC: LADOC II, 1972.

---. "Cultural action and conscientization." *Harvard Education Review* 40, (3), 1970.

---. *Cultural freedom in Latin America. Human rights and the liberation of man in the*

Americas. L. Colonnese. Ed. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970.

---. "Daring to Dream." *Boulder, Co: Paradigm*, vol., 2007.

---. Education for critical consciousness. New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1973.

---. "Education for Liberation." *One World.* 1975.

---. "Education, liberation and the church." *Religious Education* 79 (4), 1984.

---. *Education, the practice of freedom.* London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative,

      1976.

---. *Extensão ou Comunicação? Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra*, 1971.

---. "Know, practice and teach the gospels." *Religious Education* 79 (4), 1984.

---. *La Educación en la Ciudad*. México, DF: Siglo XXI, 1999.

---.Macedo, D., Q. Macedo, and A. Oliveira. A. *Letters to Cristina: Reflections on my*

      life and work. Trans. Donaldo Pereira Macedo. New York & London: Routledge, 1996.

---. *Miscellaneous writings by Paulo Freire*. Berkeley: Education-Psychology Library,

      University of California, 1975.

---. *Pedagogía del oprimido*. Buenos Aries; Argentina Siglo XXI, 1972.

---. *Pedagogía de la esperanza: un re-encuentro con la pedagogía del oprimido*.

      México D.F.: Siglo 21 Editores, 1993.

---. *Pedagogía de la indignación: cartas pedagógicas en un mundo revuelto*. Buenos Aires:

      Siglo 2 , 2012. (Translation provided by me.)

---. *Pedagogy in process: The letters to Guinea-Bissau*. New York: Seabury, 1978.

---. *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. Lanham:

      Rowman & Littlefield, 1998.

---. *Pedagogy of indignation*. Boulder and London: Paradigm, 2004.

---. *Pedagogy of the city*. New York: Continuum Press, 1993.

---. *Pedagogy of the Heart*. New York: Continuum Publishing Company,

      1997.

---. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1972.

---. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: The Continuum Publishing

     Corporation, 1993.

---. *Politics and education*. Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center

     Publications, 1998.

---. *Que Fazer: Teoria e Prática em Educaçao Popular*. Petrópolis, Brazil:

     Editora Voces, 1993.

---. *Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare to teach*. Boulder,

     CO.: Westview Press, 1998.

---. "The adult literacy process as cultural action for freedom." *Harvard*

     Educational Review 40 (2), 1970.

---. *The Politics of Education*. New York: Bergin and Garvey, 1985.

---. *The politics of education: Culture, power and liberation*. South Hadley, Mass:

     Bergin & Garvey, 1985.

Gabriel Marcel. *Homo Viator: Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*. Gloucester,

     Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978.

Gadotti, Moacir. *Reading Paulo Freire: His life and work*. New York: SUNY Press, 1994.

Gadotti, Moacir and Carlos A. Torres. "Paulo Freire: Education for Development."

     Development and Change 40 (6), 2009.

Gadotti, Moacir, Paulo Freire and Sergio Guimarães. *Pedagogia: diálogo e*

     conflict. São Paolo: Cortez, 1995.

---. "Lẹzoẽs de Freire." *Educaçao, Sociedade & Culturas* 11 (10), 1998.

---. *Reading Paulo Freire: His Life and Work*. New York: Sunny

Press, 1994.

Galeano, Eduardo. "Ventana sobre la utopia." *Las palabras andantes*. Siglo XXI ,

    1993.

Galston, William. "Realism in Political Theory." *European Journal of Political*

    Theory, 9 (4), 2010.

Geerts , Henry, (June 1, 2014). "Why Real Leaders are More than Optimistic: A

    Small Political Theory of Hope". Retrieved from

    <http://www.tilburguniversity.edu/upload/4b602c2b-9ee8-41c1-ab75-

    55979d89c2e1_realleaders.pdf>.

Gelwick, Richard. "Post-critical belief." in R. Fitzgerald. Ed. *The sources of hope.* Rushcutters

    Bay: Pergamon Press, 1979.

