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Perhaps not wholly unrelatedly to the message of the first Obama presidential campaign, the concept of hope has been receiving increased philosophical attention in recent years. A good bit has been written on honing a definition of hope, and investigating the morally relevant territory. After a brief summary of that literature, I situate myself amongst those who advocate for hope—at its best—as a virtue, and I then suggest that hope seems to have a unique status amongst the virtues insofar as it appears to be foundational for moral progress. I want to suggest that virtue generally can be seen as having an infectious quality, and that along with hope's foundational status, this infectiousness is particularly crucial as regards the development of hope for working on solutions to structural injustice.

According to both ancient and contemporary sources (e.g., Rosenberg & Hovland), cognitive states have three main elements: affective, conative and cognitive. As a cognitive state, hope has an *affective* side requiring the presence of the *desire* for something, a *conative* aspect as hope is always a desire *for* something (even if we're talking about generalized hope for some vague positive future), and a *cognitive* aspect insofar as hope is always about estimating probabilities (Day, 61). Hope then can be distinguished from belief by the addition of desire and a lack of certainty, and from desire by the addition of belief in possibility, however remote.

Additionally, hope as a cognitive state can be oriented toward positive outcomes (benefits to self and/or others) or towards negative outcomes (harms of various kinds, e.g., financial loss for a neighbor or physical violence at a hockey game). Hope can be future-oriented or relevant

to the past if the outcome, although passed, is still uncertain (Fremstedal, 58). I might be hopeful that you got home safely last night given that I have not yet heard from you today.

In much of the literature on hope there is a distinction between 1) particular moments of hope: hoping for particular objects, events or states of affairs (e.g., Fremstedal, 52) and, 2) a general concept of hope: a sustained state of hopefulness generally (Snow, e.g., 155). The latter distinction may be best understood as a character trait, and when we apply an Aristotelian lens to that territory we have the elements necessary for a virtue.

The territory of the particular:

J.P. Day explores the territory of particular hopes, and points out that hope cannot be simply an emotion because it has an evaluative (cognitive) aspect (61). a) Hope concerns probabilities. In order to hope, I have to have a belief in the possibility of the outcome. Hope has to be for something that *is* (or is believed to be) attainable. One cannot hope—as one cannot *will* in the Kantian sense—something that is not (at least theoretically) possible. However, one can hope for things that will not likely occur in one's lifetime: say, a world free of terrorism. Hope is not appropriately applied to things that are known to be impossible to attain. This also suggests that b) to hope in any substantive sense cannot simply be a matter of a passing wish or whimsy. In addition, c) the hoped-for has to be perceived to be at some distance in time from the present. Although it would be possible to assume that the thing is not eminent when it turns out to be ("I hope our server comes to take our order soo….oh, hi!") d) Hope of the particular has to be a hope *for* something that is or appears to be difficult to attain. If the thing in question comes immediately or as a matter of course then it does not require hope (even though we might use that language).

Hope, as elusive, has to also be e) at least perceived to be somewhat (or completely) outside of one's control. If my statement "I hope I do well on that test tomorrow" is more than mere belief despite my being well-prepared, it is because I perceive the test as at least something of an unknown. Maybe I am suffering from a bad cold that makes my brain more sluggish than usual. If I hope that our society can one day be free from institutional injustice, f) it is not something I have to expect to be solely in my power or realized in my lifetime. Holding to the possibility of progress towards the goal would be sufficient, it seems to me, as an appropriate realm for hope. And this raises the relevance of hope in the general sense.

The territory of the general:

Hope as a sustained cognitive state will be, following Snow, referred to as "hopefulness." It is a state of mind that desires, believes in and anticipates some future goal. If one possesses the general disposition of hopefulness, one possesses an attitude, molded over time, which attends to the future with a kind of confidence—with what I will argue is a justified trust that "the future one desires" (to use Cheshire Calhoun's phrase [Calhoun, 10]) will unfold. It is here that the language of virtue ethics seems most useful. Just as hope for particulars need not, hopefulness as a general state need not, be focused on some moral good (however we define that). Picture Shakespeare's Richard III who is "determined to prove a villain" (*Richard III*, Act I, Scene 1). He can be seen as possessed of a disposition aimed at harm to others. He is hopeful that he can bring about those harms. For hopefulness to be designated virtuous, we must be able to distinguish Richard III's character traits from those that contribute to an Aristotelian *eudemonia* or "human flourishing."

