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How to theorize about Hope

Jack M. C. Kwong

Department of Philosophy and Religion, Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina, USA

Correspondence
Jack M. C. Kwong, Department of Philosophy and Religion, Appalachian State University, 114 Greer Hall, Boone, NC 28608, USA.
Email: kwongj@appstate.edu

Abstract

In order to better understand the topic of hope, this article argues that two separate theories are needed: One for hoping, and the other for hopefulness. This bifurcated approach is warranted by the observation that the word "hope" is polysemous: It is sometimes used to refer to hoping and sometimes to feeling or being hopeful. Moreover, these two senses of "hope" are distinct, as a person can hope for some outcome yet not simultaneously feel hopeful about it. I argue that this distinction between hoping and hopefulness is not always observed or fully appreciated in the literature and has consequently caused much confusion. This article then sketches what theorizing about hope looks like in light of this clarification and discusses some of its implications.

How should we go about theorizing about hope? The dominant strategy in philosophy has been to give it a reductive analysis. The standard or "orthodox" account, for example, sees hope as constituted by a desire and belief: To hope for an outcome is to desire it and to believe that the probability of its obtaining falls somewhere between 0 and 1, or in short, that its obtainment is possible. The general consensus among hope theorists, however, is that this analysis of hope is inadequate because it fails to capture and explain certain features of hope. Thus, some theorists have argued that the standard account cannot explain how hope is valuable (Bovens, 1999), how it shapes and structures our agency (Pettit, 2004), how it is distinguished from despair (Meirav, 2009; Milona & Stockdale, 2018), and how it explains the phenomenon of hoping against hope (Martin, 2014). To compensate for these inadequacies, theorists have accordingly proposed ways to improve the standard account by adding a third component such as mental imaging, cognitive resolve, external factor, or justificatory rationale. Despite the emendations, all of these theories remain reductive in nature.

This reductive approach to understanding hope has recently come under challenge (Blöser, 2019; Segal & Textor, 2015). According to these critics, hope is either a primitive mental state in that it cannot be reduced to a composite of belief, desire, and some other factor, or it is so diverse in manifestation that it is best construed as a family resemblance concept. For example, Claudia Blöser notes that "we should take seriously the fact that we hope in a great variety of ways and should question the search for elements that are common to all cases" (Blöser, 2019, p. 1). Interestingly, aspects of the reasoning behind these nonreductive approaches are similar to those used by the

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reductive theorists just described. The strategy is to identify some reductive account of hope and then to show that it fails to explain some feature usually associated with hope. While reductive theorists appeal to such a failure to motivate an alternative reduction, the nonreductivist ones take it to be an indication that hope cannot be reduced. For example, Segal and Textor argue that no current reductive account can explain hope's motivational force and conclude that hope is an ontologically primitive mental state.[1]

In this article, I argue that many of these theories of hope—reductive or not—are flawed in a shared weakness. They fail to recognize that the word "hope" is polysemous: When invoked, it refers to two related but ultimately distinct phenomena, namely, hoping and hopefulness. As I will argue, it is one thing for a person to hope, and another, for her to be hopeful about what she hopes for.[2] In the hope literature, this distinction is sometimes noted but more often overlooked when theorists formulate or assess accounts of hope. Once this distinction between hoping and hopefulness is acknowledged, the weakness in these theories will become evident: Theorists have been using desiderata that belong to one hope phenomenon in order to motivate or assess a theory pertaining to the other. Given that the explanatory target is misplaced, these theories essentially are talking past one another.

Another central goal of this article is to explore what theorizing about hope looks like once we distinguish between hoping and hopefulness. As a preview, I will argue that a better understanding of hope requires two separate theories, one to capture hoping and the other to capture hopefulness. Moreover, each will have its own distinct explanatory agenda. This article will be structured as follows: The first section will motivate and defend the idea that "hope" is polysemous in that it can be used to refer both to hoping and hopefulness and establish that these two senses of hope are distinct. Next, I will explain that this distinction is not adequately observed and considered in the current literature on hope. The third section will suggest how one might go about theorizing about hope in light of this distinction and to discuss some of the implications of this adjusted approach.

1 | "HOPE" IS POLYSEMOUS

There is a multitude of expressions involving the word "hope." Examples include: "I hope it does not rain"; "I am hoping that she will still come to the party"; "Hope is a dangerous thing"; "I have high hopes that I will get the promotion"; "Don't get your hopes up"; "Hopefully, it will not rain"; "I am hoping for a peaceful resolution to this conflict"; "He is hoping against hope that he will be cured from terminal cancer." All of these expressions are ostensibly about hope. Moreover, it is quite intuitive to take them to be about a single phenomenon and to attempt to identify the commonality behind them.

This, however, is a mistake. The word "hope" does not have a stable reference in the above instances. Instead, I contend that "hope" is polysemous in that it has two distinct senses. A helpful way to introduce this distinction is to consider that on the one hand, "hope" can sometimes be used as a verb to refer to something like a mental act, as in "I hope that we will soon have a cure for all existing variants of the coronavirus." Call this sense "hoping." On the other hand, it can be used as a possessive to refer to something that we have or feel, as in "I have hope (or am hopeful) that we will soon have a cure for all existing variants of the coronavirus." Call this sense "hopefulness." That these two senses of hope are distinct becomes clear when we consider them alongside one another as follows: "I hope we will soon have a cure for all existing variants of the coronavirus but I am not at all hopeful about it."[3] What this sentence reveals are two things: First, there is an outcome I desire to obtain and believe to be possible, namely, a cure for all existing variants of the coronavirus. I hope for it because I do not, say, want to be distanced from my family and friends and want life to regain some sense of normalcy. Second, despite having this desire, I do not feel very good or positive about its chances of obtaining. I may have learned from the news that the virus has been mutating at an alarming rate. To be sure, I believe that a cure, which I desire, is possible, which is why I am hoping for it. I just do not feel confident that it will be forthcoming soon, which is why I am not hopeful. Note that I may be wrong to feel this way about the cure's chances of obtaining; unbeknownst to me, epidemiologists may actually be making significant progress in achieving one. However, hoping and hopefulness concern *my take* on things, and not what is actually or may be the case.

