

Chapter 2

Integral Hope



A Transdisciplinary Model for Human and Environmental Flourishing

Andreas M. Krafft

Abstract This chapter introduces a transdisciplinary model that integrates the core properties of hope and connects them to various realms, from the individual to the interpersonal, collective, environmental, and spiritual. Building on previous psychological research on hope, it outlines the rationale for adopting a transdisciplinary approach and examines the fundamental elements shared by nearly all forms of hope from a philosophical standpoint. The chapter further elaborates on the three universal aspects of hope—wishing, believing in its realization, and trusting oneself and others—and presents a model that illustrates how these basic elements manifest across five interconnected layers. In doing so, it explores the ways in which hope can be expanded and nurtured at each new level. The chapter concludes with the main findings and their implications for human and environmental flourishing.

Keywords Hope · Beliefs · Trust · Collective hope · Environmental hope · Spirituality · Transdisciplinarity

2.1 Different Facets of Hope

Hope is an existential, universal, and manifold phenomenon of human experience that helps people thrive and flourish (Slezackova and Krafft 2017). People hope for many different things in diverse situations and draw nourishment for their hopes from numerous sources (Krafft and Walker 2018). Several disciplines, including theology, philosophy, health sciences, and psychology, have explored the multifaceted nature of hope through distinct thought and academic traditions. Theology, predominantly Christian theology, focuses on the relationship between people's hope and the Divine. Philosophy has mainly sought to identify the key elements that characterize hope and

A. M. Krafft (✉)

Institute of Systemic Management and Public Governance, University of St. Gallen, St. Gallen, Switzerland

e-mail: andreas.krafft@unisg.ch

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T. Karcher SJ et al. (eds.), *Making Hope Possible*, Environmental Humanities: Transformation, Governance, Ethics, Law 7, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-17719-3_2

distinguish it as a human virtue (for an overview, see Blöser 2020). Health sciences, particularly nursing research, examine the hopes of people facing severe illnesses (Herth 2005; Olsman 2020). In positive psychology, hope has been conceptualized as an individual's character strength and a positive emotion that aids people in living a fulfilling life, primarily helping them overcome dire situations (Fredrickson 2004; Peterson and Seligman 2004).

Throughout the centuries, various conceptualizations and definitions have highlighted different aspects, elements, and sources of hope, underscoring its complexity and multidimensionality (Blöser 2020). Receptivity theories suggest that hope is a transcendent phenomenon infused by a higher power, alongside faith and love. On the other hand, agency theories have centered their conceptualization of hope on an individual's capacity to define goals, willpower, and the various pathways a person relies on to achieve those goals (Snyder 2002). Besides the cognitive-individual and the religious-transcendent perspectives, contemporary philosophers and psychologists emphasize the distinctively emotional, social, and collective character of hope, a view supported by the latest advancements in neuroscience (Callina et al. 2018).

According to Fredrickson (2004), hope's positive emotional effect broadens the mindset, nurturing psychological, social, and physical resources to cope with adversity. Hope can be a virtue because it enables people to flourish, allowing them to find meaning in life, foster personal growth, and cultivate positive relationships with others (Cohn and Fredrickson 2009). Because of this broadening and growth effect, hopeful people tend to display more altruistic and generative behavior by taking a long-term view of things, rather than satisfying short-term needs, thinking beyond the struggles of the present moment, and adopting moral values to help others such as friendship, gratitude, generativity, selflessness, kindness, and inclusiveness towards strangers (Cohn and Fredrickson 2006).

In their handbook on virtues and character strengths, Peterson and Seligman (2004) included hope as belonging to the virtue of transcendence. Hope belongs to the virtue of transcendence because it goes beyond one's knowledge and coping capabilities. It enables individuals to build connections to something bigger than themselves, providing meaning, purpose, and fundamental beliefs. Hope is linked to other character strengths such as gratitude, appreciation of beauty and excellence, and spirituality, and is related to values that offer a moral framework, keeping the person committed to the expectation and pursuit of goodness.

A central question is how the objects, targets, and states of affairs that people hope for may influence the way they hope, the sources of hope they draw on, their actions, and the thoughts and feelings associated with hope (Krafft et al. 2023a). People can hold various types of hopes, including material goods, personal achievements, hedonic pursuits, interpersonal relationships, and altruistic motives, which may also influence their overall perception of hope (Averill and Sundararajan 2005). It may not be the same to hope for achieving a specific career goal, for a happy family, or transcendent religious and spiritual experiences. These insights suggest that hoping for certain things can affect how people in different circumstances and environments approach hope, and, therefore, the quality of hope itself (Averill et al. 1990).

The diverse conceptions of hope developed by scientists from diverse disciplines can be complementary and enriching. All these considerations underscore the necessity of integrating existing concepts and elements of hope from different research fields, each highlighting a specific aspect or feature of hope in its own right. Due to its complexity, hope research must be inter- and transdisciplinary, merging theories and research findings from psychology, philosophy, theology, and other disciplines into new concepts and models. As Colla et al. (2022) expound, hope is an experience or phenomenon that emerges from the interplay of individual and contextual factors, which can be modeled as a nested ecological system with different layers. This means we must examine the multi-directional connections between these various layers, such as the individual, the social, the environmental, and the spiritual.

