Chapter 1
Hope in Ancient Greek Philosophy

G. Scott Gravlee

Because of the things we have enunciated, Simmias, one must make every effort to share in virtue and wisdom in one's life, for the reward is beautiful and the hope is great.—Plato, Phaedo 114c–d

A coward is a pessimistic sort of fellow, for he fears everything. But a courageous man is the very opposite, because confidence implies hopefulness.—Aristotle, NE 3.7, 1116a3

Abstract This chapter aims to illuminate ways in which hope was significant in the philosophy of classical Greece. Although ancient Greek philosophies contain few dedicated and systematic expositions on the nature of hope, they nevertheless include important remarks relating hope to the good life, to reason and deliberation, and to psychological phenomena such as memory, imagination, fear, motivation, and pleasure. After an introductory discussion of Hesiod and Heraclitus, the chapter focuses on Plato and Aristotle. Consideration is given both to Plato's direct comments on hope and to the narrative contexts of his dialogues, with analysis of Plato's positive and negative representations of hope, hope's relationship to reason, and Plato's more psychological approach in the *Philebus*, where hope finds a place among memory, recollection, pleasure, and pain. The chapter then reviews Aristotle's discussions of confidence, hope, and courage, observing that although Aristotle does not mention hope as a virtue, he does note its importance to human agency and deliberation and as a foundation for the further development of virtue. The chapter concludes that discussions surrounding hope in ancient Greek philosophy are rich and challenging and can serve as a lively stimulus to further exploration of the concept of hope.

G. S. Gravlee (✉)
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Mount Union, Alliance, OH, USA
e-mail: gravlegs@mountunion.edu

1.1   Introduction

Acknowledgement of the importance of hope—and its ability to both comfort and betray us—can be found in the earliest Greek literature. However, while there is a growing body of scholarship on hope that draws from classical Greek literary, artistic, and historical sources (Caston and Kaster 2016; Chaniotis 2012; Kazantzidis and Spatharas 2018), scholarship on hope that engages with ancient Greek philosophical texts has been much less extensive. In this chapter, I aim to illuminate some ways in which hope was significant in the philosophical work of classical Greece. The philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, and others emerged amid a robust ancient Greek concern with hope, and so they share some of the traditionally ambivalent Greek views on the value of hope. But these philosophical approaches also add something new. Although they provide us with few dedicated and systematic expositions on the nature of hope and its place in a good human life, these philosophies nevertheless offer important steps towards an increasingly sophisticated set of views relating hope to the good life, to reason, and to psychological phenomena such as memory, imagination, fear, motivation, and pleasure.

1.2   Early Greek Literature and Presocratic Philosophy

To begin, it will be helpful to recognize the complex context in which Greek philosophy comes to the topic of hope. Perhaps the best known of the early Greek references to hope is found in the story of Pandora, as told by Hesiod in *Works and Days* (lines 50–105; see also *Theogony*, lines 565–615). After Pandora's jar is opened, a host of evils escape, with only Ἐλπίς remaining.[1] Hesiod's characterization of ἐλπίς is notoriously open to interpretation. It is unclear whether the presence of hope in the jar implies that it is also an evil, or whether the fact that it remains behind suggests it was meant to be a good, a consolation for the accompanying evils. Earlier in the story, Zeus describes his gift broadly as "an affliction in which they will all delight as they embrace their own misfortune" (57–58, West trans. 1988)—a common critique of hope, and an expression that captures the ambiguities at the core of the story. Both *Works and Days* and the *Theogony* version of the story illuminate connections between suffering and comfort, gain and loss, and in this sense the central symbols of the myth—including Ἐλπίς—are likely to be deliberately ambiguous.

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[1]The language itself adds complexity to the Greek history of hope. The Greek term typically translated as *hope* is ἐλπίς (*elpis*). However, ἐλπίς by itself often indicates not a hope for good, but simply *expectation* or *anticipation*, which could be for either good or evil (Plato, *Laws* 644c–d; see also Cairns (2016, pp. 17–24); Kazantzidis and Spatharas (2018, pp. 5–7)). When referring specifically to hope, classical Greek writers sometimes employ modifications such as εὔελπις (hopeful) or ἐλπὶς ἀγαθή (good hope), but sometimes the meaning must be taken from the context.

This ambiguity or duality is characteristic of many references to hope in early Greek stories and poetry (Cairns 2016; Day 1991). Among the playwrights, Sophocles is often cited: "Wandering hope brings help to many men, but others she tricks" (*Antigone* 616, Wyckoff trans., in Grene and Lattimore 1954). Even Solon's *Prayer to the Muses* 33–36, which is generally considered a warning against "empty" or "light-weight" hopes, permits the metaphor of lightness to also function as a *lightening*, in the positive sense of alleviating a burden. As this suggests, the relief and comfort of hope is often paired in Greek literature with its unreliability. So although Bacchylides of Ceos in his *Olympian Ode for Hieron—Chariot Race* calls hope "treacherous," he also advises us to "have two predictions in hand" when looking to the future (lines 75, 78–81, Lattimore trans. 1960). Not only should we be wary of hope's allure and unpredictability, and so expect to live only one more day, but we should at the same time foster the thought of prospering for many more years.

This ambivalence surrounding hope in early Greek literature corresponds to themes in the philosophy of Heraclitus, the Presocratic thinker most well-known for his embrace of paradox and opposition. Heraclitus uses the term ἐλπίς in two fragments:

> Unless he hopes for the unhoped for [ἔλπηται ἀνέλπιστον], he will not find it, since it is not to be hunted out and is impassable. (22B18)

> Things unexpected [οὐκ ἔλπονται] and unthought of await humans when they die. (22B27, McKirahan trans., in Curd 2011)

Post has argued that these two fragments are a reflection of Heraclitus' overall philosophy, in which hope plays a "central role" (2009, p. 229).[2] The significance of hope in Heraclitus has two aspects. First, many of the Heraclitean paradoxes revolve around a tension between hiddenness and revelation that parallels our experience of hopefulness. Hope arises in situations where we do not know what will happen, and yet hope is not simply ignorance. To hope is to not know but to act as if one knew, to be motivated or sustained by an imagined knowing of an unknowable future, or to have what Pettit calls "cognitive resolve" in the face of uncertainty (2004, p. 159). This dual nature of hope, which sits between the known and the unknown, mirrors Heraclitus' claim that the world, like a harmony, is "composed of things at variance" (B8), and it connects back to themes which permeate the Pandora story. Pandora's jar itself is a mechanism for concealment and subsequent disclosure. Hope almost reveals itself along with the other contents of the jar, but ultimately remains hidden under the edge of the lid. Hope is like an oracle (and like the sayings of Heraclitus), which "neither speaks nor conceals but gives a sign" (B93). This half-hidden aspect of hope creates curiosity and attraction, which can mislead, but which can also serve as important principles of human motivation.