The sentence "I hope that *x* but I am not hopeful about *x*" therefore is neither redundant nor senseless. Rather, it is informative, which by Frege's test, establishes that hoping is a distinct concept from hopefulness. We cannot conclude from the fact that a person hopes for some outcome that she is thereby hopeful about its chances of obtaining. Indeed, hoping is a neutral mental relation and is compatible not only with a person's having or lacking hope about the chances of the hoped-for outcome of being realized but also with her not having given any thought about such chances. Consider the following cases:

Death row

The death row inmate hours prior to the time of execution may hope to be pardoned by the governor but does not feel hopeful that it will happen. The inmate desires not to be executed and believes that there is a chance, however remote, that the governor will issue a pardon. However, based on the fact that such pardons are extremely rare and that there is, say, political pressure for the execution to be carried out, the inmate does not feel good about the chances that he will be granted a reprieve. The inmate hopes *without hope*.[4]

Competition winner

The oboe player stands among two other musicians awaiting the announcement of the winner of the competition in the woodwinds group. She certainly desires to win and believes that she stands a good chance of winning after giving what she thought was a stellar performance. After it is revealed that the third place award goes to the clarinet player, whom everyone regarded as the frontrunner of the competition, the oboe player becomes very hopeful that she will win. She hopes *with hope* as she waits for the announcement.

Direction giver

A tourist approaches a city dweller to ask for directions to a boutique shop in a nearby neighborhood. The city dweller is not familiar with the name of the shop but is not surprised given that new stores are popping up in this area almost every day. Unable to help the tourist, the dweller says, sincerely, that he hopes that she will find it, without thinking about her chances of success. He feels neither hopeful nor unhopeful. He hopes indifferently.

The above three cases demonstrate that hoping for an outcome is separate and distinct from feeling hopeful (or having hope). What unites them all as cases of hoping is that the primary individual in them—the inmate, the oboe player, and the direction giver—stands in a certain relation to an outcome.[5] Specifically, each individual desires that a certain outcome obtain and believes that it has a chance of doing so. The fact that each feels differently about the chances of achieving the hoped-for outcome, including the city dweller's not feeling anything at all about it, reveals that such feelings are not constitutive of hoping. Put differently, a person's attitude toward the chances of her outcome's obtaining is not essential to her hoping for it. In *Direction Giver*, the city dweller may not know, or even care about, how likely it is that the tourist will find the boutique. Yet, he hopes that the tourist will do so, perhaps as a way of stating his preference among the possible outcomes.

In terms of analyzing hoping, we see that the standard or "orthodox" account comes very close to being correct. According to it, to hope is to desire an outcome that is believed to have some chance of obtaining. A slight adjustment to it, however, has been proposed. Bovens notes that the two components that constitute hope under the standard account, namely, a desire and a belief, can potentially be latent in nature, which seems to imply that hopes too, insofar as they are composed of these two states, can be latent. Yet, he notes the oddity in claiming that a person can hope without her entertaining any conscious thoughts of her desire. As a remedy, Bovens proposes that hoping additionally requires a person to expend some mental energy on consciously thinking about some aspect of the desired outcome, such as fantasizing about its materializing. In the above examples, the death row inmate, the oboe player, and the city dweller all had occurrent thoughts about a desirable outcome and believed it to have some chances of being obtained.

In my view, Bovens's mental imaging account is an improvement over the standard theory. My only concern with his proposal is that he seems only to have positive and upbeat mental activities for the sort of mental imaging he has in mind. As he notes, "hoping has intrinsic value in that mental imaging provides for the pleasures of anticipation…." (p. 675) and the "mental play that is constitutive of hoping provides a satisfaction that one cannot attain from attending to one's actual circumstances" (pp. 675–676). This seems to be misleading. In *Direction Giver*, the city dweller arguably does not experience any pleasure or satisfaction in anticipating that the tourist finds her destination; he is indifferent. In contrast, the inmate in *Death Row* is in utter distress and terror to hope for a pardon and thinks that it is extremely unlikely to occur.[6] Nevertheless, Bovens's observation that hoping cannot be latent is helpful. My preference is to restrict mental imaging simply to a hoper's *registering* a desired outcome: To hope is to be consciously aware of a desire that is believed to have some possibility of obtaining (see Kwong, 2020). By registering a certain desire that she wants obtained, she can then decide what to do with it. In some cases, she may not do anything if the desired outcome is a fleeting one, frivolous and trivial in nature. In other cases, she may engage in activities like planning, anticipating, and worrying. For instance, if a runner hopes to take part in a marathon, she may well make plans to ensure that she has the stamina and strength for it. Such a minimalist conception of the kind of mental imaging that is required for hoping, I submit, accurately captures a wide variety of cases.

For present purposes, it is not crucial to settle which of the three above accounts—the standard account, Bovens's mental imaging account, or my registration account—is correct. Any of them, in my view, would confirm the distinction between hoping and hopefulness that I am urging. However, this endorsement of the standard account and its two variants represents a minority view in the hope literature. Most theorists reject the standard account as false or incomplete, arguing that it lacks the resources to explain certain central features of hope, such as how it structures and motivates our agency or is distinguished from despair. But these criticisms, as I will argue in the next section, are misguided because they fail to make the distinction between hoping and hopefulness and, in many cases, evaluate the standard account not as an account of *hoping* but as an account of *hopefulness*. But as I have argued, hoping is a distinct phenomenon from hopefulness. Once we uphold these two senses of hope, we will see that these criticisms in fact lack force, while the standard account emerges as a plausible theory of hoping.

Let us now turn our attention to hopefulness. Whereas hoping is directed at a desired outcome that a person believes can possibly be obtained, hopefulness by contrast is directed at the chances for such an outcome to obtain.[7] This difference between these two senses of hope is obscured by the fact that grammatically, both take the desired outcome as object. Consider the two sentences "I hope that my team wins the championship" and "I am hopeful that my team wins the championship." Though both take the proposition "my team wins the championship" as object, the former is about what I desire, namely, that the team wins, while the latter is about how I feel about the chances of that obtaining, namely, favorably.[8]

As a first approximation, to be hopeful is to be positively oriented toward the chances of a registered desired outcome's obtaining, where such a positive orientation consists in favorable thoughts and feelings. It is crucial to note that hopefulness *presupposes* hoping: In order for a person to feel good about the chances that her desired outcome will obtain, she must first have in mind an outcome that she desires (i.e., she must first *hope* for it).[9] According to the standard account, the desired outcome is believed to have a chance of obtaining, which implies that it also has a chance of *not* obtaining. Whether a person feels hopeful or not, then, depends on how a person views these chances.[10] If, for example, she believes them to be probable (but not certain), then she may feel good about them: She feels confident and assured, is not worried or anxious, anticipates the outcome's materializing, makes plans as if the outcome is obtained, fantasizes and daydreams about the outcome, etc. In other words, she engages in some of these activities and exhibits attitudes that fall under what Martin has called "hopeful syndrome" (Martin, 2014).