Hopefulness as a virtue

If hopefulness can be conceived of as a character trait, it is easy to imagine it as oriented towards a positive or a negative outcome for self or others. Following Martha Nussbaum, virtuous traits are those identifiable as "whatever it is to be stably disposed to act appropriately" in a given context (Nussbaum 2000, 441). I hope to make clear that being hopeful is just that in what follows. Understanding that hopefulness can be a virtue catches up both a general sense of hope and particular instances as they are relevant to ethical behavior. Nancy Snow refers to this relationship of attitude to instance as "architectonic." As Snow notes, hopefulness as virtue "giv[es] rise to more specific hopes as life goes on" (Snow, 155). If the disposition is virtuous, the instances of hope it generates are also going to be morally appropriate.

As we know, Aristotle defines a virtue as "a state of character" that involves "both actions and emotions" with the goal of seeking "the mean in all things relative to us" (*Nichomachean Ethics* [*NE*], II.v.1106a10; *Eudemian Ethics* II.1220a; *NE* II.vi.1106a30). A character trait worthy of the status of virtue must be one worth developing insofar as it aids in the attainment of human flourishing. I will not attempt a wholesale discussion of *eudaimonia* here, but I do want to argue that hopefulness seems to have a foundational or primary role to play amongst the virtues. In terms of psychological or cognitive states, hopefulness appears to be a "deeper dispositional characteristic," as Gravlee posits, than, for instance, courage, because it (hopefulness) motivates or lays the ground for other virtues. "[H]opefulness is crucial for ethical deliberation" (Gravlee, 476-7). I will attempt to unpack this in the next two sections.

Important to my discussion, Aristotle also distinguishes between "natural" virtue, and virtue "in the strict" or "full" sense (*NE* VI.xiii.1144b), as Fröding notes (184). Hopefulness may be a natural virtue if one is generally optimistic by temperament or if one's community molds one to develop such a trait and one unreflectively conforms to that molding. Hopefulness

as a natural virtue can be seen in the naivety or idealism of youth. To acquire a virtue "in the strict sense," Aristotle points out that we also need to possess practical wisdom (*phronesis*) relevant to that virtue. That means that in addition to automatically doing the right thing we must also have done the work necessary to *know* it is the right thing to do; to autonomously come to understand the value and purpose and appropriateness of the actions we take, even, say, in the face of repeated failures or exposure to adversity. Practical wisdom is the understanding that comes with deliberation and experience even while it will have, ideally, been nurtured within a community that values that kind of work. Virtues generally are most likely to be perpetuated in a community that encourages them and this is what I am calling "infectiousness."

Aristotle understands that the acquisition of practical wisdom comes with long periods of training and deliberation within a community of virtuous others (*NE* VI.vii.1141a15-20). We acquire practical wisdom by being encouraged to notice what things matter in a situation and to deliberate about what it means to act appropriately in regard to them. This attention when practiced repeatedly creates a heightened awareness and over time instills or reinforces in us the habits. But I want to argue that the acquisition of hopefulness as a virtue is of especial importance in this process because it creates the possibility—and thus is, in a sense, necessary for ethical deliberation in general and for the deliberation that aims to address structural injustices specifically. Thus, I want to suggest that the infectiousness of hope has a kind of moral priority.

<u>Hopefulness as Necessary</u>

For the sake of argument, imagine a hypothetical community where individuals living in despair go through the motions of working towards a more just future, habituated into those behaviors by the norms of their culture. Imagine this rote habituation as "natural," on Aristotle's

view, the possession of an unreflective but ostensibly appropriate habit. The despair signals the absence of hope, and this absence removes intention in a vital way—it empties the activity of meaning and purpose. Members of this community may speak of their activity as working towards justice because it is a part of the behavior they've acquired, but the despair they feel is witness to the emptiness of their words. As analogy, if I know that there is no water where I am digging I am in a very real sense NOT digging a well; even, if I say that's what I'm doing. If I know there is zero chance for justice, yet I go through the motions of protesting injustice by organized marches or acts of civil disobedience, I am in the same sense as the digging example NOT pursuing justice. That there is no way to verify the lack of possibility of attaining justice in the way we could verify with scientific measurement and observation the absence of water, does not negate the point here if this hypothetical society was one definitively incapable of justice. If the possibility does not exist and that information were available, any hope that might accompany this context would not be virtuous. Because it is not appropriate to hope for something specific in a definitively hopeless situation, one who hopes for that thing is instead performing some kind of absurd habituated activity, perhaps akin to a kind of obsessive compulsive disorder. Insofar as appropriateness of an action, emanating from the virtue, requires the activity to be linked to the goal of human flourishing, we have no link here because there is no possibility of attaining the goal.