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[2]As McKirahan's mixed translations suggest, whether ἐλπίς in these fragments signifies hope or mere expectation is a matter of some debate (Wheelwright 1959, pp. 131–132, 137–138; Kahn 1979, pp. 210–211; Freeman 1948). Post provides a broad framework for understanding ἐλπίς here as hope, and his approach introduces important themes, including not only the dual nature of hope, but also the relation of hope to rationality, trust, motivation, and the afterlife.

Second, Post argues that Heraclitus employs a methodology of hope. B18 states that in order to discover what is hidden we must "hope for the unhoped for." But how is this possible? How can we hope to understand the workings of nature, which "loves to hide" (B123), and the mysteries that follow death, which are "unexpected and unthought of" (B27)? If we would follow the advice of Democritus, one of the few other Presocratic philosophers who directly addresses ἐλπίς, we would hope only for what seems rational or understandable, for "The hopes of right-thinking men are attainable, but those of the unintelligent are impossible" (68B58, Freeman trans. 1948; see also B185, B292). Heraclitus takes a different tack. We are to seek out that which is unforeseen and unattainable, and so laudable hope is not connected to rationality. Instead, Post argues, hope is connected to trust. As Heraclitus points out, "Divine things for the most part escape recognition because of ἀπιστίη ['unbelief', McKirahan; 'lack of trust', Freeman]" (B86). Instead of opening ourselves to the "common" principle that explains and governs the world, we live as if we had our "own private understanding" (B2; see also B89), closing ourselves off from the world and returning to our own familiar thoughts. We will never find the unexpected unless we hope for it (B18), trusting in an outcome and in possibilities we cannot foresee and that are unfamiliar.[3] In this way, hope and trust work together to enable us to expect the unexpected (B18), and to open us to a revelation of the divine (B86). Among the most unexpected and divine mysteries of human existence is death and the potential afterlife (B27), which, as Post states, is "an ultimate object for hope" (2009, p. 233), and which we will see is also an important locus for hope in Plato.

1.3   Plato

The dramatic form of Plato's dialogues suggests two complementary approaches to understanding Plato's views on hope. First, we can identify texts where Plato directly comments on hope. In addition to a number of brief passages in the *Laws* and elsewhere, Plato provides a more extended account in the *Philebus,* where he examines hope as a kind of pleasure and links it to memory and imagination. Second, the narrative contexts in which Plato's philosophical expositions are embedded mean that a more complete understanding of Plato's views will require us to look at how he uses the concept of hope in the dramatic contexts of his dialogues.

Although I will ultimately argue that Plato holds a positive view of hope, we should first recognize where Plato was also part of the more skeptical or ambivalent Greek tradition. In the *Timaeus* creation story, for example, Plato describes ἐλπίς as having been placed together with passion (θυμός: anger, spiritedness) in the trunk of the human body, both thereby being physically separated from human reason, but

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[3]For a more recent discussion of trust and openness in relation to hope, see Webb (2013, esp. pp. 399–401).

each being distant from reason in opposite ways (69d–e). While passion (θυμός) is stubborn and hard to sway, an emotional state which isolates us from outside influences, hopes are easily influenced ("easily led astray", 69d) and involve an emotional investment in the future which leaves us susceptible to manipulation.[4] In the *Laws*, Plato likewise associates hope with an intellectual fault, pairing it with opinion (ἐλπίδων καὶ δόξης, 864b), linking them together with ignorance (863b–c), and describing them as unreliable guides regarding the good—both ἐλπίς and δόξα aim at the good, but miss.[5] Thus, hope may lead people to act wrongly when they pursue something that is falsely thought to be good. Such ignorance (like pleasure and passion also) "often prompts every man to take the opposite course to the one . . . which he *really* wishes to take" (863e, Saunders' emphasis, in Cooper 1997).[6]

As Plato states earlier in the *Laws* (863b–d), ignorance varies in its seriousness. As forms of ignorance, so also do hopes and opinions. At one end of the spectrum, hope misdirects our efforts, but does not corrupt our character or threaten the social order—as in the case of Socrates himself, who was deceived by the "wonderful hope [θαυμαστῆς ἐλπίδος]" he had concerning the writings of Anaxagoras (*Phaedo* 98b). In other cases, hope accompanies a confidence which exacerbates an arrogant character (*Laws* 649b). When this is joined with the power to carry out one's intentions, the faults of hope enter the most serious category, where ignorance fueled by "impractical expectations [ἀμηχάνου ἐλπίδος]" (*Republic* 494c) becomes a source of "serious and barbarous wrongdoing" (*Laws* 863c). Plato notes that "it is among these men that we find the ones who do the greatest evils to cities and individuals" (*Republic* 495a).

Foolish and unrealistic hopes can lead to harmful ambitions, but they can lead to destructive behavior in the opposite way as well—through the nurture of idleness and apathy. To illustrate this, Plato draws a parallel between political and medical hopes. Citizens who are not adequately educated or governed tend to adopt laws which repeatedly need to be amended. Because they avoid addressing the need for more fundamental political improvements, such citizens,

> live like those sick people who, through licentiousness, aren't willing to abandon their harmful way of life. . . . Their medical treatment achieves nothing, except that their illness becomes worse and more complicated, and they're always hoping [ἐλπίζοντες] that someone will recommend some new medicine to cure them. (*Republic* 425e–426a)

Such hopes support unsustainable behavior which may be perilous in both medical and political contexts.

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[4]Translations of Plato will follow those in Cooper (1997), with occasional modifications.

[5]The association of hope with passion and with opinion may reflect Greek ambivalence on another issue: whether hope is more like an emotion or a cognitive state. On this issue, see the Introductory to Kazantzidis and Spatharas (2018), and Notes 10 and 15 below.

[6]Martin, commenting on Groopman (2003), likewise identifies false hope as that which "interferes with the hopeful person's engagement with and ability to pursue her own values" (2008, p. 50).

1.3.1   Building a Positive Platonic View of Hope

One common feature among Plato's negative portrayals of hope is its association with ignorance or a lack of reason. But of course not all hopes are false or irrational, and there are a number of places where Plato closely connects hope with rational justification and philosophical argument. This is especially evident in the narrative contexts of the *Apology* and the *Phaedo*.

