Adrienne M. Martin
How We Hope: A Moral Psychology.
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In this short but substantial tome, Adrienne Martin makes an important contribution to the relatively limited literature on hope in the analytic philosophical tradition. She shows in her introduction that there is very good reason for this subject to receive more attention, calling the reader's attention to situations in both politics and medical research where important ethical questions turn on our understanding of hope. We tend to think that hope has a kind of power to sustain and motivate people, yet we also think it is sometimes wrong to get someone's hopes up. In order to address such situations, Martin concentrates on the phenomenon of "hoping against hope," which she interprets as "hoping for an outcome that one highly values but believes is highly unlikely" (5).

This project divides roughly into two parts. The introduction and the first two chapters are dedicated mostly to conceptual analysis. Martin proposes a novel conception of hope, and raises objections to what she calls the "orthodox definition" of hope (in the analytic tradition), as well as several recently proposed alternatives to the orthodox definition, arguing that these definitions cannot properly account for the phenomenon of hoping-against-hope. Her conceptual analysis lays the groundwork for her to answer some of the pressing ethical questions about hope, and in the final three chapters she turns to some of the special roles hope is thought to play in ethical life, and considers to what extent hope is really suited to playing these roles.

The orthodox definition holds that hope is "a combination of the desire for an outcome and the belief that the desirable outcome is possible but not certain" (4). Martin's own account of hope is as follows: "to hope for an outcome is to *desire* (be attracted to) it, to assign a *probability* somewhere between 1 and 0 to it, and to judge that there are sufficient *reasons* to engage in certain feelings and activities directed toward it" (8). Thus, the element she thinks is crucially missing from the orthodox definition is a judgment that the probability of the desired outcome *licenses* certain ways of thinking about that outcome. An initial problem with this added element is that it seems to rule out the possibility of having hopes we regard as *unreasonable*. We certainly sometimes struggle to repress hopes for outcomes we reflectively recognize are nigh-impossible (as when I hope there will be no rush hour traffic on the day I am running late). Martin suggests that what we feel in such cases is "not full-fledged hope, but potentially worth calling 'hope' anyway" (62). She also bites the bullet in accepting that, according to her analysis, small children cannot hope until they develop a sufficiently robust conception of reasons and justification, and non-human animals lack the capacity for full-fledged hope (70-1). Insofar as she means to be analyzing our shared, common-sense conception of hope, these are costly bullets to bite. I think most dog-owners would be surprised to hear that the creature lurking alertly under the dinner table is not really hopeful.

Martin claims, though, that there are even greater costs to accepting the orthodox definition; in particular, that this definition leaves us "unable to distinguish hope from despair," at least in cases where the desired outcome is highly improbable (15). She proposes several test cases in which two people desire an outcome equally, and recognize it as equally improbable, but take very different

attitudes; one hopes for the outcome because it is *possible*, whereas the other despairs because the outcome is so *improbable* (15-17). This is her most persuasive objection to the orthodox definition, but it involves too many moving parts to be at all decisive. For one thing, it is not clear we would want to call a state *despair* unless it involved thinking the desired state is *impossible*. Of course, we can think of something as de facto impossible that isn't *absolutely* impossible (e.g., there is no traffic at all on my commute during rush hour). If someone has hope only when they consider a desired outcome *de facto* possible, and despairs otherwise, the orthodox definition needs only a small tweak. Conversely, if neither party thinks of the low probability outcome as effectively impossible, we might want to say, with the orthodox definition, that they both have hope, but that one is, say, more fearful, or more saddened by the unlikelihood of the desired outcome, perhaps in such a way that the fear or sadness eclipses the experience of hope. And then, as Martin points out, a widely-accepted conception of desire lets us say that we do not *desire* everything we *prefer*; desire involves a disposition to think about the object of desire in certain ways (18). But in that case, a plausible way to draw the distinction between hope and despair is to say that, when one despairs, the improbability of the preferred outcome makes one no longer disposed to think of the preferred outcome in ways characteristic of desire. Other questions could be raised about the efficacy of Martin's argument from test cases.