Hopefulness as virtue in the strict sense requires real reasoned awareness of a) the possibility of success, b) the appropriateness of the disposition to the goal, and c) the expectation that particular kinds of behaviors and activities "to[wards] the right person, to the right extent, and at the right time, for the right reason, and in the right way" (*NE* II.vi.1106b20) will be appropriate for generating that success. If I am to act, inspired by the virtue of hopefulness, I will

be acting appropriately when I am automatically choosing behaviors fitted to the successful pursuit of the goal. Hopefulness as virtue in the strict sense, insofar as it brings desire and possibility together, creating meaningful, self-aware and automatic intention for one's action (that which the above example lacks), is the grounding for working against injustice. As the architectonic of the virtue of hopefulness has it, we have to believe the outcome possible before we can meaningfully commit to tasks relevant to bringing that outcome about, as the well water example is meant to demonstrate. A sustained general state of hopefulness will generate the various instances of appropriate hope as life goes on. Actions emanating from the virtue of hopefulness will be aimed "at the right things, for the right reason," as virtue "in the strict sense" requires.

But, what of those hopes that we have for a future so far off or on so complicated a path that whatever we are doing in the present will be only remotely related to the change we are hoping for? Can we meaningfully apply hopefulness to that circumstance? Are we still talking about virtue in that context? What if our hopefulness is related to the elimination of structural injustices that any one person can have only the minutest possibility of affecting by themselves? I hope for a less racist and sexist and classist and ableist (etc.) world. The possibility of that hope being fulfilled is significantly out of my control, although actions I take towards that end may have some miniscule effect. I think the kind of deliberation that hope can inspire in this sort of case is perhaps the extreme case of what Luc Bovens calls "frustration tolerance" (Bovens, 681). My confidence in my personal ability to bring about this change hovers near zero. But my hopefulness that human beings generally—and collectively—have the potential is significantly higher. Practical wisdom brings my hopefulness into the realm of virtue in the strict sense when it shows me that a great many people working together and working contiguously and

continuously might, over a great expanse of time, may be able eventually to bring about change.

Gravlee, in his discussion of what hope leads to, makes a "a distinction between what [he calls] speculative (or hopeful) deliberation and proper (or confident) deliberation" (473). When hope is for a thing completely out of my control, hope will motivate me to deliberate, not about how to bring the thing about, but about what to do once the thing has arrived. I cannot control the weather, but I can control what I will do depending on the weather. When hope is related to something within my control, I have what he calls "optimistic deliberation." I have confidence in my abilities and believe I have some contribution, and thus control, to make towards the outcome (Gravlee, 473). The deliberation that hope inspires here is about what I should be doing to bring about the desired outcome. This is practical wisdom at work. We are in search of the best, most appropriate, route for responding in ways motivated by the virtue.

The change hoped for and thus relevant to the actions deliberated about in the case of institutional injustices does not fit either of Gravlee's distinctions well, in my view. Deliberation about institutionalized injustice is not speculative, in that speculative deliberation is not aimed at actions I can take to cause the change. In the case of structural injustices, there *are* actions I can take that are not wholly unrelated to the change hoped for, such as participating in boycotts or being one among many peacefully protesting to draw attention to these injustices. And, it is not what Gravlee refers to as the "optimistic" or "proper" kind because it is it not reasonable to believe that my individual contributions will have much to do with any eventual change. A third distinction seems useful. Hopefulness about a future that a whole community must work to bring about is about generating a collective kind of deliberation. Akin to Seyla Benhabib's use of the term, this sort of deliberation would have to be viewed as a public dialogue about the best possible ways forward (Benhabib, 69). The public debate about same-sex marriage in the last

decade or so could serve as an example. My private deliberation about the justness of access to same-sex marriage will do nothing by itself. Participating in the public deliberation by raising the ethical implications in my classroom over the last decade was encouraged by my knowledge that many of my colleagues around the country were having the same conversations, as were public figures of various kinds. Change would not have come on this issue without <u>many</u> conversations happening in many places. Legislation would not have occurred without lengthy public deliberation beforehand. I pursue the sense of obligation related to such deliberation implied here in the next section.