However, it must be emphasized that hopefulness is not essentially tied to a person's belief that the desired outcome has a high probability of obtaining. In some cases, a person may not feel hopeful even if she believes that the odds are favorable. For example, a person who is told and thereby sincerely believes that the odds of winning a prize in a lucky draw are high may not feel hopeful if she thinks she always has bad luck. Conversely, a person may still feel

hopeful even when she believes that the chances of her desired outcome materializing are extremely low. Martin's discussion of cases of hoping against hope is relevant: Cancer patients Bess and Alan both desire to be cured and believe that the chances of getting a miracle cure is around 1%. Yet, they hold different attitudes toward these chances. Bess is hopeful because she sees the 1% chance as representing a possibility for a cure, whereas Alan is much less hopeful because he sees the 1% as representing an extremely small or no chance of a cure. Whether or not a person is hopeful therefore depends on how she perceives the chances of her desired outcome's obtaining, favorably or otherwise.

Another way to get at the concept of hopefulness (with respect to a specific outcome), and to contrast it with hoping, is to think of it as *having* hope: A hopeful person is one who possesses hope. Here, hope is construed as a noun, as something that a person can have. What might this something be? One candidate is a desire that the hopeful person believes possible to obtain. But it would be a mistake to think so. Contrast a person who is hopeful with one who is in despair. Presumably, the former possesses something that the latter lacks. But it is false to maintain that the latter lacks the relevant desire. To tweak Martin's example, let us suppose that Alan despairs about his chances to be cured. Even so, that does not mean that he lacks the desire to be cured, an outcome that he still believes possible, however unlikely. It is more accurate to characterize Alan as possessing such a desire but also a despairing attitude toward the chances of its being satisfied. Indeed, the hope literature is filled with examples juxtaposing a pair of individuals, one who is hopeful and the other in despair (e.g., Red and Andy from *Shawshank Redemption*, Meirav and his wife in *Lottery Example*, Alan and Bess in *Cancer Patient*). These examples are meant to illustrate that the standard account lacks the resources to explain the difference between the paired individuals, though both are stipulated to have the relevant desire and belief.[11] In short, what the hopeful person possesses and what the despairing person lacks is *not* the desire for a certain outcome.

Instead, my suggestion is that what the hopeful person possesses, in addition to her relevant desire and belief, is a positive orientation toward the chances of the desired outcome's obtaining: She feels good and has good thoughts about her chances. By contrast, the despairing person has the same desire and belief but lacks such a positive orientation: She feels bad and has bad thoughts and feelings about her chances. An attractive feature of this suggestion is that not only can we explain what a hopeful person possesses and the despairing one lacks, we can also account for how people can exhibit different degrees of hopefulness. People can be characterized as being very hopeful, fairly hopeful, somewhat hopeful, etc., with respect to a desired outcome. Such differences in attitude can be explained in terms of how positive they feel about these chances and of the quality and quantity of their good thoughts and feelings.[12]

To conclude, I have argued in this section that "hope" is polysemous in that it is sometimes used to refer to hoping and, other times, to hopefulness. Hoping is a distinct phenomenon from hopefulness or feeling hopeful: The former is a mental relation directed at an outcome, which is desired and believed to be obtainable, whereas the latter is an attitude held toward the chances of such an outcome's obtaining. Hoping does not imply hopefulness, which is why a person can hope for some outcome but not feel hopeful about it. I earlier remarked that this distinction can sometimes be captured by thinking about hope as a verb and hope as a noun. This, however, is not always applicable and can sometimes be misleading. For example, some uses of "hope" as noun do not in fact refer to hopefulness (which incidentally contributes to the confusion in the hope literature, which I will detail later). Suppose a person is asked what she hopes for. Under my distinction, this is a question about hoping, about the kinds of outcome that she desires. She might then proceed to answer: "I hope that I will someday be a Supreme Court justice," "I hope to visit Alaska," "I hope I will master the Tango," etc. In light of her answer, it is quite natural to say that she *has* these hopes, which now construes "hope" as a noun. However, saying that she has these hopes, of course, is *not* to say anything about whether she is hopeful or not about them; we in fact cannot determine whether or not she feels hopeful about these hopes by merely being told that she has them. Therefore, hopefulness cannot always be captured by thinking of it in terms of hope as something that we have.

To preserve the distinction between hoping and hopefulness as a verb and as a noun, we can perhaps qualify that hopefulness is captured when we use the word in the possessive sense *without* preceding it with an article.[13]

While the person from the above example can aptly be characterized as having *these* hopes, she cannot, however, be characterized as having hope. This is to say, she may not have hope (read: she may not feel hopeful) that these hopes (read: what she is hoping for) will be obtained. This qualification can also be applied in the singular case. "I hope that I will be a surgeon someday" can be construed as "I have *a* hope that I will be a surgeon someday," which is surely distinct from "I have hope that I will be a surgeon someday." That they are distinct is evident when we ask for her reasons behind these expressions. As to why she has a hope to be a surgeon someday, she may well respond by saying that she enjoys working under intense and challenging conditions, that she values an occupation that saves lives, etc. By contrast, when asked why she has hope to be a surgeon someday, her explanation will be different: Medical school has proven to be much less difficult as she had thought, her first year in residence has been hectic but manageable, etc. The former answers tell us why she desires to be a surgeon, while the latter, why she feels good about her chances that her desire to be a surgeon will obtain.[14]

2 | CONFUSING HOPING AND HOPEFULNESS

Now that the distinction between hoping and hopefulness has been drawn, we are now in a position to see why contemporary theorizing about hope is misguided. Roughly, the argument is that the word "hope," as we have seen, is polysemous in that it can be used to refer to both hoping and hopefulness, which are distinct phenomena. Yet, theorists of hope fail to draw this distinction or if they do, fail to fully separate the two. Thus, their discussion of hope, which tends to shift back and forth between these two senses, are rooted in a confusion. In many cases, they are talking past one another, and setting faulty agendas for what a theory of hope is supposed to explain.