In his final *Apology* speech, between the initial exhortation to "reflect in this way, too, that there is good hope [πολλὴ ἐλπίς] that death is a blessing" (40c), and the concluding encouragement to the jury to "be of good hope [εὐέλπιδας] as regards death" (41c), Socrates presents an argument specifically intended to show that these hopes are rational. For our purposes, the persuasiveness of the argument itself is not of primary importance. Indeed, any doubt we might have about the argument is integral to the conclusion that we can *hope* (but not be certain, 42a) that the afterlife is good. What is important is that Socrates puts forward an argument at all, that his hopefulness is given rational justification. We have here a picture quite different from the *Timaeus*. Hope in the *Apology* is not simply wishful thinking or an irrational emotion, but it is the result of thoughtful reflection—and so it appears that the boundary between hope and reason, which in the *Timaeus* was set by the gods who made us, is not so fixed after all.[7]

Even for those familiar with the *Phaedo*, it may be useful to demonstrate the extent to which hope permeates the dialogue and how closely it is connected with reason and argument. Socrates opens the *Phaedo*'s "apology" (or defense) as follows:

> [L]et me try to make my defense [ἀπολογήσασθαι] to you more convincing than it was to the jury. . . . Be assured that, as it is, I expect [ἐλπίζω] to join the company of good men. This last I would not altogether insist on, but if I insist on anything at all in these matters, it is that I shall come to gods who are very good masters. That is why I am not so resentful, because I have good hope [εὔελπίς] that some future awaits men after death. (63b–c)

And soon after:

> I want to make my argument before you, my judges, as to why I think that a man who has truly spent his life in philosophy is probably right to be of good cheer in the face of death and to be very hopeful [εὔελπις] that after death he will attain the greatest blessings yonder. (63e–64a)

The tone here is one of characteristically Socratic caution regarding philosophical matters. Socrates claims no knowledge, and he will not insist that what he says is true or certain, but he will give reasons (a "defense", an "argument") for his hopes. The first set of reasons is intended to show that the body is a hindrance to knowledge acquisition and that therefore the philosopher should look forward to the liberation

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[7]The other consideration given at the end of the *Apology*, Socrates' observation that his divine sign has not opposed his actions in court (40a–c), is not so much a reasoned argument as it is an expression of trust. Indirectly, this trust provides another kind of reason to hope (as in Meirav 2009).

of the soul from the body. In concluding these arguments, Socrates again uses the language of hope and links it to his argument:

> It seems likely that we shall, only then, when we are dead, attain that which we desire and of which we claim to be lovers, namely, wisdom, as our argument shows. . . . And if this is true . . . there is good hope [πολλὴ ἐλπίς] that on arriving where I am going, if anywhere, I shall acquire what has been our chief preoccupation in our past life, so that the journey now ordered for me is full of good hope [ἀγαθῆς ἐλπίδος]. (66e–67c)

The second set of reasons Socrates gives for being hopeful in the *Phaedo* consists of the series of arguments for the immortality of the soul that form the central part of the dialogue (70c–107a). Following Socrates's lead, Cebes phrases the goal of these arguments in terms of hope:

> If indeed [the soul] gathered itself together and existed by itself . . . there would then be much good hope [πολλὴ ἐλπὶς καὶ καλή], Socrates, that what you say is true; but this requires a good deal of persuasive argument [παραμυθίας] and trust [πίστεως]. (70a–b)

Cebes's claim, confirmed by Socrates, that holding a philosophical hope for the survival of the soul will require "a good deal" of persuasion and reassurance,[8] contrasts with Plato's characterization in the *Timaeus* of hope as "easily led" into place. These philosophical hopes require more persuasion, are more closely connected with reason, and are therefore more stable than the hopes described in the *Timaeus*. At the conclusion of Socrates's second set of arguments, Cebes does indeed say that he is persuaded, but Simmias's more cautious response (107a–b), commended by Socrates, reminds the reader that Plato does not intend the arguments in the *Phaedo* to produce certainty, but to provide a rational foundation for a philosophical hope.

With these things in mind, let us return to the question of the evaluation of hope. We saw earlier that one feature of Plato's critique of hope was an emphasis on its irrationality. Yet now we have seen that Plato closely ties Socratic philosophical hopes to rational argument. Since Socrates functions in the *Apology* and the *Phaedo* as a positive model of hopefulness, reason, and moral integrity (*Phaedo* 118a), we might conclude that Plato, like Democritus, considers hope to be commendable or virtuous—a risk worth taking (*Phaedo* 114c–d)—when the outcome is probable or likely, as determined by a process of philosophical justification. Perhaps it is only unlikely hopes that should be discouraged, since they will be virtuous neither intellectually nor (recalling the arrogance and licentiousness of *Republic* 494c and 426a) from the standpoint of practical action.

Promising as it seems, this approach will not be enough to characterize positive hope in Plato. This is because there are passages in which Plato makes positive mention of *desperate* hopes, that is, hopes which are irrational in the sense that they are quite unlikely to be fulfilled. In the *Laws*, for example, Plato describes the

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[8]The Greek terms παραμυθίας and πίστεως have a range of overlapping meanings which can include reassurance, encouragement, and explanation. On the significance of trust (πίστις) in the *Phaedo*, see Miller (2015).

response of the Athenians when they found themselves in a desperate military situation during the Persian invasions:

> No one, they thought, would come to help them. They remembered the previous attack . . . no one had assisted the Athenians then. . . . [and] they expected [προσεδόκων] the same thing to happen this time. . . . They could think of only one means of salvation, and it was a thin and desperate one; but there was simply no other. Their minds went back to the previous occasion, and they reflected how the victory they won in battle had been gained in equally desperate circumstances. Sustained by this hope [ἐλπίδος], they began to recognize that no one but they themselves and their gods could provide a way out of their difficulties. All this [together with the fears that coexisted with this hope] inspired them with a spirit of solidarity. (*Laws* 699a–c)

Here, ἐλπίδος (in contrast to προσεδόκων) clearly marks a desire for an *unlikely* future good. And yet, Plato suggests, this desperate hope played a positive role in helping to sustain the Athenians and inspire them to action. Thus, although desperate hopes are likely to be false or misleading, such hopes are sometimes fulfilled (as on the "previous occasion" here), and even if they are not, they still may have beneficial psychological and practical effects.

Desperate hopes can be held not only in the context of battle, but also, and perhaps more importantly for Plato, in the context of philosophical discourse. At *Republic* 453d, responding to Glaucon's request to explain the social arrangements of the model city, Socrates compares this daunting task to the predicament of Arion, who despite a similarly daunting situation was rescued from the sea, according to Herodotus, by a dolphin: "Then we must swim too, and try to save ourselves from the sea of argument, hoping [ἐλπίζοντας] that a dolphin will pick us up or that we'll be rescued by some other desperate means." Socrates here encourages his friends to engage in the difficult tasks of philosophy with an attitude of perseverance and hope. As in the *Laws* passage above, Plato indicates that even desperate hope can have a positive value. It spurs us on to challenging philosophical work which we might otherwise avoid out of a sense of philosophical despair.[9]

In both the *Laws* and *Republic* passages, the function of desperate hopes is a practical or moral one. Such hopes are justified not by the probability of their fulfillment, but by the effect on the ones hoping. Unlike the hopes of the licentious medical patient (*Republic* 425e–426a), these hopes motivate the agent to act courageously.