Gerhardt, Heinz P. "Paulo Freire (1921-1997)." *Prospects: The Quarterly Review of*

    Comparative Education, 23 (3 - 4), 1993.

Gerring, John and Yesnowitz, Joshua. "A Normative Turn in Political Science."

    Polity, 38, 1, 2006.

Gettell, Raymond G. "Nature and Scope of Present Political Theory." *The*

    American Political Science Review, 8 (1).

Geuss, Raymond. *Philosophy and Real Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University

    Press, 2008.

Giroux, Henry. "Dystopian nightmares and educated hopes: The return of the

    pedagogical and the promise of democracy." in Michael Peters, & John Freeman. Eds. *Edutopias:*

    New utopian thinking in education. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2006.

---. *On Critical Pedagogy*. NewYork: Continuum, 2010.

---. *Freire: A Critical Encounter*. London & New York: Routledge, 1993.

---. *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope: Theory, Culture and Schooling* Boulder,

    Colorado: Westview Press, 1997.

---. "Pedagogy of the Depressed: Beyond the New Politics of Cynicism."

    College of Literature 28 (3), 2001.

---. "Radical pedagogy and prophetic thought: Remembering Paulo Freire."

    Rethinking Marxism, 9 (4), 1996.

---. *University in Chains.* Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2007.

---. "When Hope is Subversive." *Tikkun*, vol. 19, no. 6, 2004.

---. *Zombie Politics and Culture in the Age of Casino Capitalism*. NewYork: Peter Lang, 2010.

Glass, Ronald. "On Paulo Freire's philosophy of praxis and the foundations of liberation

    Education". *Educational Researcher*, 30 (2), 2001.

Godfrey, Joseph. *A Philosophy of Human Hope*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff,

    1987.

Goldman, Loren. "In Defense of Blinders: On Kant, Political Hope, and the Need

    for Practical Belief." *Political Theory*. 40 (4), 2012.

---. "In Defense of Blinders: On Kant, Political Hope, and the Need for Practical

    Belief." *Political Theory*, 40 (4), 2012.

---. *The sources of political hope: Will, world and democracy*. Diss. Ann Arbor: The University

    of Chicago. ProQuest/UMI, 2010. (Publication No. 3419637).

Goodwin, Bennie. *Reflections on education.* Atlanta: Goodpatrick Publishers, 1978.

Goodwin, Bennie and Keith Taylor. *The Politics of Utopia*. London: Hutchinson, 1982.

Graff, Gerald. "Teaching Politically Without Political Correctness." Radical

Teacher, (58), 2000.

Gravlee, G. S. "Aristotle on Hope." *Journal of the History of Philosophy,* 38, 2000.

Guimarães Sérgio and Moacir Gadotti. Eds. Trans. Marcano, Juan E. *Pedagogia: diálogo e*
   conflito (4 ed.). São Paulo: Cortez, 1995.

Gunnell, John. "Dislocated Rhetoric: The Anomaly of Political Theory." *The*
   Journal of Politics, vol. 68, no. 4, 2006.

Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *A theology of liberation*. London: SCM Press, 1971.

Habermas, Jürgen. "Constitutional Democracy: A Paradoxical Union of
   Contradictory Principles?" Trans. William Rehg. *Political Theory,* vol. 29, no. 6,
   2001.

---. "The new obscurity: the crisis of the welfare state and the exhaustion of utopian energies."
   The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians Debate,
   MA: MIT Press, 1989.

---. *The Theory of Communicative Action: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*
   and the rationalization of society, vol. 2. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1987.

Halpin, David. *Hope and education: The role of the utopian imagination*. London: Routledge
   Falmer, 2003.

---. "Hope, Utopianism and Educational Management." *Cambridge Journal of Education,*
   31:1, 2001.

---. "The nature of hope and its significance for education." *British Journal of*
   Educational Studies 49 (4), 2001.

---. *Spaces of Hope*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2000.

Hare, William and John Portelli. "Reading the World and Reading the Word: An Interview

with Paulo Freire." In W. Hare and J. P. Portelli. Eds. *Philosophy of Education: Introductory*

    Readings. Calgary: Detselig, 1994.