Let us begin by noting the titles of some works on hope: "The Value of Hope" (Bovens), "The Nature of Hope" (Meirav), "Philosophy of Hope" (Milona, 2018), "A Perceptual Theory of Hope" (Milona and Stockdale), "Hope and Its Place in Mind" (Pettit), "What is hope?" (Kwong, 2019), and "How Hope is Possible" (Martin). These titles give the impression that they are all concerned with the same phenomenon, namely, hope. It is not therefore surprising that each of these attempts would discuss and cross-reference others, where available, in order to lay out its explanatory agenda, and to motivate and defend its own account. Take Milona's recent encyclopedia entry on hope, for instance (Milona, 2020). After discussing the deficiency of the standard account of hope, he goes on to provide an overview of some recent theories aimed to improve it: Bovens, Pettit, Meirav, Martin, Milona and Stockdale, and Kwong (2019). All of these theories are assumed to be in conversation with each another in philosophizing about the same topic, and the tenability of each hinges on the extent to which it can improve upon the explanatory agendas of what other theorists hold to be the most pivotal in understanding hope.

To show that these theories are not always in real conversation with one another, I will examine some of them in detail, starting with Bovens's. In "The Value of Hope," Bovens is preoccupied with responding to the skepticism that hope has no value since it can only result in disappointment. As the imagined skeptic laments, "a life in which one has no hopes is better than a life in which one does have hopes" (p. 670). Bovens argues that hope has both instrumental and intrinsic value. My aim is not to assess Bovens's response to the skeptic but to determine what target he has in mind when he uses the word "hope." Here are some of his remarks regarding the target of his investigation. First, he characterizes the skeptic's position as follows: "Either way, I would have been better off not having hoped for anything and so it is always irrational to hope for something" (ibid). Second, he summarizes his own position by asking "Is mental imaging in conjunction with the proper belief and desire a sufficient condition for hoping?" and answering "I think so…Hoping *is* just having the proper belief and desire in conjunction with being engaged to some degree in mental imaging" (p. 674). Third, some of his reasons for thinking that hope has value reflect that hoping is his focus. As he notes, "hoping can be illuminating in that it invites us to reflect and rearrange this structure. Through hoping we spend a certain amount of mental energy on the projected states of the world and we may come to realize that what we were originally hoping for is not worth hoping for after all" (p. 673). Since hoping can engender new constitutive hopes, Bovens concludes that it has instrumental value.

Bovens goes on to identify other ways in which hope can have instrumental and intrinsic value, such as that it can help us counteract risk aversion (p. 671), facilitate the realization of the projected state of the world (ibid), and is constitutive of loving another person and having a sense of self-worth (p. 676). What is crucial to note, however, is that all of these remarks reveal that Bovens is concerned principally with the phenomenon of *hoping*, that is, with hope as something that we do. For him, what it is to hope is just to desire a specific outcome, to believe its obtainment possible, and to expend some mental energy on thinking about the outcome. More important, it is our conscious entertaining of these desired outcomes that enables us to have new hopes (read: desires) and to abandon others as incongruous. Similarly, it is thinking about some desired future state that allows us to go beyond our myopic focus on the particular risks associated with an opportunity.

None of these claims about hope's value concerns or presupposes hopefulness, or how we feel about the chances of the desired outcomes' obtaining; indeed, they make sense without appealing to the notion of hopefulness (or lack thereof). Consider a marathon runner who hopes to qualify for the Olympics trial. Her hoping for such an outcome motivates her to devise a long-term training plan to prepare for the race. Although she is physically capable of undergoing grueling training, she soon realizes, in devising such a plan, that doing so would be extremely time-consuming, and interfere with her other important goals such as pursuing a career in medicine. In light of this realization, she may cease to hope to compete in the Olympics trial, and instead hope to enroll in medical school. Notice, however, that hoping can engender hope without reference to the notion of hopefulness. That is, she can revise her constitutive hopes without giving any thought to whether she has been hopeful about any of these outcomes for which she hoped. For instance, when asked whether she was hopeful that she would qualify for the Olympics trial, she might well respond with any of the following: That it was too early to tell; that she was not feeling hopeful but might feel differently as training progressed and she gained more confidence; or that she has not even considered the question or does not think that it is relevant. As I argued above, hopefulness is not a prerequisite for hoping for some outcome.

Let us now examine Meirav's position in "The Nature of Hope." He begins by noting that someone "who hopes generally falls short of *believing* that a happy prospect will obtain." As an example, he observes that "a patient may accept that the probability of a cure in her condition is, say, ten percent" (p. 216). What Meirav appears to be discussing in using the word "hope" is the nature of hoping, specifically, the requirement that a person has to believe that there is some probability or chance of her desired prospect obtaining. However, in formulating the main concern of his article, he goes on to describe the person who hopes as someone who "typically displays good cheer, enthusiasm, and motivation, which seem difficult to justify without [the belief that the prospect will obtain]" (ibid). Thus, despite accepting that her chances of being cured are only 10%, the aforementioned patient harbors "an intense hope that expresses itself in high spirits, active cooperation with the doctors, and enthusiastic engagement in long-term creative or scholarly projects, in spite of the difficulties" (ibid). According to Meirav, the "seemingly paradoxical" problem is to explain how a person who hopes "can have reason to be cheerful and enthusiastic about a prospect, *without* having reason to believe it will obtain" (ibid).

Notice the shift in target in Meirav's statements about hope. When he speaks of an intense hope with positive features, he no longer refers to hoping, but to what a person experiences when she *has hope* or is hopeful. All of the features he mentions—for example, good cheer, high spirits, enthusiasm, and motivation—are ones associated with hopefulness, and are what a person typically experiences when she feels good or positive about the chances of her desired outcome's obtaining. That the target of Meirav's use of "hope" has shifted is confirmed by his lottery example, in which he buys a lottery ticket and "come[s] home full of enthusiasm, showing the ticket to [his] wife and wanting to share with her [his] great hope in winning a sizeable monetary prize" (p. 223). Although his wife has the "same desire to win, and assign[s] winning the same probability," she does not share his enthusiasm (p. 224). This difference in attitude is characterized by Meirav as "I am *hopeful* of winning, and she is not" (ibid, my italics).