<u>Hopefulness as Duty</u>

If the claim that hopefulness can be viewed as a virtue is convincing, and if hopefulness about the elimination of structural injustices requires the generation of a kind of collective deliberation, there seems to be a Catch-22 here. I cannot be hopeful of any particular change that I can contribute relevant to structural injustice unless I believe it is possible that others will participate. I must believe others will participate before I can hope that any contribution I make—regardless of size—will have any connection to the long term goal of eliminating injustice. Each of us individually must arrive at the conclusion that others <u>will</u> participate; that the work is worth doing and that others will recognize that fact in order to feel hopeful that our actions matter. My hopefulness as a virtue cannot exist without my expectation that it will also exist in others. Hopefulness in a futile situation is a vice. If all this follows, I have a basis for making my main claim: that hope (as hopefulness) can be infectious because of its status as virtue, and that infectiousness is a moral requirement encouraging the work that, if sustained, could lead to the attainment of justice. That is, the spread of hopefulness as virtue is required for inspiring the work needed for social change.

<u>Collective responsibility for hope</u>

I argue that this hopefulness is the right attitude to possess from two separate directions. First of all, borrowing from a theme in applied ethics (business ethics and research ethics specifically) of ethical leadership—role modeling—as a moral obligation. Psychologist James Rest summarized, back in 1982, that "[t]he research convincingly demonstrates that modeling and reinforcement have impact on social behavior" (Rest, 34). And the research unsurprisingly continues to support this claim. Supervisors who model unethical behavior, for instance, will have a negative impact on the behavior of their subordinates (e.g., Gelman & Gibelman, cited in Mumford and Mumford). Also, not surprisingly, there is evidence that the reverse is true as well. Graduate school, e.g., is where future researchers learn what "constitutes unacceptable deviation from shared norms of conduct" (Anderson, et al., 331). Acquiring the qualities of a good researcher is most likely when one is surrounded by ethical, reflective, principled supervisors. Aristotle understood this, evident in his approach to molding the young who are not mature enough yet to have acquired practical wisdom (*e.g.*, *NE* II.iii.1104b10). Acquisition of natural virtue in the young occurs when encouraged by the virtuous adults around them.

The second direction for my examination of the worth of hopefulness comes from Larry May. He argues that collectivities are in part identified by a set of "shared interests" (May, 46) and if members of these collectivities possess what he calls "risky attitudes"—such as racist attitudes known to cause harm—individual members of the group are at least partially responsible for the harms emanating from those risky attitudes even if they themselves did not directly produce the harm because their presence, as a part of a group, feeds the likelihood of harm (May, 48). The climate created by such a group increases the probability that some action related to that attitude will result. I suggest it makes sense to think in these terms for positive

attitudes too. I think May's view is particularly useful in terms of the attitude of hope because hope appears, as I've said, to be crucial for ethical deliberation and hopefulness as an attitude akin to May's "risky attitudes" makes that deliberation more likely and thus potentially more productive. The cognitive aspect of the virtue of hopefulness involves evaluation of possibility. The practical wisdom involved in the elimination of structural injustice is in part a recognition that success is not achievable without collective efforts, and it is a part of the ethical deliberation necessary in order to assess likely paths forward. Hope for the elimination of structural injustices requires spreading the virtue of hopefulness because actual elimination requires collective deliberation and collective effort. Identifying possible paths forward is part of that deliberative effort, and encouraging the virtue of hopefulness at least in the natural sense will make that work more likely. The collective effort may or may not be wholly deliberative, but it is necessary. Whether or not all involved possess the virtue of hopefulness in the strict sense is not important; the collective effort is.

Structural injustice cannot be eliminated simply by a stroke of some benevolent dictator's pen because this type of injustice is deeply embedded in the tissues of a culture and prying it out requires a multitude of responses on a multiplicity of levels; e.g., structural injustices tend to have effects on individual attitudes and beliefs. Such attitudes require significant personal soul-searching to identify and eliminate—such as that which a loving but homophobic parent must work through when confronted with his or her own prejudices when a child has revealed his or her sexual orientation.