So, where do we stand? The positive role of desperate hopes should not lead us to conclude that reason is unimportant. Rather, we should recognize that reason plays multiple roles in the formation and justification of hopes, and that assessing the likelihood of realizing the object of hope is only one of these. Indeed, more important to Plato may be a second, broader, role for reason, that of helping us to

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[9]See also *Meno* 86b-c. Although hope is not mentioned explicitly in the *Meno*, it is clear that Socrates is arguing against epistemological despair and in favor of a philosophical hope the positive value of which comes primarily from its effect on the agent's moral character and from its ability to motivate us to action—we will be "braver and less idle" (*Meno* 86b). An appeal to pragmatic benefit appears also in Plato's approach to trust in the *Phaedo* (Miller 2015, pp. 163–170).

form the aims of our hopes. Although in a sense such aims are determined by desires, Plato argues that these desires should be guided by a reason that "has calculated about better and worse" (*Republic* 441c; see also 441e, 442c; *Meno* 77b–78b).[10] My suggestion, then, is that Plato's texts provide us with three components relevant to the evaluation of hope, the first two of which reflect the two roles of reason just mentioned:

1. The predictive rationality of the hope (its probability or attainability)
2. The moral rationality of the hope (its integration into philosophically justifiable aims related to the good; its metaphorical "direction")
3. The motivational power of the hope (its ability to sustain us and spur us to action).

Indeed, if we look more carefully at several of the passages where Plato critiques hope, we find that the missing rationality is not only of the first "predictive" kind, but is often more fundamentally of the second "moral" kind. So in the *Timaeus* (69d–e), pleasures and pains are criticized for the direction in which they move us, tempting us towards evil or causing us to flee what is good. That hopes are "easily led astray" (69d) is also a directional metaphor, naturally understood to mean that our hopes are easily influenced to aim at the wrong objectives. The *Laws* passage (863b–864b) also places emphasis on direction. Hope and opinion miss their aim at the good not only because they may aim too high (at something unattainable), but also because they are not aimed in the direction of the good in the first place (863e, 864b). Hoping well is not only about whether or not the hope is likely to be fulfilled. It is also about whether or not the hope is directed towards a good or worthy aim. Indeed, the latter is likely to be of more concern to Plato than the former, inasmuch as he consistently emphasizes the importance of moral character over concerns about external goods or outcomes. As Plato argues extensively in the *Republic* (Books 2–4), it is better to be just than to be unjust, even if the practical or external outcome does not reflect the goodness of one's character. It seems, therefore, that Plato would be more concerned about a poorly directed hope than about an unlikely hope. Indeed, in the *Republic* even reason itself is judged by Plato to be "either useful and beneficial or useless and harmful, depending on the way it is turned" (518e–519a).

Another way to conceptualize the "direction" of one's hopes is to talk in terms of what one desires or loves. What we love affects what we hope for. Plato links hope and love together in the *Phaedo*, where we are reminded that the philosopher is a lover of wisdom who, like other lovers, orients their hopes towards the object of their love:

> Many men, at the death of their lovers, wives or sons, were willing to go to the underworld, driven by the hope [ἐλπίδος] of seeing there those for whose company they longed, and being with them. Will then a true lover of wisdom, who has a similar hope [ἐλπίδα] and knows that he will never find it to any extent except in Hades, be resentful of dying and not gladly undertake the journey thither? (*Phaedo* 68a)

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[10]Kahn (1987) argues that reason itself incorporates a desiderative aspect. Compare Cairns' observation that opinion (δόξα) has an affective aspect (2020, p. 20).

Love not only provides direction here, but it also works together with hope to motivate action. The lover is "driven" or carried by their hopes to seek that which they love—in the case of a philosopher, to seek wisdom, or a vision of Forms (*Symposium* 210d–212b). As Aristophanes concludes in his *Symposium* speech, in moving the lover in the direction of the beloved, with the aim of uniting them together, "Love promises the greatest hope of all [ἐλπίδας μεγίστας]" (193d).

As we have seen in this section, philosophical hope is tied to a rational process of determining what is likely and of discovering the good, and it is tied to the motivation and aims of a lover of wisdom. This is underscored by Plato's consistent portrayal of Socrates as a hopeful figure (*Euthyphro* 15e–16a; *Phaedo* 98b; *Republic* 453d; *Philebus* 61b).[11] Hope and hopefulness are characteristic of the Socratic practice of philosophy, and they are central to the character of the Socratic philosopher, and to Socrates in particular. In these ways, the hopes expressed by Socrates in the *Apology* and the *Phaedo* are "fundamental hopes" in the sense put forward by Blöser and Stahl (2017)—they are constitutive of the practical identity of the one hoping, such that "losing hope would require giving up important aspects of their identities" (p. 346).

The ancient Greek approach to hope was traditionally cautious. However, although Plato does voice concerns about hope, his overall attitude towards hope is positive. Hope is built into Plato's positive portrayal of a life of philosophy. What might account for this shift in attitude? One important consideration relates to the trustworthiness of what Meirav (2009) identifies as "external factors" that distinguish hope from despair. More archaic Greek frameworks often characterized these external factors (typically the gods or fate) as unknowable or uncontrollable, and as Cairns notes, this "shared outlook that emphasized the limitations of human beings' abilities to influence their own lives for the better" contributes to a "broadly pessimistic assessment of *elpis*" (2016, p. 43; see also p. 39). In contrast, Plato placed more emphasis on the intrinsic rewards of human virtue, and where he did not, he is more trusting of external influences on human affairs. So, as Socrates argues in the *Apology*, a good person cannot be harmed in the ways that matter most (30c–d, 41c–d), and the benefits of being just in the *Republic* are defined primarily intrinsically (444d–445b). In this sense, external factors play less of a role in the good human life. Yet even when our well-being is impacted by external factors, these are regularly characterized as broadly trustworthy. So, in the *Republic*, Plato re-conceptualizes traditionally capricious deities as good and unchanging (379a ff.), and in the *Apology* Socrates characterizes the gods as "upright" and "true judges" (41a; see also 41d; *Phaedo* 63b–c; *Philebus* 40b). Besides the gods, Plato discusses a second external locus of trust: reason itself (*Phaedo* 89c–91c).[12] When arguments

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[11]Forte, commenting on *Philebus* 61b, also notes that, "Plato's intention is for Socrates to serve as an example of true hope" and that "the life of philosophy is one of true, pure hopes" (2016, p. 290, 293).