Meirav thus uses the word "hope" sometimes to refer to hoping and, other times, to hopefulness. This in and of itself is unproblematic because "hope," as I noted above, is polysemous. What *is* problematic, however, is that Meirav fails to distinguish these two senses of "hope" and inadvertently switches back and forth between them, treating them as if they are equivalent. The consequence of such a treatment is that he erroneously

appeals to considerations revolving around one sense of hope, namely, hopefulness, as a standard for evaluating and assessing accounts of hope in the other sense, namely, hoping. More precisely, he expects the standard account and Bovens's account, which are both ostensibly accounts of *hope* but really are accounts of *hoping*, to be able to explain why hope has the aforementioned positive features (i.e., hopefulness). As he argues, both are false because an appeal to belief and desire, and in the context of Bovens's account, mental imaging, is insufficient to explain why a hopeful person is enthusiastic and in good spirits. Consequently, Meirav rejects both of them in favor of his "external factor" account.

Meirav's argument, I contend, rests on a mistaken assumption. Despite using the same word "hope," he and advocates of the accounts he rejects are *not* in fact concerned with the same subject matter: Meirav, with hopefulness and the others, with hoping. As such, we cannot expect an account of hoping to explain both the nature of hoping *and* to account for a hopeful person's positive experiences. The latter is a distinct explanatory target that lies outside the purview of an account of hoping. As I argued above, hoping is distinct from hopefulness and does not entail experiences associated with the latter. Indeed, if we keep in view the distinction between the two senses of "hope," we can see that Meirav's query, far from being "seemingly paradoxical," turns out to be rather sensible and important: What reasons might a hoping person have to be hopeful? Put another way, why would someone who hopes—even when there is a small chance of her desired outcome obtaining—still occasionally feel hopeful? Construing Meirav's query this way helps to clarify that hoping is separate from hopefulness and that further conditions must be met in order for a person who hopes also to be hopeful. As I argued above, one answer is that the hopeful person, in addition to hoping, feels good about the chances that the hoped-for outcome will obtain. The job of an account of hopefulness, as opposed to an account of hoping, is to identify what these reasons are.[15]

In short, the problem with Meirav is that he assumes himself to be engaging in the same conversation as the defenders of the standard account and as Bovens but in fact, he is not. The other theorists are concerned with the nature of hoping, whereas Meirav, with hopefulness. For Meirav, the standard account is deficient because of its inability to explain hopefulness's positive features and needs to be supplemented by a third factor. However, it is never the job of the standard account to explain so much. The standard account *qua* an account of hoping thus emerges unscathed from Meirav's objections. This conclusion, I believe, has significant implications for research, for criticisms of the standard account like Meirav's have grown into something of a cottage industry in the hope literature.[16] The typical strategy is: Identify some feature of hopefulness, use it to argue against the standard account (as false or inadequate), and seek to improve it with an additional condition (the reductive approach[17]) or reject it wholesale (the nonreductive approach[18]).[19]

As a final example, I will consider Segal and Textor's account of hope and illustrate why their conclusion that hope is a primitive mental state also rests on a confusion.[20] Segal and Textor's argument can be succinctly summed up as follows: Hope is inherently motivational. In their view, current analyses of hope, which construe hope in terms of a belief, desire, and a third factor, lack the resources to explain how hope can be motivational. This failure shows that there is plausibly no analytic definition of hope. Insofar as "definitions of concepts of mental states and activities in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions are hard to come by," we should not "expect hope to be definable" (p. 15). The argument is mistaken, as can be shown in the evidence provided. One of the examples cited by Segal and Textor to illustrate that hope has motivational force involves Reinhold and Hillary, a couple of mountaineers who have a strong desire to climb to the summit, a feat which both acknowledge to have only a slim chance of success. Midway through their arduous climb, they pause to reassess their chances of reaching the summit, which is still some distance way. Both "believe that they have a fifty percent chance of success and a fifty percent chance of failure" (p. 3). Whereas Hillary has "lost heart" and is thereby likely to return to the base camp, Reinhold "hopes that he will make it to the summit, hence he is likely to go…Hope can break the deadlock" (p. 4).[21]

On the surface, when Segal and Textor use the word "hope," they seem to be discussing hoping or hope as something that we do. As we just saw, Reinhold, in their words, hopes that he will make it to the summit, and it is this hoping, they contend, that has motivational force. However, when they later discuss this example in a different context to illustrate how the two climbers differ, they use "hope" at a critical juncture of their argument to mean

something *other* than hoping. As they remark, Reinhold "persists with the climb because he remains optimistic *about his chances of success*" and "*has enough hope* to keep going" (p. 12, my italics).[22] My contention is that Segal and Textor are now talking about hopefulness, in particular, about Reinhold as being or feeling hopeful. As I have defined the term earlier, to be hopeful is to feel good about the chances of a desired outcome's obtaining. To feel optimistic about his chances of reaching the summit surely is a positive orientation toward such chances. Moreover, a telltale sign that hopefulness is the target of "hope" is when it is used in the possessive sense (without an article), or as something that we have. In this case, Reinhold's principal difference from Hillary is that the former has more hope than the latter, which is an alternative way of saying that Reinhold is more hopeful than Hillary. In sum, hope's motivational force, in this example, is derived *not* from the fact that one hopes, but from the fact that one is hopeful.

Like Meirav, Segal and Textor use the two senses of "hope" interchangeably to mean both hoping and hopefulness. As we saw, there is evidence to suggest that what they have in mind is that hopefulness has motivational force. The problem is that their conclusion that hope is a primitive mental state relies heavily on the premise that no current theory in the literature can explain how hope can be motivational. Yet, some of the theories they consider—including the standard account and Bovens's—are accounts of hoping.[23] To expect them to be able to explain a separate phenomenon, namely, hopefulness, exceeds their purposes. Segal and Textor are not able to discredit the standard account or Bovens's, and the hypothesis that hope (as something that we do) is a composite mental state remains very much untouched. At best, hopefulness or hope as something that we possess might well turn out to be a primitive state but this claim would have to be established on grounds different from what Segal and Textor have offered.