Honig, Bonnie. "Between Decision and Deliberation: Political Paradox in Democratic Theory."

    The American Political Science Review, vol. 101, no. 1, 2007.

---. *Emergency Politics: Paradox, Law, Democracy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,

    2009.

---. "The politics of Agonism." *Political Theory,* vol. 21, no 3, 1993.

Honneth, Axel. *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Polity,

    2007.

Hooks, Bell. "Bell hooks Speaking about Paulo Freire--the Man, His Work." *Paulo*

    Freire: A Critical Encounter. Eds. Peter McLaren and Peter Leonard.

    London: Routledge, 1993.

---. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Hooks, Bell and Cornel West. *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life*.

    Boston: South End Press, 1991.

Horrigan, J. and Ed Wiltse. Eds. *Hope against hope; philosophies, cultures and*

    politics of possibility and doubt. New York: Rodopi, 2010.

Horton, Miles and Paulo Freire. *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations in*

    Education and Social Change. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.

Hur, Mann Hyung. "Empowerment in terms of theoretical perspectives: exploring a typology of

    the process and components across disciplines." *Journal of Community Psychology.*

    34 (5), 2006.

Iglesias, Lucía. "Entrevista a Fernando Savater: La ética como antídoto." UNESCO, 2007.

Isaac, Jeffrey C. "The Stranger Silence of Political Theory." *Political Theory*, 23

    (4), 1995.

Jacobsen, Michael H. "Solid Modern Utopia to Liquid Modern Anti-Utopia?

    Tracing the Utopian Strand in the Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman." *Utopian Studies*. 15 (1),

    2004.

Jacobsen, Michael and Tester, K. "Sociology, nostalgia, utopia and mortality: a conversation

    with Zygmunt Bauman." *European Journal of Social Theory*, 10 (2), 2007.

Jameson, Frederic. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science

    Fictions*. London: Verso, 2005.

---. "The politics of utopia." *New Left Review*, 25, 2004.

Kast, Verena. *Joy Inspiration and Hope*. New York: Fromm, 1994.

Kelly, Erin. Ed. *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard

    University Press, 2001.

Kincheloe, Joe L. *Critical Pedagogy Primer*. 2nd ed. New York: Peter Lang

    Publishing Inc., 2008.

Kretz, Lisa. "Hope in Environmental Philosophy." Journal of Agricultural and

    Environmental Ethics, 2013.

Kumar, Krishnan. "Ideology and Sociology: Reflections on Karl Mannheim's Ideology

    and Utopia." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11 (2), 2006.

Laín-Entralgo, Pedro, *La espera y la esperanza; historia y teoría del esperar

    humano*. Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1962.

Lange, Elizabeth. "Fragmented Ethics of Justice: Freire, liberation theology and pedagogies for

    the non-poor." *Convergence,* 79, 1997.

Laslett, Peter. (Ed.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society*. Oxford, vii–xv, 1956.

Lazarus, Richard. "Hope: an Emotion and a Vital Coping Resource Against Despair." *Social Research* 66, 1999.

Lear, Jonathan. *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Levitas, Ruth. "Educated hope: Ernst Bloch on abstract and concrete utopia" in J. O. Daniel and T. Lopez, S., Snyder, C. R. and Pedrotti, T. "Hope: Many Definitions, Many Measures" in S. Lopez and C. R. Snyder. Eds. *Positive Psychological Assessment*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2003.

---. "For Utopia: The (Limits of the) Utopian Function in Late Capitalist Society: in B. Goodwin Ed. The Philosophy of Utopia. London: Frank Cass, 2001.

---. "Looking for the blue: the necessity of utopia." *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 12 (3), 2007.

---. "The imaginary reconstitution of society, or, why sociologists and others should take utopia more seriously." *Inaugural lecture, University of Bristol*, 2005.

Ludema, James, Timothy Wilmot, and Suresh Srivastva. "Organizational Hope: Reaffirming the Constructive Task of Social and Organizational Inquiry." *Human Relations* 50, 1997.

Macquarrie, John. *Christian hope*. London: Mowbrays, 1978.

