Hoping With: an Editorial Introduction

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Hoping for a better collective future can be a form of relating to others. In fact, in times of crisis, when there is a need for collective power to overcome hardship, an invitation to hope, hoping together, is essential. Social movements are one of the many social mechanisms by which we can hope together. As put by Patrisse Cullors, a founder of the Black Lives Matters movement the goal of constructive movements is to "provide hope and inspiration for collective action, to build collective power, to achieve collective transformation." Sometimes such transformation is rooted in grief or even rage, but the glue is the hope that it is possible to reach for our visions and dreams together.

But hope, collective or otherwise, is a complex phenomenon with different manifestations at different times and contexts. This volume is a collection of reflections about hope and peace in times of crisis and struggle. It is a scholarly result of hoping with others through the shared project of philosophical reflection. The essays that follow here were originally presented at the annual meeting of Concerned Philosophers for Peace. They reflect upon hope while also demonstrating the importance of hoping with (and thinking about hope) in the company of others.

1   The Urgency of Hope

The urgency of rethinking hope and peace in response to present socio-political struggles stems from various sources. But to start the conversation, let me consider one aspect related to many of our most important problems: our newly found and unmatched ability to influence many others and be influenced by them with minimal effort. This ability originates from advancements in technology and our consequent heightened level of connectivity to others, which comes with an unparalleled set of problems and novel opportunities. The list of such problems includes but is not limited to the COVID 19 pandemic, growing mistrust in democratic institutions and the associated January 6th insurrections, the widespread presence of misinformation and conspiracy theories, and the complexities of dealing with imminent climate change disaster.

One might ask what any of these problems have to do with our connectivity levels. Well, we can take, for instance, the global spread of COVID-19. While it is true that this highly contagious virus requires minimal contact to infect a new person, explaining how fast this virus generated a pandemic involves attention to the ease and frequency of transportation worldwide. Thay controlling the spread of the virus required manipulating the frequency of our social interactions supports the importance of degrees of connectivity.

Similarly, when it comes to spreading other socially contagious phenomena, the importance of social connections becomes salient. With the popularity of social media, our virtual social relationships, up to sixth degrees of separation, can shape our exposure to various social disorders. Network theorists analyze the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories (Weatherall & O'Connor, 2019), the increase in hate crimes and radicalization (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010), or even the resistance to public health or environmental interventions (Luke & Stamatakis, 2012) to the topology of our networks and the frequency of our interactions with others.

Technology allows us to be more interconnected than ever before, and this is not all bad. Relying on others to solve complex problems is an effective tool for solving complex social issues. One novel factor, however, is the scale at which we can expand our social networks compared to any time before. This access to a much broader network can be confusing and dangerous, but it can also be constructive. Our closest experience with constructively exploiting higher connectivity levels at a mass scale comes from social movements. We have a lot to learn from past and present movements and their ability to use social connections to bring about sustainable change. In the United States, the Black Lives Matter movement and the #Metoo movement exemplify movements that amplified their momentum by exploiting what social media had to offer in terms of social connections. Now the question is, in a world where both insurrections and constructive movements are possible and more likely than ever before, how should we hope for a better future.

Let me start the discussion about hope by reflecting on the idiosyncratic challenges of living in the age of pandemics, insurrections, and social movements. My goal is to help us see the importance of social connections to social change in even our conceptual toolbox regarding social transformation. I compare and summarize two discussions about the political value of hope: one in Western modern political thought and the other in non-violent movements and their subsequent philosophy. I follow Michelle Moody-Adams' conviction that visionaries and intellectuals of constructive social movements ground political hope in collectives rather than in individuals, as Western political

philosophy tends to do. However, I suggest that the proper interpretation of a collectivist hope requires attention to the people with whom we hope.