3 | RESETTING THE AGENDA

Let us return to the theme of the paper. How should we theorize about hope? I will sketch below a proposal that incorporates the crucial considerations. The first step is to note that "hope" is polysemous and can be used to refer to hoping or hopefulness. It should also be kept in mind that hoping is a distinct concept from hopefulness, and that the fact of a person's hoping does not necessarily mean that she is also hopeful; she can hope *with* hope or she can hope *without* hope. An important consequence of observing this distinction is that there will *not* just be a single "theory of hope." In order to theorize properly about hope, there will need to be two theories: One for hoping and one for hopefulness.

The second step is to determine which of these two senses of hope is the target of one's interest and query. Once this question is settled, caution is advised to avoid equivocating between the two. As we have seen, it is easy to do so, thanks to the fact the same word "hope" is used for both but often used, implicitly but specifically, in a qualified sense. That hoping and hopefulness share similar properties is also a source of confusion. Consider the statement "hope is a good thing." Already, this statement, with its unqualified use of "hope," is ambiguous because it could mean either "it is good to be hopeful," which is about hopefulness, or "it is good to have hopes,"[24] which concerns hoping. Plausibly, either hoping or hopefulness is a good thing. For example, it is good to have hopes because having them can, say, shape and structure our identities, and reflect that we love other people as well as ourselves (Bovens, 1999). But it is also good to be hopeful because feeling good and having good thoughts about the chances that a desired outcome will obtain can, among other things, help us withstand setbacks and not be adrift at the "ebb and flow" of fortune (Pettit, 2004).[25] These considerations, however, should not be mixed indiscriminately together as support for the overall claim that hope is a good thing. Instead, they should be treated separately for their respective contentions that hoping is a good thing and that hopefulness is a good thing.

The third step is to identify proper questions for each sense of hope, with the aim of defining their respective theoretical and explanatory agendas. An initial list of questions can already be extracted from the existing literature, though they must be asked separately as befits the context of discussion. For hoping: What is the nature of hoping? In what ways is hoping valuable, or why is it important to hope? Is hoping motivational, and if so, how? Is it rational

to hope? What is the phenomenology of hoping? For hopefulness: What is the nature of hopefulness? In what ways is hopefulness valuable, or why is it important to be hopeful? Is being hopeful motivational, and if so, how? Is it rational to be hopeful? What is the phenomenology of feeling hopeful? Though the questions asked of each look similar—for instance, once the explanatory target of each theory is determined, the questions may all be phrased identically by using the same word "hope"—the answers to them will vastly differ. For example, as I have argued above, the nature of hoping is such that it is constituted by a belief, a desire, and some degree of mental imaging, whereas the nature of hopefulness, by contrast, is plausibly constituted by a positive orientation consisting of good thoughts and feelings. Likewise, insofar as hoping is just a matter of registering that one has a certain desire believed to be obtainable, its phenomenology may well be tied to the content of the outcome and the circumstances under which the hope emerges. For instance, as my car suddenly hits a patch of black ice, my hoping that I do not crash into another car is filled with fear and trepidation, while my hoping a stranger to have a nice day is often expressed as a routine, without accompanying feelings. By contrast, insofar as hopefulness is a positive orientation toward the chances of a desired outcome's obtaining, it arguably is always positively valenced: A person who is feeling hopeful is upbeat, enthusiastic, excited, and so on (see Kwong, forthcoming).

I am inclined to think that the eventual explanatory agendas for a theory of hoping and for a theory of hopefulness will have several desiderata in common, though, as noted, they will differ according to the phenomena targeted. Crucially, these theories will also have their own distinct desiderata to account for. Any adequate theory of hopefulness, but *not* of hoping, will have to explain how hopefulness is distinguished from despair, and relatedly, why a hopeful person enjoys a characteristically positive outlook even when she believes that her desired outcome has only a slim chance of obtaining.[26,27] Ensuring that these desiderata are demanded *only* from a theory of hopefulness will correct for some of the confusion in the hope literature, for such confusion arises because hope theorists erroneously demand theories of hoping to account for features of hopefulness, a separate issue. Another important desideratum of a theory of hopefulness, one that in my view is conspicuously missing, is to explain what it is to be hopeful. While much has been written about the conditions under which a person can be hopeful (e.g., Meirav's external factor, Martin's justificatory rationale, Milona's belief as a cognitive base of desire (Milona, 2018), Milona and Stockdale's encouraging perceptual experience, Kwong's pathways (Kwong, 2019)), scant attention has been paid to what hopefulness is as an intentional state.[28]

I would like to conclude this article by briefly discussing two implications of my proposal. The first has to do with an issue raised at the outset of the article, namely, whether hope can be given a successful reductive analysis. Most theorists think that hope can be reduced in terms of a belief, desire, and a third factor, while some maintain that either hope is a primitive mental state or that the concept of hope is an irreducible one. My view is that the foregoing discussion can shed light on this issue. The crucial starting point is, again, to note the polysemous nature of hope that can mean either hoping or hopefulness. Thus, when we ask whether hope is a compound or primitive state (or the related question whether the concept of hope is reducible or irreducible), we need to be clear which sense of hope is in question. My suspicion is that theorists like Segal and Textor and Blöser are concerned about whether hoping can be analyzed in terms of other mental states like beliefs and desires. Yet, as we saw in the case of Segal and Textor, their arguments are faulty in two respects: Not only do they see themselves as engaging in the same conversation as theorists who were really interested in hopefulness, but they also falsely appeal to properties of hopefulness to substantiate claims about hoping. My approach can correct both of these errors. Keeping the two senses of hope separate ensures that theorists discuss the relevant accounts of hope by appealing to appropriate features to settle the question whether hoping is reducible.[29]

The second implication has to do with the notions of *hoping with hope* and relatedly, *hoping without hope*, which I introduced in this paper. At first glance, the former may strike one as redundant and the latter, as contradictory, since hoping intuitively implies being hopeful. However, as I have argued, a person can hope without being hopeful, just as a person can hope while being hopeful. Whether hoping is accompanied by hopefulness depends on how the person is oriented toward the chances that the desired outcome will obtain, which is *extraneous* to the mental act of hoping. My speculation is that many philosophers are in fact interested in the phenomenon of hoping with hope. This

perhaps explains why hoping is thought to possess all sorts of qualities, including ones that really belong to hopefulness like a distinct kind of motivational force, enthusiasm, positive valence, etc. Yet, in discussing it, it is easy to drop the qualification "with hope" because of the seeming redundancy. Now, dropping this qualification is not inherently problematic so long as theorists keep in mind that the notion of hoping with hope really involves not one phenomenon but two, namely, hoping and hopefulness. However, they often fail to do so, as evidenced by their objections toward accounts of hope without distinguishing between hoping, and hoping with hope. Much gets lost in the confusion that ensues. The corrective is to explicitly identify hoping with hope as the target, which I have argued in this article will involve separate theorizing about hoping and about hopefulness.