Virtue in the strict sense requires practical wisdom, and it is best to be in possession of virtue in the natural sense in order to develop it in the strict sense, *and*, the virtue of hopefulness in the strict sense seems necessary for further ethical deliberation: not only do we need to

evaluate the best paths forward but we also need to deliberate about what other virtues it might be appropriate to have for the pursuit of human flourishing. While the former requires Aristotle's *phronesis*, the latter involves a more general kind of ethical deliberation. For all of this, we need a community surrounding us, encouraging the appropriate dispositions and giving us hope. Such hopefulness is akin to instilling us with purpose. If the future one desires is one of *eudaimonia*, then, hopefulness as a virtue is fundamental to that goal, and the community is essential to instilling the virtue. I will also suggest—though this seems obvious—that elimination of structural injustices is required for the human flourishing of all.

In summary, then, if we acquire practical wisdom by being embedded in a community that encourages deep reflection on how to act appropriately, it seems that we must begin with the acquisition of a general sustained cognitive state containing the belief, desire and expectation that acting appropriately is possible. That virtue too is an offshoot of the community's encouragement. Developing the virtue of hopefulness is of vital importance to an individual's character, and thus one of the most important things an individual can do, and one of the most important things a community can encourage.

When we consider the collective side of hopefulness, there is the recognition of a kind of attitude of *sustained confidence*, or "trust" which gets its impetus from the group. Walker notes this aspect of human relations generally (*e.g.*, 23-4). This trust involves the recognition that a) one is not in this alone, b) one cannot attain one's goals by oneself, and c) the change one seeks is possible *because* at least some others feel the same way and many others act the same way (whether with practical wisdom or not). And it is through that confidence that hopefulness can make its greatest contribution. A hopeful attitude when shared can make a space where good is more likely to occur, and as regards structural injustice, that good, I have tried to argue, *will* not

occur without the hopefulness. At its best, the most important contribution that hopefulness makes, as I want to present it, is a tacit acknowledgement that the attitude of hopefulness is warranted which in turn encourages others to hold the attitude, making action associated with that attitude more likely. This is the infectiousness of hope: a community molds its members. The group will have an effect, first, on the likelihood that a natural virtue gets developed, and second, that the natural virtue gets transformed into a virtue in the strict sense. I am encouraged to maintain my hopefulness in the face of structural injustice if the group I am associated with is also hopeful. The amount of confidence I have in the future can grow correlative to the numbers of people who share that confidence. It is of course possible that the disposition being encouraged is a false hope, a misplaced hope and thus more like a vice. If collective deliberation has done its job well we have some reason to be hopeful(!) that this is not the case. If I'm the only one worried about the environmental damage from fracking in Western Pennsylvania or the Bakken reserves in North Dakota, I'm going to feel mighty insignificant in the face of the oil companies, and state legislators and grateful families who are benefiting from the monetary compensation. If there are several hundred of us or a couple thousand of us, it is actually more reasonable to expect that environmental concerns related to fracking will be noticed and attended to. Successes feed back into a continuation of hopefulness.

It has been argued (e.g., Nelson[i]) that one aspect of hopefulness may actually have a detrimental effect on work that needs to be done. If we are encouraged to believe that there is reason for hope that could be an excuse for not doing the work. Michael P. Nelson, raises this issue specifically as regards attitudes towards climate change (459). This form of hope, however, does not seem to fit into the virtue of hopefulness, if the virtue is "what it is to be stably disposed to act appropriately". Hope that leads to inaction is not virtuous. Nelson

juxtaposes hope to virtue, as a matter of fact (460), so I do not believe he is talking about the worth of hopefulness as a dispositional motivator. The hope he sees would qualify as vice. To truly possess the virtue of hopefulness—in the strict sense—requires an emphasis on calm, reasonable, sustained deliberation on the appropriate steps towards positive change.

Aristotle says we do not study ethics "in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good" (*NE* II.ii.1103b.25). If "hope matters" because "hoping supports continued efforts to bring about the future one desires" (Calhoun, 10), and if the future one desires is justifiable based on the goal of "becoming good" or increasing access to human flourishing and institutional justice, then there must be a moral obligation to perpetuate hopefulness specifically as a virtue.

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[i] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this reference.