2   Hope, Stability, and Individualism

Modern Western political philosophy takes hope to be the pillar of any stable political system. Philosophers like Thomas Hobbes ground political hope in individuals and their self-oriented desire to avoid conflict, violence, and death. They explain the connection between hope and stability by emphasizing individuals' willingness to maintain a political system that satisfies this basic necessity.[1] However, striving for stability does not exhaust the political value of hope. Hope can also destabilize political systems and do so constructively. In fact, the history of various peaceful and non-violent social movements proves the significance of hope in destabilizing oppressive social and political systems. These movements persuade their participants that hoping for a better collective future is a necessary ingredient for progress and growth. Hope in this sense is a relationship of trust that brings and keeps us together.

In addition to their focus on the destabilizing capacity of hope, social movements diverge from the Hobbesian approach by grounding hope in collectives rather than individuals. I call this kind of hope "collective."[2] But before discussing collective hope, let me elaborate the sense in which hope for Hobbes is grounded in individuals. For Hobbes and many of his successors, individuals' hope to avoid violence and conflict is the reason for their willingness to cooperate. Even those like Hume and Spinoza who avoid such a doleful picture of humanity agree that social and political systems are stable only if they satisfy our hope to avoid the state in which trust and cooperation are impossible and everyone has the incentive to use violence. This effort of avoidance, they argued, makes a stable political system, even an oppressive or a tyrannical one, desirable for everyone regardless of their social position or relative benefits they derive from the system. Hobbes characterizes hope as simply individuals' "expectation of good to come" (Elements, 9.8). In his account, hope is

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1   Here I focus on Hobbes, but this description also applies to Hume, Rousseau, and many others. For instance, Hume does not worry too much about a war of all against all. Instead, he believes that coordinating our actions or norms of cooperation can do the work. But even for Hume, there is a worst-case scenario, in which we mis coordinate, and we all want to avoid at all costs. A similar story can be told about Rousseau.

2   I am borrowing this distinction from Michelle Moody-Adams' recent book Making Space for Justice.

constitutive of trust which is simply a "passion proceeding from belief of him from whom we expect or hope for good, so free from doubt that upon the same we pursue no other ways" (Elements, 9.9).

Hobbes's approach merits the label of individualism because it relies on individuals shared, yet independently and naturally formed, hopes and fears. Nothing about one's social position, history, experience, relations, etc. changes such fundamental needs. Moreover, such shared hopes and fears are self-oriented, which is both a virtue and a vice for Hobbesian political philosophy. It is a virtue in the sense that it assumes very little about individuals yet provides a coherent explanation. It is also a vice because it fails to explain how other-oriented or contingently formed shared hopes can be politically important.

Hobbes's understanding of political hope is also reductive. He reduces the hope's instrumental value to a narrow and static conception of stability. However, most lasting political systems are indeed very fluid and constantly changing. They evolve and adapt to endogenous and exogenous changes and find ways to avoid degeneration in times of crisis. More importantly, such adaptivity sometimes requires destabilizing institutional, political, or cultural practices that hinder flexibility and growth. Social movements are critical social mechanisms through which such adaptivity, growth, and change are possible (see Anderson, 2014; Tilly, 2006). One way these movements implement change is through altering the networks of social relationship and trust (Della Porta & Diani, 2020). They bring together people who were previously separated and merge their networks of cooperation. These movements give people reasons to hope together and see each other as potential sources of political opportunities or likely allies for collective action.

It is worth noting that unlike Hobbes's hypothetical state of nature, constructive social movements often start from a stable, even resilient, oppressive system in need of change. Although these oppressive systems avoid the war of all against all, they do so by exposing a smaller fraction of their population to various harms of oppression.[3] As Iris Young argues, such harms involve violence, marginalization, exploitation, powerlessness, and cultural domination[4] (Young, 1988). Thus, even though the collapse of such an oppressive system is in no one's best interest the status quo can be utterly unbearable for the oppressed. An expansive analysis of such stable social systems, one that

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3   For a similar discussion see King's analysis of "obnoxious peace".