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ORCID

Jack M. C. Kwong https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0171-0568

ENDNOTES

[1] Blöser is an exception. Whereas most theorists argue that the standard account lacks the sufficient resources to explain certain central features of hope, she argues instead that neither belief nor desire is necessary for hope (Blöser, 2019). Given this difference in strategy, this paper will not have occasion to review and assess Blöser's arguments. Suffice it to point out that some of her considerations can be used to support this paper's main claims, which in turn can be used to categorize her theory of hope (i.e., as a theory of hoping but not of hopefulness) and to identify its relevant competitors.

[2] This distinction was first introduced and discussed in Kwong (2020). That paper emphasized hopefulness as the central concept in theorizing about hope, almost to the point of relegating the concept of hoping as secondary. The present paper builds on that discussion but remedies the imbalance between hopefulness and hoping, stressing that both concepts are equally important and necessary for a better understanding of the nature of hope.

[3] It may be objected that this sentence can be understood to mean "I hope we will soon have a cure for all existing variants of the coronavirus but I am not at all optimistic about it." In response, I concede that the word "hopeful" may sometimes imply "optimism"; indeed, as I argue below, if we construe hopefulness as a positive attitude a person has about the *chances* that her hope will be realized, then optimism is plausibly a component of hopefulness. Nevertheless, my present contention is simply that hope can in fact be used in such a way to suggest hopefulness: A person can hope for an outcome without being hopeful about it.

[4] It is important to note that my notion of "hoping without hope" is distinct from "hoping against hope". In my view, the principal difference is that cases of the latter are ones in which a person hopes for an outcome *yet remains hopeful* in spite of incredibly low odds (e.g., less than 1%). In contrast, "hoping without hope" refers to cases where a person hopes for an outcome but is *not* hopeful at all about its chances of being realized.

[5] My contention is that when we use "hope" as a verb (e.g., I hope that *x* or I am hoping that *x*), we use it to capture this mental relation to the outcome. As I argue below, my preference is to construe this mental relation as conscious registration of a desired outcome that is believed to be realizable, although the two alternative construal can also be used to establish the central distinction between hoping and hopefulness.

[6] Katie Stockdale recently made a similar point by noting that hope is not always positively valenced and can be entirely unpleasant to experience (e.g., fearful hopes) (Stockdale, 2019).

[7] This paper therefore is concerned only with *intentional* hopefulness (i.e., hopefulness as directed toward an intentional object), as opposed to a general hopefulness (e.g., as disposition or outlook). Interestingly, Adam Kadlac has recently argued that the latter can be construed as having the specific hope with the intentional content that "the future will be good" (Kadlac, 2017, p. 209).

[8] Two points are worth noting here. First, I am employing the word "feel" broadly to refer to more than just feelings. When we are asked "How do you feel about *x*?," we are being asked to state both our thoughts and feelings about *x*. This is the wider sense of "feel" I am using to explain what hopefulness is. Specifically, my claim is that whether or not a person is hopeful is principally related to how she feels – what her thoughts and feelings are – with respect to the chances that

her desired outcome will be realized. Second, a person can, of course, also have thoughts and feelings about *hoping*. Thus, Stockdale's notion of a fearful hope is posited to capture the anxiety and trepidation a person feels when she hopes for certain outcomes (e.g., the hope *not* to be sexually assaulted). Notice, however, that these thoughts and feelings are directed at the desired outcome itself, and do not reflect whether a person is additionally hopeful about the likelihood that her hope will be realized. Thus, if we are told that a person experiences great fear in hoping not to be assaulted, we cannot determine *by that fact alone* whether or not the person is hopeful. To determine the latter, I contend that we would have to know how that person feels about the chances that she will be assaulted. Notice also that these thoughts and feelings are not required for hoping. On my view, the only requirement for hoping is that there is a consciously registered, desired outcome that is believed to be realizable, with or without the aforementioned thoughts and feelings about it. For a detailed discussion of the phenomenology of hope, and a critical analysis of Stockdale's fearful hopes, see Kwong (forthcoming).

[9] It might be objected that having a positive orientation *just is* conscious registration of the desired outcome, thereby collapsing the distinction between hopefulness and hoping. In response, recall that hoping and hopefulness have different targets. The former is concerned with the desired outcome, whereas the latter, with the *chances* that the desired outcome will obtain. Thus, to hope, say, that restaurants will soon reopen for indoor dining just is to be consciously aware *that* one has this desire. By contrast, to be hopeful that restaurants will soon reopen for indoor dining requires not only that one hopes for it, but also has positive thoughts and feelings about the outcome's chances of happening. A person can therefore hope for an outcome without being hopeful about it, but she cannot be hopeful without first hoping for it. Indeed, a main contention of this paper is that a person can still be said to hope for an outcome even if she does not think or have feelings about the chances of her hope's realizing, or if she possesses principally negative ones. In sum, the objection can therefore be defused by noting that the positive orientation associated with hopefulness is neither necessary for, nor has the same target as, hoping. As such, hoping and hopefulness are distinct. I would like to thank an anonymous referee for raising this objection.

[10] Importantly, whether or not a person is hopeful presupposes that she has given *some* thought to the chances that her hope will be realized. Since the city dweller in *Direction Giver* did not think about the tourist's chances of finding the boutique shop at all (and *ipso facto*, did not possess a positive orientation with respect to such chances), he is in fact *neither* hopeful nor unhopeful. Nevertheless, he did consciously register a desire that she find the shop, which is why he can be said to hope for the outcome. That a person can hope without being either hopeful or unhopeful confirms that hoping is distinct from hopefulness.

[11] For this same reason, the hopeful person does not differ from a despairing one in having a stronger or more intense desire.