Mandel, Ernest. "Anticipation and Hope as Categories of Historical Materialism." *Historical Materialism* 10, 2002.

Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia.* London: Kegan Paul, 1940.

Marcel, Gabriel. "Desire and hope." in Lawrence, N and D. O'Connor. Eds. *Readings in existential phenomenology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1976.

---. *Homo viator: Introduction to a metaphysic of hope*. New York: Harper and

    Row, 1962.

---. *Homo Viator: Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*. Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1978.

Mark, Roelofs, H. "Make Political Theory More What?" *Political Research, Organization and*

    Design 3 (1), 1959.

Margonis, Frank. "Paulo Freire and Post-Colonial Dilemmas." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 22,

    2003.

Mattingly, Cheryl. *The Paradox of Hope: Journeys Through a Clinical Borderland.*

    University of California Press: Berkeley, 2010.

Mayo, Peter. *Gramsci, Freire and adult education: Possibilities for transformative action*. New

    York: Zed Books, 1998.

Mayo, Peter. *Liberating praxis: Paulo Freire's legacy for radical education and politics*.

    Westport: Praeger, 2004.

McGreer, Victoria. "The Art of Good Hope." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political*

    and Social Science 592, 2004.

McKenna, Brian. "Paulo Freire's blunt challenge to anthropology: Create a Pedagogy of the

    Oppressed for Your Times." *Critique of Anthropology* 33 (4).

McLaren, Peter and C. Lankshear. C. *Politics of liberation: Paths from Freire*. London:

    Routledge, 1994.

McLaren, Peter and P. Leonard. Eds. *Freire: A critical encounter.* London: Routledge, 1993.

McLaren, Peter. *Rage and Hope*. New York: Peter Land Publishing, 2006.

McManus, Susan. "Hope, Fear, and the Politics of Affective Agency." *Theory and*

    Event 14 (4), 2011.

Menninger, Karl. "Hope." *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 116, 1959.

Mittleman, Alan. *Hope in a democratic age*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Moltmann, Jürgen. "Religion, revolution, and the future." In W. Capps Ed. *The future of hope.*
 Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970.

---. *Theology of hope*. London: SCM Press, 1967.

Monclus, Antonio. *Pedagogía de la contradicción: Paulo Freire*. Barcelona, Anthropos, 1988.

Moylan Tom Ed. *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch.* London: Verso, 1997.

Mouffe, Chantal. *The Democratic Paradox*. New York: Verso, 2000.

Näsström, Sofia. "The Legitimacy of the People." *Political Theory* 35 No. 5, 2007.

Nayar, Jayan. "The Politics of Hope and the Other-in-the-World: Thinking
 Exteriority." *Law Critique* 24, 2013.

Olson, Kevin. "Paradoxes of Constitutional Democracy." *American Journal of
 Political Science* 51, no. 2, 2007.

Pettit, Philip. "Hope and its place in mind." *The Annals of the American Academy
 of Political and Social Science* 592, 2004.

Philp, Mark. "Realism without Illusions." *Political Theory* 40 (5), 2012.

Pieper, Josef. *Faith, hope, love*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1997.

Polivy, Janet and Herman, Peter. "The false-hope syndrome." *Current Directions in
 Psychological Science* 9 (4), 2000.

Polkinghorne, John. *The god of hope and the end of the world.* London: Yale University Press,
 2002.

Quinn, M. S. "Hoping." Southwestern Journal of Philosophy 7, 1976.

Raff, Carmen. "Viewpoints Paulo Freire 1921-1997: A Philosophy of Hope, a Life of Practice."

Development in Practice, vol. 8, no.1, 1998.

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971.

---. "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical." *Philosophy and Public Affairs,* Vol. 14,

no. 3. (Summer, 1985).

---. *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

---. *The Law of People*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Rehfeld, Andrew. "Offensive Political Theory." *Perspective on Politics*, 8 (2), 2010.

Roberts, Peter. *Education, literacy, and humanization: Exploring the work of Paulo Freire*.

Westport, CT.: Bergin & Garvey, 2000.