4   She calls this cultural imperialism which indicates the dismissal of the concerns of the oppressed groups in the evolution of cultural practices. It also means that the existing cultural practices and norms that guides the life of the oppressed can be used to further their marginalization and be a tool for further violence.

matches Hobbes' conception of stability at the expense of a marginalized group, is Charles Mills depiction of "the racial contract" (1997). Mills provides a historical account, one that allows for various contingencies, that explains the likely emergence of such polity, its resilience, and its stability.

In what sense can hope be collective? In an oversimplified model of an oppressive system, one might argue that the oppressed share a collective sense of hope for, say, liberation. This hope is obviously not a shared and natural feature of all involved parties, as Hobbes's individualistic hope requires. Not only do the oppressors not share the hope for change, but the hopes and desires of the people who bear the burden of oppression are as heterogenous as they are. The facts that different social groups experience oppression differently and that we are simultaneously members of multiple social categories can even further complicate this picture about common hopes (Young, 1988). Also, different levels of access to social and material resources can alter what would be the proper object of hope among the oppressed. For instance, the experience of oppression among women of color is likely to be meaningfully different from the experience of oppression among white women, even controlling for income and education (for similar arguments see Davis, 2003; Khader, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989). This difference in experience implies different struggles as well as different hopes or strategies for change (Combahee River Collective, 1986).

Despite the heterogeneity of individuals and their hopes or fears, sustainable forms of social and political progress happen. More importantly, a social movement almost always supports every instance of social moral progress (Crutchfield, 2018).[5] If hope is the motivator for such change, as social movements activists and intellectuals suggest, then we need an alternative account of hope that accounts for such heterogeneity and fluidity of hopes and dreams. A famous example of an alternative approach to hope is Martin Luther King's Jr. distinction between finite and infinite hope when he states, "We must accept finite disappointment but never lose infinite hope." One way to understand infinite hope, in Moody-Adams' interpretation, is something that "persists in spite of experiences that might be expected to extinguish hope if we assume (wrongly) that the only kind of hope that makes sense is hope that seeks empirical evidence for reasons to persist" (2022, p. 233).

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5 Take for instance the Abolitionist Movement, the Civil Rights Movements, the Women Suffrage Movement, etc.

Moody-Adams suggests that infinite hope is an instance of collective hope. She emphasizes that the key to understanding collective hope is attention to shared identities, shared stories, and shared goals.

> We can appeal to people's capacity to accept a shared social identity; when we encourage the readiness to interpret important episodes and events in light of that identity; and when we assist efforts to articulate shared goals and then to collaborate on collectively imagining what the world might look like if those goals were realized. (p. 233)

Moody-Adams is correct in her conviction that when they exist, homogenous shared identities that allow their members to merge their interpretations and coalesce their goals are undeniable engines of social change. However, in the age of social media and the internet, it seems more clear than ever that heterogeneous and fluid identities with members who cross the boundaries of multiple social identities still create change. That is so even when there is no single narrative, unified goal, or homogenous social identity on which we can rely.

3   Collective Hope

The non-individualism of collective hope, or in King's words, infinite hope, is best understood in contrast to its individualistic alternative. For instance, for Hobbes, the object of political hope is shared among all individuals, while very little might be found constant and shared among the members of any organic social collective. Thus, mapping the object of collective hope to individuals leads to a relation of one to many. It is unclear whether there is any unified object for collective hope or whether there needs to be one for hope to serve its destabilizing function. The same goes for collective goals. Despite the intuitive appeal of ascribing a unified goal to collectives, scholars of social movements suggest that such goals bear no explanatory value in the change process (Gamson, 1989). Also, when unified goals or locally shared hopes are present, they are highly contingent and responsive to circumstances. Finally, collective hope is distinct from its individualistic alternative since it is not formed independently of others. It is formed in virtue of connections with others and is sensitive to the contingencies of those connections.