[12] Elsewhere, I have argued that someone who is hopeful that a desired outcome will be realized may entertain some negative thoughts and feelings. For instance, despite feeling hopeful that her cancer will be in remission, the patient may still experience doubt and fear at times. Accordingly, to be hopeful is to have *on balance* more positive thoughts and feelings than negative ones (Kwong, 2020). Such a qualification helps to explain the stability of a person's hopefulness with respect to her desired outcome (that is, her hope). Thus, if her positive thoughts and feelings were to "come and go," she arguably cannot be considered hopeful (or may be so only when she has these thoughts and feelings).

[13] Although my preference is to think of the distinction in terms of *hoping* and *hopefulness*, capturing it in terms of hope as a verb or as a noun is nevertheless useful for determining which sense of hope theorists have in mind when they use the word "hope." As the next sections shows, this distinction is sometimes lost or not fully observed precisely because the same word "hope" is used interchangeably between the two senses. It is therefore important to be attentive to the various ways in which the word is used. In this case, my contention is that expressions that employ hope in the possessive sense without a preceding article refer to hopefulness but not hoping.

[14] It is tempting to think that my distinction between hoping and hopefulness is already captured by Pettit's distinction between "superficial" and "substantial" hopes (Pettit, 2004). Roughly, superficial (or thin) hopes are ones in which we are not much invested, and which are low-stakes and fleetingly entertained. By contrast, substantial (or thick) hopes involve high-stakes, and can structure and motivate our agency. Pettit's distinction, however, does not replace or substitute my distinction, which tracks two varying dimensions of hope. To see this, note that my distinction between hoping and hopefulness can be applied to both superficial and substantial hopes. Thus, it is one thing for a person to entertain a superficial or substantial hope, but another, to be hopeful or not about it. This is because the mere fact that a person hopes for some outcome does not automatically imply that she must feel hopeful about it. Accordingly, my distinction yields a richer classification of the kinds of hopes that we can entertain, specifically by identifying cases where we hope for an outcome, high-stakes or not, but are not hopeful about its chances of obtaining. Another explanatory advantage of my distinction, as I will explain in the last section of the paper, is that it gives us a better understanding of the nature of some kinds of hopes that philosophers have identified. For instance, it argues that Stockdale's notion of a fearful hope may best be construed as cases of hoping *without* hopefulness. It also allows us to see that Pettit's discussion of substantial hopes best accommodate cases where we hope for a high-stakes outcome but are not hopeful that it will obtain, which is why

we need to adopt a cognitive resolve. In cases where we hope for a high-stakes outcome *and* are additionally hopeful, my suspicion is that they have a different motivational and sustaining basis.

[15] Elsewhere, I have argued that Meirav's "external factor" account is more appropriately construed as a theory of hopefulness than as a theory of hope (Kwong, 2020).

[16] To be sure, some criticisms of the standard account treat it *as an account of hoping*. For example, as we saw, Bovens argues that genuine hoping additionally requires some mental energy in thinking about the desired outcome.

[17] For example, see Milona (2018).

[18] For example, see Segal and Textor, and Blöser.

[19] Schematically, the objection can be expressed as: (P1) Hope has property *x*; (P2) Current accounts of hope fail to explain *x*; (C) Current accounts of hope are deficient. This objection fails because it equivocates on the word "hope." On (P1), "hope" refers to hopefulness, whereas on (P2), it refers to hoping.

[20] It is worth pointing out that many of these theories are motivated by Meirav's concern to distinguish hope from despair, and share the assessment that the standard account is inadequate. For reasons just considered, these theories would err in a similar way as Meirav.

[21] Notice that this argument is similar in structure to Meirav's lottery example, to Red and Andy in *Shawshank Redemption*, and to Bess and Alan as cancer patients, namely, two individuals are posited to be identical in terms of desire and belief but different in attitude towards the desired outcome.

[22] It is important to point out that when Segal and Textor return to the example of the mountaineers later in the paper to show that Pettit's account cannot explain hope's motivational force, Hillary is now the one who hopes, whereas Reinhold does not. This switch is inconsequential to the argument I am making, and I have adapted their description of these mountaineers' psychological states to the original example.

[23] Segal and Textor also consider other accounts of hope, including Martin's and Pettit's.

[24] See my earlier distinction between "having hopes" or "having a hope", and "having hope." The former is about having specific hopes, which concerns hoping, and the latter, about having hope that a specific hope will obtain, which concerns hopefulness. In this context, the statement "it is good to have hopes" can be taken to mean "it is good to hope for things."

[25] Here, I am adapting some of Pettit's considerations with respect to the benefits of adopting a cognitive resolve.

[26] Meirav understands despair in terms of a person's not feeling hopeful about the chances of a desired outcome's obtaining. Both Red from *The Shawshank Redemption* and the wife in Meirav's lottery example experienced despair in this way. Insofar as the opposite of despair is hopefulness, a theory of the latter will have to identify conditions that distinguish the hopeful from the despairing. Indeed, Meirav's "external factor" proposal does precisely this: The hopeful person sees such a factor as acting in accordance with her interests and goals, whereas the despairing one sees it as acting against them. This is why Meirav's theory is a theory of hopefulness, and *not* of hoping.

[27] Incidentally, based on my brief remarks on the nature of hopefulness, notice that an intuitive answer is readily available: If hopefulness is construed in terms of a positive orientation toward the chances that some desired outcome will obtain, then despair (read: not feeling hopeful) will naturally be construed in terms of a negative orientation consisting of bad thoughts (e.g., that the desired outcome will not happen) and feelings (e.g., helplessness) about such chances.

[28] Elsewhere, I have argued that once these theories are construed as offering accounts of the conditions under which a person is hopeful, they turn out not to be rival theories but compatible with one another (Kwong, 2020).

[29] It is worth noting that my approach to theorizing about hope remains feasible even if one disagrees with the theory of hoping or the definition of hopefulness that I have offered in this paper. For instance, I defend a theory of hoping that is reductive in nature: To hope is to register a desire that is believed to have some chances of obtaining. One can disagree with this construal of hoping yet see value and use in maintaining the distinction between hoping and hopefulness. This is because the fact of the distinction does not preclude the possibility that hoping may be non-reductive. For instance, following Blöser, hoping may simply be a matter of registering in one's mind a "pro-attitude" (Blöser, 2019).

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