[12]Carpenter (2006) argues for the fusion of these two loci of trust, noting that Plato's view of god is highly rationalist in nature, roughly equivalent to mind or intellect (*Philebus* 28d–30d).

appear to mislead or contradict, Socrates notes, people are tempted to believe that, "there is no soundness or reliability" in them (*Phaedo* 90c). In contrast, Socrates argues that we "should not allow into our minds the conviction that argumentation has nothing sound about it." Instead, we should continue to trust in reason and move forward, believing "that it is we who are not yet sound and that we must take courage and be eager to attain soundness" (90d–e).[13] Thus, Plato is able to have a more positive attitude towards philosophical hopes, to the extent that they are entrusted to the integrity of the philosopher's own virtue, to the fair oversight of just and reasonable gods, and to the ultimate reliability of reason itself.

1.3.2 Plato's Psychology of Hope

Besides these evaluative attitudes towards hope, Plato also provides the beginnings of a "psychology" of hope, situating hope within a broader set of theories about the soul (*psychê*) and its activity. Plato's most extensive direct discussion of hope along these lines is found in the *Philebus*. Here, Plato considers the relative value of a life of reasoning and understanding on the one hand, and a life of pleasure on the other, ultimately critiquing the claim that pleasure is the highest good. Hope in the *Philebus* finds itself in the midst of a host of related phenomena, including pleasure and pain, sensation and perception, memory, despair, and desire, and this complex context enriches the ancient Greek conception of hope.[14]

The relevant set of claims in the *Philebus* is as follows: Pain is the disruption of a creature's natural harmony or balance, often described as a process of emptying. Pleasure then is the corresponding restoration or filling (31d). Examples of pain include hunger, thirst, and the effects of extreme heat and cold (31e–32a), while pleasures are those processes (eating, drinking, cooling down, warming up) that restore an organism's balance. However, there is a more complex kind of pleasure: *Hopes*, Plato says, are pleasures that occur even though the relevant processes of restoration or filling have not yet happened. That is, hopes are pleasant even when they are not yet fulfilled. As Socrates paradoxically puts it, "the hope before the actual pleasure will be pleasant [πρὸ τῶν ἡδέων ἐλπιζόμενον ἡδύ]" (32c).[15]

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[13]For further discussion of this *Phaedo* passage, see Miller (2015). For a more general discussion of the connection between trust and hope, see McGeer (2008).

[14]I discuss in this section aspects of the psychology of hope in the *Philebus*, without further discussion of the evaluation of hopes, for which see, e.g., Frede (1985, esp. pp. 178–179), who argues that hopes can be evaluated from both an "intentional" standpoint (based on what we are hoping for) and from a "propositional" standpoint (as being true or false).

[15]Compare Philo of Alexandria (d. ca. 50 CE): "hope is . . . a joy before a joy" (*QG* 1.79). Kazantzidis and Spatharas (2018, pp. 11–14) include this Philo passage as evidence for a contrast between Stoic accounts of hope as an emotion (or a "preliminary" emotion, προπάθεια) and the more cognitive accounts of hope found in Aristotle and in Plato's *Laws*.

Because hopes are pleasant independently of the physical process of restoration, hopes must be pleasures "that the soul experiences by itself, without the body" (32c). Although all pleasures ultimately occur in the soul (35d), Plato makes a distinction between pleasures that *originate* in the body and are transmitted via perception to the soul, and pleasures that originate in the soul itself (Hackforth 1958, p. 61, 112; Frede 1992, p. 441). A pleasure such as hope that originates in the soul "depends entirely on memory" (33c), which is a "preservation of perception" (34a). The idea here is that, after memory preserves an initial perception, the soul, by recollecting (ἀναμιμνήσκω) what has been preserved, is able to reproduce that perception in the soul, even though the body is not currently undergoing any such experience. In this way, the recollected memory of a previous perception of filling (pleasure) is able to produce in us a current experience of pleasure, even when our body is not currently being filled. This is how hopes can be pleasant even when they have not been fulfilled (compare also Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.11, 1370a27–b27).

Memory is a key aspect of Plato's psychology of hope. Besides explaining the pleasure of hopes, memory also *directs* hopes (and in fact all desires as well, 35d). For Plato, desires are always directed at a remembered experience of filling, a past point of "contact" with what would restore our current emptiness (35b–c). As Frede states it, specific desires such as thirst are possible only because we have a "memory of the previous experience of fulfillment" (1985, p. 164). This creates a puzzle, which Plato raises but does not resolve, about how people can desire or hope for things they have never experienced. Plato appears to deny that such hope is possible (35a). In explaining this, Frede provides the example of a newborn infant, who "cannot distinguish between hunger and stomach-pain," suggesting that a newborn with such perceptions cannot have a directed desire to eat food or to be given medicine, because he does not have the past experience to "know what he needs" (1985, p. 164). Without memory, the infant does not know what to hope for.

Aside from the case of the infant, Plato's view here might seem implausible. Clearly, people do in fact hope for things they have never experienced. Indeed, one might think that Plato would have been better served by connecting hopes more generally to imagination, rather than specifically to memory, since, as Day notes, "the object of . . . hope is sometimes something which is wholly imaginary, the like of which [the person hoping] has never perceived before" (1969, p. 95) Day (1969).

In Plato's defense, several things might be said. First, it seems that what is required in order to lend direction to our hopes is simply that we have a memory that is relevantly *similar* to what we currently hope for. To use one of Plato's own examples, the Athenians desperately hoping for victory in the *Laws* remembered how the previous victory "had been gained in equally desperate circumstances" (699b). Obviously, the Athenians could not have a memory of winning *this* battle, but they could have a memory of a previous victory in relevantly similar circumstances. Second, the Athenians need not have been personally present at the previous victory in order to have a memory of it. This is because desires and hopes can be conveyed to someone by another person, and memories can be socialized through storytelling, histories, and mythologies. Plato acknowledges this when he writes in the *Laws* of "the hopes [ἐλπίσιν] that every man should live by," exhorting each

person to "remember all this advice and never spare any effort to recall it vividly to his own mind and that of others" (732c–d; see also *Phaedo* 66b). Plato grants here that we can recall memories to the minds of others, that memory is not only an individual effort but is the responsibility of the community (and that part of what we should remember is to be hopeful). Thus, an individual can draw from cultural or social memory in order to create and direct a hope for something they themselves have never directly experienced.[16] This social approach to memory can help to explain a number of hopes expressed in the Platonic dialogues, including especially the hopes Socrates expresses regarding the afterlife, where Plato regularly uses mythology and storytelling as a way of recalling social or cultural memories in order to ground and direct hopes.[17] In some cases, such as the myth of Er (*Republic* 614b–621d), the narratives of the afterlife which Socrates offers are even reputed to be based on the memories of a specific person, socialized or made collective by their retelling.[18]