Roclofs, H. Mark "Make Political Theory More What?" *Political Research, Organization and*

Design 3 (1), 1959.

Rodriguez-Magda, Rosa M. *La sonrisa de Saturno: Hacia una teoría transmoderna*.

Barcelona: Anthropos, 1989.

Romeu, Danilo. "Da Pedagogia Do Oprimido às Pedagogias da Exclusão: Um

Breve Balanço Crítico. " *Educ. Soc.* 30 (107), 2009.

Rorty, Richard. *Achieving our Country*. London: Harvard University Press, 1998.

---. *Philosophy and Social Hope*. London: Pinguin, 1999.

Sabine George H. "What is a Political Theory?" *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 1, no.

1, 1939.

Santos-Gomez, M. "Ideas filosóficas que fundamentan La pedagogía de Paulo Freire." *Revista*

Iberoamericana de Educación, 46, 2008.

Sartre, Jean Paul. *Hope now: The 1980 interviews.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Savater, Fernando. "Después de la Utopía: El mito (Respuesta a Ernst Bloch)."

Vuelta 261, 1998.

Schlosser, Joel A. ''Hope, Danger's Comforter: Thucydides, Hope, Politics." *The*

   Journal of Politics, vol. 75, no. 1, 2013.

---. "Thucydides." *History*, (5.103), as cited by Schlosser. Ibid. p. 169.

Shor, Ira and Pablo Freire. *A Pedagogy of Liberation*. Wesport, Connecticut:

   Bergin & Garvey, 1987.

Schugurensky, Daniel. "The legacy of Paulo Freire: A critical review of his contributions."

   Convergence 31, 1998.

Schumacher, Bernard. *A Philosophy of Hope; Josef Pieper and the contemporary*

   debate on hope. New York: Fordham University Press, 2003.

Smith, Nicholas. "From the Concept of Hope to the Principle of Hope", In Janet

   Horrigan and Wiltse eds. *Hope Against Hope: Philosophies, Cultures and Politics and Doubt*.

   N.Y.: Radopi, 2010.

---. "Hope and Critical Theory." *Critical Horizons* 6, 2005.

Snyder, Charles R. "Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Nurturing Hope."*Journal of*

   Counseling & Development, vol. 73, 1995.

Snyder, Charles R. Ed. *Handbook of hope: Theory, Measures & Application.* San Diego:

   Academic Press, 2001.

 Snyder, Charles R. and David Feldman. "Hope for the Many: an Empowering Social

   Agenda", in C. R. Snyder. Ed. *Handbook of Hope*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press (2000).

Snyder, Charles R. "Hope Theory: Rainbows in the Mind.," *Psychological Inquiry*,

   13, 2002.

---. "Reality Negotiation: From Excuses to Hope and Beyond." *Journal of Social*

and Clinical Psychology 8, 1989.

---. "The Past and Possible Futures of Hope." *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*,

vol. 19, no. 1, 2000.

Stears, Marc. "The Vocation of Political Theory: Principles, Empirical Inquiry and

the Politics of Opportunity." *European Journal of Political Theory* 4(4), 2005.

Strauss, Leo. "What is Political Philosophy?" *The Journal of Politics*, 19 (3), 1957).

Taylor, Peter. *The texts of Paulo Freire*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993.

Tiger, Lionel. "Hope springs internal." *Social Research* 66 (2), 1999.

---. *Optimism: The Biology of Hope.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979.

Tinder, Glenn. "The fabric of hope." Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.

Torres, Carlos A. *Education, power, and personal biography: Dialogues with critical educators*.

New York: Routledge, 1998.

---. *La praxis educativa de Paulo Freire*. México, Ediciones Gernlka, 1983.

---. "Fifty Years After Angicos Paulo Freire, Popular Education and the Struggle for a Better

World that is Possible." *Revista Lusófona de Educação,* 24, 2013.

---. "Paulo Freire: Education and Transformative Social Justice Learning". Recuperated

<http://www.ipfp.pt/cdrom/Pain%E9is%20Dial%F3gicos/Painel%20A%20%20Sociedade%20M

ulticultural/carlosalbertotorres.pdf.>