The heterogeneity and fluidity of the content, its contingency, and its interdependence make collective hope indispensable to our analysis of social change. It is impossible to replace collective hope with what happens in individuals' minds and explain its role in motivating change or destabilizing social

systems. At least, this is impossible without extensive empirical data about the contingencies of individuals' desires or decisions at each moment. This irreducibility of collective hope is enough to expel the charge of individualism. However, the irreducibility argument can imply that there is no meaningful connection between the content of individual hopes that can motivate change. Thus, there is a disconnect between individuals and collectives, and there is no unifying prescription about hope such that following it can inspire change. Needless to say, King's invitation to resist despair does not match this conclusion about collective hope.

4   Hoping That vs. Hoping With

The disconnect between individuals and collectives disappears when we focus on the relation of hope in addition to its object. In other words, although there might be nothing that we all hope for, one thing we can all do to resist despair is to stay and hope together. In a very minimal sense, one stands in a relation of hope with others when one allows the contingencies of their connection to influence the object or target of one's hope. We alter who we hope with by managing our social interactions or the modes through which we relate to others. By reframing the conceptual space, we can go beyond the dichotomy of individuals' psychology and groups with their seeming independence from their members. Participants and scholars of social movements support breaking this dichotomy by urging attention to social ties and relationships. For example, Charles Tilly argues that instances of political action such as social protests "often consist[s] not of (just) living breathing whole individuals but of groups, organizations, bundles of social ties, and social sites such as occupations and neighborhoods" (2005, p. 62).

Even though King did not frame it this way, the invitation to not surrender infinite hope is more than an urge for a psychological commitment one maintains in isolation. It is also an invitation to maintain our connection with people with whom change is a real possibility. Accepting this invitation results in a change in the broader network of social relations and is a significant step towards change. The power of social movements to destabilize oppressive systems comes from their ability to alter social networks (Heydari Fard, 2022). With the right level of connectivity, even small contributions or acts of disobedience can have significant effects (for example, see Fithian, 2019). We achieve this level of connectivity when we provide access to our networks of trust, cooperation, and communication by associating with various collectives (Diani & Mische, 2015).

The #Metoo movement exemplifies a case in which changing our social connections destabilized oppressive norms. Arguably, the legal, political, and conceptual reframing of sexual harassment and its harms in the 1970s, although very important, failed to provide a safer space for women in the workplace. But as Catherine MacKinnon (2019),a legal scholar and activist, rightly points out, real change happened only with the collective social intervention of the movement. In harmony with MacKinnon, empirical evidence suggests that women's willingness to report instances of harassment significantly increased after the #MeToo movement.[6] The change that facilitated this was that victims had a new assurance that their network would not retaliate or tolerate retaliation against them. Empirical data also suggest a greater rate of arrests in response to such reports before and after the movement (Levy & Mattsson, 2019).

One might argue that ultimately, movements like the #Metoo or Black Lives Matter have a clear goal and an ideal to hope for. However, it is important to note that such conformity in goals is the byproduct of networks of trust and solidarity not vice versa. At best there is a feedback loop between the emerging goals and the birth of solidarity and alliance networks. Over time and in different contexts these goals and the successful strategies to achieve them vary significantly. For instance, in the United States, cities or neighborhoods with the most active and well-connected participants experienced the greatest increase in the use of body cameras after the protests in 2020. Active locations had an additional 15% to 20% decrease in police homicide before and after the Black Lives Matter protests (Campbell, 2021). In fact, the larger and more frequent the protests, the wider the gap between the homicide rates before and after the protests (Campbell, 2021).