Such stories, when they are presented as memories, have the advantage of being able to sustain hope better than stories presented as mere imagination or conjecture. This is because when we view an object of hope as merely imaginative or conjectural, our sense of the *possibility* of fulfillment will be tenuous, and what would otherwise be a hope is likely to remain a mere wish or desire. However, if we think of a story as a memory, then such a wish can more easily be transformed into a hope, because our sense of what is possible is buoyed by the belief that *it has happened before*. In the case of the Athenians at *Laws* 699, it is the memory of previous victory in "equally desperate circumstances" that allows the Athenians to think that victory is possible, by reminding them that it happened in similar circumstances in the past. Without that memory, the Athenian response would have been a mere wish, rather than a desperate, but real, hope. If this is granted, then we can say that personal and social memories contribute to hope in at least three ways: by making hope pleasant as our soul makes contact with the object of hope through memory, by providing direction for our hope in this same way, and by showing us that the attainment of the object of our hope is possible.

Through the concept of memory, it is also possible to link the psychological discussion of hope in the *Philebus* to Plato's broader approach to philosophy itself. Plato argues in the *Meno* (80d–86c) and the *Phaedo* (72e–76d) that the acquisition of philosophical knowledge is essentially a process of remembering or recollection (ἀνάμνησις). Connecting this with the *Philebus* suggests that philosophical recollection may play an important role in enabling and directing philosophical hope, that the philosopher is able to be characteristically hopeful because the whole process of

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[16]For an excellent discussion of what he calls "shared memory" (pp. 51–52), see Margalit (2002, esp. Chap. 2 and pp. 94–104). See also below on philosophy as a social practice of remembering.

[17]On myth as both memory (μνήμη) and recollection (ἀνάμνησις), see Latona (2004).

[18]Er, the "messenger" of the story (614d), is specifically "forbidden to drink from the water" which causes forgetfulness (621b).

doing philosophy is itself a process of remembering.[19] In light of the importance of dialogue as a spur to philosophical recollection (*Meno* 85c–d; *Phaedo* 73a), along with Socrates' self-description as a "midwife" who helps others to recollect (*Theaetetus* 148e–151d), it might be added that, for Plato, philosophical recollection is often a *social* process of remembering—and so also a social process of hoping.[20]

The *Philebus* is a complex and relatively technical dialogue, and there is much scholarly discussion of precisely how to understand Plato's claims, especially regarding true and false pleasures (and therefore regarding true and false hopes). One final matter is worth mentioning. Some scholars have argued that Plato's comments on hope in the *Philebus* should be understood as applying only to *confident* hopes. So Frede has argued that "Plato does not speak of *any* kind of hope but of those where there is a definite expectation that they *will* be fulfilled" (1985, p. 170, original emphasis). Elsewhere, in order to distinguish hopes from mere "daydreams," Frede argues that hopes must "anticipate future states of affairs as facts" (Frede 1992, p. 445). In addition, Frede understands the *pleasure* of Platonic hope as being tied to one's confidence in the outcome, rather than simply to the recollection of a memory (1985, p. 165).[21] Although Frede's view is widely accepted, there are good reasons to suggest that it is not the whole story. Vogt, for example, in considering what we picture to ourselves when we hope, argues that "the kinds of agency-imaginations Plato discusses are not predictions" (2017, p. 45). Vogt views hopes as motivational, and she notes that "attitudes involved in motivation are different from prediction" (p. 45 n. 33).[22] More discussion of this issue is needed, but for our purposes here, we should simply note that adopting Frede's view would narrow the range of hopes affected by Plato's comments in the *Philebus*.[23]

1.4   Aristotle

Aristotle, like other ancient Greeks, had a complex view of hope. Because Aristotle is a key early source for virtue ethics, many later thinkers have used Aristotelian models to describe hope as a virtue. However, Aristotle himself does not consider

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[19]Forte appears to make a similar suggestion in his discussion of hope and the pleasures of learning (2016, pp. 291–294).

[20]On the importance of the social process of "building a community" of hope, see McGeer (2004, pp. 108, 125–126). Compare also *Laws* 732c–d, quoted above.

[21]One consequence of this view would be that desperate hopes could not be pleasant.

[22]Presumably, then, what would distinguish hopes from daydreams is not that hopes involve assertions or predictions, but that hopes involve motivations. Along these lines, compare Frede's approach with Pettit (2004), for whom substantial hopes "consist in acting as if a desired prospect is going to obtain" (p. 158). The commitment in Pettit is in terms of action, not belief (p. 162).

[23]More recently, Cairns (2020) has argued that the broad semantic range of ἐλπίς, along with its use in varying contexts in the dialogue, makes "the specific phenomenon of hope more difficult to pin down" (p. 19) in the *Philebus*.

hope in this way. In fact, the most extensive Aristotelian discussion relating hope to virtue is a series of considerations meant to show that hopefulness is *not* a virtue. Nevertheless, hope does play an important positive role in Aristotelian ethics, contributing to practical deliberation and to the development of virtue. In addition, Aristotle's observations regarding the psychology of hope continue to add sophistication to the Greek understanding of hope.[24]

1.4.1 Hope, Courage, and Confidence

As with Plato, we will begin with Aristotle's doubts about hope. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle contrasts hopefulness with the virtue of courage, observing that hopefulness can lead to confident actions which appear to be courageous, but are not motivated in the proper way. For example, when faced with stormy seas, both sailors and a courageous person are "fearless." On the one hand, a courageous person who lacks a sailor's experience, and has thus given up on being saved, will continue to be fearless regardless of the expected outcome. On the other hand, sailors are "hopeful [εὐέλπιδές] because of their experience" (*NE* 3.6, 1115b3–4).[25] That is, the skill and experience of sailors (and also mercenaries, *NE* 3.8, 1116b6 ff.) leads to hopeful confidence in a good outcome, and because they therefore have little fear to face, they also have little occasion to exercise the virtue of courage.