If the orthodox definition turns out not to be able to distinguish hope from despair, that would constitute a decisive reason to revise it. But why revise it in such a way that rational endorsement is a central feature? Surely some other revision could make the hope-despair distinction clearer without reclassifying un-endorsed hopes and the hopes of children and animals as mere hope-like states. (For instance, we could instead add a defining feature like, "feeling more cheered than dismayed by the consideration of the desired-but-uncertain outcome").

So why this particular adjustment? Martin takes a Kantian approach to hope, and to action and motivation more generally, offering brief arguments against "monist" theories, especially the Humean theory (but also addressing what she calls "fully rationalist" theories, such as those of the Stoics, Spinoza, Scanlon and Parfit). Her argument, in brief, is that only a dualist theory, such as Kantian theory, can account for our capacity to "stand back" from our motivations and deliberate about them (53-57). Monists of all stripes will probably find this line of argument less than compelling for a familiar reason: either this argument misrepresents the monist by construing motivations too narrowly (e.g. making the classic mistake of neglecting the "calm passions"), or else leaves our rational capacities somehow evaluating our motives with no apparent basis for evaluation. Given the extent of the literature on this subject, I doubt Martin had any pretensions of resolving these questions within four pages. A better characterization of her conceptual analysis, then, is this: She offers and defends a Kantian alternative to the orthodox theory of hope.

If the part of the book devoted to conceptual analysis is plausible but partisan, the part devoted to practical questions makes still more compelling arguments, appealing to a wealth of different bodies of literature on hope, including Aquinas' Scholastic view, Marcel's religious Existentialist approach, and a range of work from empirical psychology. Although Martin continues to appeal to her Kantian position, most of her practical conclusions could be accepted by Humeans and rationalists as well.

One outcome of the conceptual analysis is that not all hope is equally reasonable or defensible. Hope can be irrational if our probability judgments conflict with the evidence available.

Hope is not always good for a person—it can involve psychological costs and sometimes offers inadequate payoffs—but neither is it necessarily unreasonable to hope for an improbable outcome— aside from the fact that it sometimes makes sense to invest at long odds, there are psychological benefits to hope. All these conclusions follow from elements of Martin's view that it either shares with the Orthodox view, or that the Orthodox view could incorporate with minor adjustments.

In Chapter 3, Martin explores the Scholastic view that hope has a special sustaining power, and will keep a person from suicide. On the basis of empirical research on the effects of imagining processes and imagining outcomes, Martin draws a very sophisticated conclusion, distinguishing between types of hope that will help sustain a person, and types of hope that will not. She also shows that, while hope may often be what keeps a person from suicide, there is not necessarily any contradiction between hope and suicide. Chapter 4 explores the connection between faith and hope, and argues that there is a special kind of sustaining hope: hope for an outcome that is literally beyond one's powers of imagination (and, for that reason, a hard hope to dash). This kind of hope has traditionally been associated with religious faith, as a person with faith can trust the divine to make things turn out alright, even if one cannot imagine what that outcome would be. But, Martin argues, nothing about this kind of hope specifically *requires* religious faith; a secular version is at least theoretically available.

Finally, in Chapter 5, Martin makes a contribution to the discussion of the reactive attitudes by suggesting that there is a certain kind of "normative hope" and correlative disappointment, which are reasonable attitudes to hold toward those we do not consider fully responsible agents, but recognize as reasonable, thinking beings in some respect. Her suggestion here contributes to a growing literature mapping the territory between what Strawson called "interpersonal engagement" and "objective" attitudes in his influential 1960 paper, "Freedom and Resentment."

In sum, Martin offers a plausible Kantian theory of hope. Those who find the orthodox definition persuasive, or who find the Kantian theory of practical reason implausible, probably will not be persuaded by Martin's alternative. But anyone who is interested in the ethics of hope will find a great deal of valuable insight in this book.

Ben Sherman
Brandeis University