Another potential concern is that without attention to the content of hope or the goal of movements constructive and destructive movements can be indistinguishable. In other words, the goal for which they are fighting is the most salient difference between Black Lives Matter or #Metoo and the January 6th insurrection. But again, the goal of these movements is not independent of the networks of social relationships in which they are embedded. Black Lives Matter is a response to the fragmentation in the networks of trust, care, and protection. This fragmentation allows for the isolation of people of color to the extent that their experience of violence has had little effect on the rest of society. Thus, the significance of the movement is its ability to reorient our focus and expand our networks of care and protection such that harm to these

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6   According to Levy & Mattsson (2019), there was an increase in reporting of sexual crimes by 10% in the first six months after the movement which persisted over time.

communities would not go unnoticed. Thus, given the democratic ideals of inclusion, this movement's network structure and its process of expansion are very much positive. The same, however, cannot be said about the January 6th insurrection or its participants' insistence on exclusion and the supremacy of an already dominant racial group.[7]

5   Conclusion

Social marginalization and exclusion from networks of support and cooperation is at the heart of many forms of oppression. Thus, constructive social movements are the ones that fill the structural holes and reconnect marginalized individuals and communities to the rest of the society. This reconnecting can involve various hopes, goals, or tactics that might not be shared among those who desire change. In fact, there might be very little to be said about the content our hopes that would meaningfully result in a sustainable social or political progress. But, one thing that we can do and has a meaningful effect beyond our individual contribution is to be mindful of people with whom we hope for a better future. Without saying much about how we should identify the right people to hope with, in this chapter I argued that making a difference requires attention to the relational aspect of hope.

6   Precis of the Volume

The upcoming chapters are philosophical reflections on the distinctive problems of our time. Each of these chapters is an original paper in response to what came before the insurrectionary riot of January 6th through the lens of peace and non-violence philosophy. The contributors engage with the ideas of hope and peace in light of concrete problems such as the spread of misinformation and fake news, growth of authoritarian ideology, threat and response to genocide, public health crises, and various threats to peace around the world. But conceptually, the following chapters are divided into four parts.

The first section of this volume includes original work by eminent American scholars of peace and non-violence. Barry Gan, in Chapter 2, contextualizes the darkness of the present time in a broader historical narrative. He also urges

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7 For a more detailed discussion about ways to distinguish movements see Anderson, 2012, 2014 and Heydarifard, 2022.

us not to forget the role that both we individuals and the United States play in this more comprehensive narrative. In Chapter 3, Paula Smithka centers her analysis on the spread of misinformation and its role in generating political turmoil. She suggests that critical thinking and other seemingly obvious personal habits can bolster our ability to remain close to the truth. In Chapter 4, William Gay elaborates on ways through which the language of hope can promote peace and justice.

The second section focuses on ideas of authoritarianism and resistance. Rentmeester, in Chapter 5, brings our attention to polarization in our social networks and its interaction with ideology. He discusses the role of social movements in addressing problems resulting from the ideological fragmentation of society. In Chapter 6, Merriam discusses conflicting interests at the national and global levels for maintaining peace and the resulting dilemmas for resisting authoritarianism. Chapter 7 focuses on moral and pragmatic constraints on the mode and intensity of resistance. Wilson suggests a path forward despite these constraints. In Chapter 8, DiLorenzo examines the interactional aspects of resistance between the authoritarian regimes and the participants of civil-resistance movements.

The third section of this volume engages with various current domestic and global issues. In Chapter 9, Layton discusses the threat to peace resulting from the spread of misinformation and fake news. Layton also lays out ways citizens can resist this threat by encouraging epistemic responsibility. In Chapter 10, Poe highlights the relationship between privilege and injustice and the need for introspection and accountability or even hoping for a better future. She emphasizes the heterogeneity of a social category like women in terms of their experiences and struggles. Lal, in Chapter 11, brings back our attention from the social and political back to individuals' most inner peace and hope. Finally, in Chapter 12, Rehman and Santhakumar trace a relational notion of peace in medieval philosophy.

The final section of this volume includes reflections from practitioners committed to hope, peace, and non-violence. In Chapter 13, Tahvildary discusses the practical benefits of restorative meditation in building peace and repairing collective hope. In Chapter 14, Taft shares her experience with transnational non-profit organizations in Mali and Ecuador, making space for action and hope. She argues in favor of a procedural and relational approach to creating organic hope in the face of hardship. She draws from Hannah Arendt to discuss the dangers of evaluating human relationships in terms of their utilities, even when they serve a greater good.

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