Aristotle mentions two other kinds of non-courageous confidence relevant to the discussion of hope. First, there are those who are hopeful not because they are skilled, but because "having won many victories over many people," they inductively conclude that they are likely to succeed in the present case as well (*NE* 3.8, 1117a9–12). Such people act confidently due to "having been fortunate often" (*EE* 3.1, 1229a19). Second are those who act confidently due to ignorance of the danger at hand. Such people, Aristotle says, are "not far removed from the hopeful ones [τῶν εὐελπίδων]" (*NE* 3.8, 1117a23). However, while the first two types of hopefulness involve some self-confidence (1117a24) due to skill or good fortune, this third type of near-hopefulness is based simply on ignorance of the circumstances. In all of three of these cases, because those involved are confident of a good outcome—that they "will suffer no harm" (1117a14)—there is simply no occasion to exercise the virtue of courage.

Despite these distinctions between hopefulness and courage, Aristotle does acknowledge connections between them, through the concept of confidence. Two passages help to illustrate this connection. First, at *NE* 3.7, 1116a3, Aristotle states

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[24]For a more extended discussion of the main points in this section, see Gravlee (2000). Other observations regarding hope in Aristotle can be found in Kazantzidis and Spatharas (2018, pp. 6–7, 11–14, 23). Cf. also Cairns (2020), whose discussion of both Plato and Aristotle highlights the semantic challenges of eliciting a psychology of hope from sources in ancient Greek philosophy.

[25]Translations of Aristotle will generally follow Barnes (1984) or Ostwald (1962), with occasional modifications.

that, "A coward is a pessimistic [δύσελπις] sort of fellow, for he fears everything. But a courageous man is the very opposite, because confidence implies hopefulness [εὐέλπιδος]." Here, if we add the implicit premise—that courageous people are confident—to the explicit claim that confident people are hopeful, we get the stated result that courageous people are hopeful (the "opposite" of a pessimist).[26] Second, speaking of young people, Aristotle states in *Rhetoric* 2.12 that, "Their hot tempers and hopeful dispositions [εὐέλπιδες] make them more courageous than older men are; the hot temper prevents fear, and the hopeful disposition creates confidence" (1389a26–28). Here, Aristotle states that hopefulness creates [ποιεῖ] confidence, and this serves in the passage as an explanation for how hopefulness can make a person more courageous. In both passages, confidence serves to connect hopefulness with courage.

In order to reconcile these last two passages with the previous distinctions we saw between hope and courage, we need to pay special attention to what one is hoping for, that is, to the *direction* of one's hopes. Courageous people can be hopeful, and even confidently so, but if we follow *NE* 3.6 and 3.8, they will have no occasion to exercise the virtue of courage when they are confidently hopeful regarding the outcome of their circumstances. Instead, as Duff (1987) has suggested, a courageous person, in acting courageously, must direct their confident hopefulness towards the intrinsic value of their actions or goals. Such actions and goals Aristotle broadly characterizes as τὸ καλόν, what is "noble," and a courageous person acts for the sake of the noble (*NE* 3.7, 1115b23; *NE* 3.8, 1116b3, 1116b31, and throughout), although they are likely to also have in mind more specific ideals that guide and direct their choices.

In addition to keeping clear both the distinctions and the connections between hopefulness and courage, we should keep in mind that hopefulness and confidence are also not precisely the same (although in the passages discussed above Aristotle's focus is on confident hopes). The distinction between hopefulness and confidence can be approached in Aristotle via the concept of distance. So, Aristotle notes that "Confidence [is] the expectation [ἐλπίς] associated with an appearance of safety being nearby.... We feel it if we can take steps ... to cure or prevent trouble." (*Rhetoric* 2.5, 1383a15–21). In contrast to this, Aristotle acknowledges that hopes can be either for what is near or what is far. So, we may have near hopes such as those of the sailors, who feel confident that they can "take steps" to avoid shipwreck, or we may have more distant hopes such as those we have for a child's life: "When we do call a child happy, we do so by reason of the hopes [ἐλπίδα] we have for his future," which can be known only after "a complete lifetime" (*NE* 1.9, 1100a3).

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[26]"[T]he courageous are confident, but not all those who are confident are courageous" (Protagoras, in Plato's *Protagoras*, 351a). This is consistent with Aristotle's views.

1.4.2 Hope, Fear, and Deliberation

According to Aristotle, hopefulness and confidence, although not the same, are characteristically found together. But hope has a similarly close relationship with fear. When we are resigned to our fate, such that we are genuinely without hope, like "those who have grown accustomed to terrible things, already having suffered everything and being coldly indifferent to the future" (*Rhetoric* 2.5, 1383a3), we also do not fear. Hope and fear both depend on our sense that the future is open, that there are possibilities, and when the future seems closed, or as the future transitions into the present and the past, both hope and fear are transformed—either fading into resignation, being redirected towards other goals, or being converted into the exercise of a courageous virtue which does not depend on outcomes.[27] For fear to be felt, Aristotle says in *Rhetoric* 2.5, "it is necessary that some hope [ἐλπίδα] of salvation remain" (1383a7). When the future appears open, when there is still hope, then there is also apprehension concerning that future: "And the sign of this is that fear makes one deliberate, and yet no one deliberates concerning things that are not hoped for [τῶν ἀνελπίστων]" (1383a3–8, my modification of Freese 1926).[28]

In this last passage, not only are hope and fear connected to each other, but they are also both connected to deliberation. Fear spurs deliberation, Aristotle says, and deliberation presupposes hope. However, although both hope and fear underlie deliberation, there is reason to think that hope plays the primary role. To see this, we can begin by observing that not only fear, but also confidence, can spur deliberation. So, in the case of the sailors, we can say with Aristotle that it is their confident hopefulness that enables them to "take steps" to prevent shipwreck. However, even where Aristotle claims that "fear makes one deliberate", he also makes it clear that in such cases both fear and deliberation are dependent on hope (1383a3–8). Thus, hope is the common factor involved in both confident and fearful deliberation. While fear does spur deliberation (and so it is not merely passive), so also does confidence, and both sources of deliberation are underwritten by hope. In this sense, hope is more fundamentally tied to deliberation than fear is.[29] This is

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[27]Thus, a courageous person at sea, who has lost hope for their life, is also "fearless . . . though not in the same way as sailors are" (1115a34–b2).

[28]It is partly this relationship between hope and fear that raises concerns about hope in post-Aristotelian philosophies, such as Stoicism, that were oriented towards *ataraxia* (tranquility, freedom from disturbance). Seneca, a later Roman Stoic, writes that, "Fear follows hope. Both belong to a mind that is hanging in suspense, a mind made anxious by expectation of the future" (*Ep*. 5.8, quoted in Rutherford 2003). On the significance of an open future for deliberation, see Aristotle, *De Int*. 9, 18b26–33: "if . . . everything is and happens of necessity . . . there would be no need to deliberate or to take trouble."

[29]Here, we should keep in mind the distinction made earlier between hope and confidence. We deliberate about "what we believe might be attained through our own agency" (*NE* 3.3., 1113a9–12). So, confident deliberations will consider immediate steps we can take towards a hoped-for outcome (or a courageous action) that is "near". Regarding more "distant" hopes, if the object of hope is unpredictable or outside our immediate control, we can still deliberate, but not

further supported by the observation that hope and confidence are more broadly characteristic of Aristotelian deliberation, motivation, and desire, for "in every case the mover is the object of desire, but the object of desire is either the good or the apparent good . . . that is achievable in action" (*DA* 3.10, 433a27–30, Irwin and Fine trans. 1995; see also 433b16, and *NE* 1.1, 1094a1–3). Fundamentally, for Aristotle, it is hope for the good, rather than fear of suffering, that moves us.

Given this, we can pause briefly to consider a point of comparison with Plato. I have argued that hope is closely tied to Aristotelian *deliberation*. Vogt (2017), in her discussion of the *Philebus*, has argued that hopes are also tied to Plato's concept of agency, but via *imagination*. In the *Philebus*, Plato describes imagination as a painter who creates images in the soul (39b). These images, when they concern the future, "are really hopes" (39e). Excellent hopers, Vogt argues, are those who not only are skilled at imagining scenarios that are attainable and rendered with appropriate detail, but who also react with pleasure to imagined scenarios that genuinely constitute a good human life. Once good "imaginative agents . . . dream of things that they can take some steps to bring about" (Vogt 2017, p. 47), they then can turn to a more Aristotelian deliberative approach (in line with Aristotle's observation that hope motivates deliberation), in order to pursue their hopes. In these distinct but complementary ways, both Plato and Aristotle emphasize the important role of hope for human agency.[30]

For the most part, the cases of Aristotelian deliberation and agency considered so far have been rather immediately concerned with things like physical safety (shipwreck, for example). However, it should be emphasized that for Aristotle good deliberation is an important part of both becoming and being a virtuous person, that is, of living a flourishing human life (*NE* 6.5, 6.9, 6.12–13, throughout). Recognition of this role for deliberation will enable us to better appreciate the significance of hope for Aristotle. Guided by practical wisdom (φρόνησις) and experience—and motivated by hope—good deliberation helps us to become more fully virtuous by recommending actions that will shape our "natural" capacities for virtue into more established character traits (*NE* 6.12, 1144b4–7).

This hope that motivates character change is more typical of the young than of the old, as we see in Aristotle's comments connecting hope with the natural virtue of *megalopsychia*—being high-minded or "great-souled."[31] Young people, Aristotle says,

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directly about the object of hope itself. Instead, we deliberate about our responses to various outcomes, or we consider intermediate steps about which we are more confident.

[30] So Vogt suggests that, "Agency-imagination may be something that good agents are good at, similar to the way in which Aristotelians think that good agents are good at deliberation" (2017, p. 46; see also n. 35).

[31] *Megalopsychia* is, Aristotle says, "the crown, as it were, of the virtues: it magnifies them and it cannot exist without them" (*NE* 4.3, 1124a1–3). That Aristotle has in mind here (1389a16–34) the natural virtue—an inborn trait not yet developed into a full virtue—is indicated by his emphasis on inexperience.

are trusting [εὔπιστοι], because they have not yet often been cheated. They are hopeful [εὐέλπιδες]; nature warms their blood as though with excess of wine; and besides that they have as yet met with few disappointments.... They are high-minded [μεγαλόψυχοι], because they have not yet been humbled by life and they are inexperienced in the force of necessity; moreover, there is high-mindedness in thinking oneself worthy of great things, a feeling which belongs to one who is hopeful [εὐέλπιδος]. They would always rather do noble deeds [τὰ καλά] than useful ones. (*Rhetoric* 2.12, 1389a16–34)

Aristotle mentions here two factors that contribute to hope and that connect it to trust and to *megalopsychia*. The first is a youthful lack of experience. Youthful hope, trust, and *megalopsychia* are all the result of not having encountered disappointment. This is the hope of good fortune, mentioned in the previous section. Second, Aristotle also suggests a physiological explanation for hopefulness, connecting it to warmth, which may be natural or may be induced by wine (*NE* 3.8, 1117a15; *EE* 3.1, 1229a20; *Problems* 30.1, esp. 954a12-955a29; see also Plato, *Laws* 649b). In addition, due simply to their age, young people are oriented towards an open future (*Rhetoric* 2.12, 1389a21–25).[32] Together, these factors provide a foundation for a hopeful disposition which grounds the natural virtue of *megalopsychia*. If to this we then add Aristotle's view that hopefulness provides a foundation for practical deliberation and agency—including deliberation that transforms natural character traits into more mature virtues—then we are led to an understanding of hopefulness in Aristotle that places it at the very core of the development of virtue.

1.5   Conclusion

In both what I have considered here, and in what I have not, there is much room for further scholarship on hope in ancient Greek philosophy. The philosophical history of hope often fast-forwards through ancient Greece. I have tried to show that this approach misses a rich and challenging philosophical discussion. Ancient Greek philosophy—especially as found in Plato and Aristotle—provides a set of critiques, proposals, case studies, and frameworks surrounding hope that are deep and complex, and which can serve as a lively stimulus to further exploration. Discussions of hope are bound together with reflection on many of the most significant aspects of human life: the mysteries of death, the cultivation of virtue and the human good, and the search for knowledge and understanding. Hope is connected to pleasure, trust, love, and courage. Hope sustains and motivates us, serving as a foundation for human agency. And although hope itself is not treated as a virtue, it underlies the

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[32]The comparative hopelessness of the old is tied to their "cold" physiology, to their experience with disappointment, and to the fact that their character traits have been rendered inflexible by long force of habit (*Rhetoric* 2.13, 1389b20–1390a9; *NE* 3.5, 1114a17–22). Nevertheless, Aristotle does sound a hopeful note for older people, suggesting elsewhere that the guidance of law can continue to be a positive influence on character development throughout one's life (*NE* 10.9, 1180a1–4).

imagination and deliberation needed to move towards ethical self-improvement and human flourishing.[33]

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G. Scott Gravlee (Ph.D.) is Associate Professor of Philosophy in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Mount Union, Alliance, Ohio, USA, where he teaches courses in the history of philosophy, ethics and medical ethics, and aesthetics. He earned a joint Ph.D. in Philosophy and Humanities from Stanford University and a B.A. in Philosophy from the University of Washington in Seattle. He is the author of "Aristotle on Hope" (*Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 2000), and he is currently working on a variety of projects in the areas of hope, peace studies, bioethics, and philosophy for children.