2.2 Basic Elements of Hope

Contemporary philosophers have identified a first common foundation for conceptualizing hope. The so-called standard account or orthodox definition of hope asserts that it involves at least two basic elements: (1) A wish or desire for a valued good or outcome (we only hope for what is important to us); and (2) the belief that the realization of what we desire is possible but not certain (Day 1969; Meirav 2009). Furthermore, contemporary philosophers share a common understanding that these two fundamental elements of the standard definition—desire and possibility—can be regarded as necessary but not sufficient conditions for explaining the phenomenon of hope. Several authors have proposed different features that account for this missing factor. We adhere to numerous psychological and philosophical explanations that define an attitude of substantial trust as a core element of hope (Braithwaite 2004; Erikson 1998; McGeer 2008; Tennen et al. 2002).

Therefore, we propose to understand hope in its fundamental sense as the human capacity that emerges from the combination of a *wish or desire* for a valued outcome or state of affairs, along with the *belief* that its realization is possible—albeit uncertain and not necessarily likely—and the *trust* in the availability of some internal or external resources, either existing or future, that could help facilitate its realization, especially when confronting obstacles and setbacks (Krafft et al. 2023a). The willpower to act and persist stems from the nature and importance of the desired good, as well as the intensity of the belief and trust held by the person who hopes for it.

These fundamental elements should capture the essence of hope while being broad enough to be applied in various situations, across different levels (e.g., individual, interpersonal, social, and transcendent), and within diverse cultural contexts. An additional advantage of this conceptualization of hope is that it can be applied to two distinct forms of hope, which in the literature are known as the form of specific hopes and the form of general or fundamental hopefulness (Calhoun 2018; Dufault and Martocchio 1985; Godfrey 1987; Shade 2001): (1) Specific hopes are directed toward concrete outcomes (goals, events, circumstances) connected with the belief

in the possibility of their fulfillment and linked to particular resources for their realization; (2) Fundamental hope is usually oriented toward a good life in general. It might be based on the overall belief in the world's goodness and relies on a basic trust in one's capabilities or some external power, fortune, or fate.

Drawing on existing publications from diverse scientific backgrounds, the following sections provide an overview of the three fundamental elements of hope, as conceptualized in this chapter.

2.3 Wish, Belief, and Trust

Wishes and desires, the first element inciting hope, evolve from what people value and want to happen because it is significant to them. To hope for something always implies a conscious or unconscious motive, the reason for hope, which reflects the values people are committed to (Blöser and Stahl 2017). We hope for something when what we hope for has meaning and value. Since hope is a strong motivator for action, the first task must be to pay attention to the quality, meaning, and significance of the targets of hope. People in different circumstances may hope for diverse things, including good health, a fulfilling job, a happy family, fame, and a fulfilling life, and rank their hopes according to their relative value, creating a hierarchy of hopes (Krafft et al. 2023b; Shade 2001; Shin et al. 2013). However, hope can, but need not, involve a concrete goal or personal achievement, for example, when people hope for peace or the well-being of others. Therefore, the formulation of hoped-for ends and the conscious assessment of the desirability of specific hopes are of utmost importance to understand the lived experience of hope (Shade 2001).

A central question is how the objects, targets, and states of affairs people hope for may influence the sources of hope they draw on, their actions, and the thoughts and feelings associated with hope (Olsman 2020). Different targets of hope can be linked to culturally transmitted worldviews, values, and norms. Culture contains implicit or explicit assumptions about what is good and right. The prevailing values in a particular culture, such as tolerance, care, creativity, power, or performance, can influence people's hopes. For example, Singelis et al. (1995) distinguished individualist and collectivist cultures based on people's goals. People in individualistic societies tend to hold and pursue more self-centered goals that reflect personal wishes. In more collectivist cultures, individuals tend to prioritize goals that align with the desires and wishes of their family and immediate social environment, including maintaining good social relationships, harmony with their surroundings, and supporting others (Triandis 1997). In one case, the focus is on fulfilling one's wishes and desires, achieving personal success, and experiencing novel adventures, with goals requiring personal effort to be accomplished. In other cases, individuals prioritize tolerance, respect, and care for others over personal wishes, goals, and individual performance (Eid and Diener 2009).

The second element in the basic definition of hope is the *belief* that achieving the desired good is possible, even in the face of uncertainty and difficulty. Since

the future does not exist and we cannot know it, it remains a realm of speculation and belief (Slaughter 1993). To hope is to stay open to the future and to believe in how things could be rather than how they currently are. In classical cognitive psychological theories, it is assumed that when we believe in ourselves, based on experience, we also think that what we desire is more likely to occur (Snyder 1994; Stotland 1969). Furthermore, hope is grounded in the belief in one's capabilities to overcome obstacles and setbacks. From more recent psychological and philosophical perspectives, neither anticipating a high probability of fulfillment nor having personal control over the hoped-for outcome is a prerequisite for hope (Bruininks and Malle 2005; Milona 2020). Hope is distinct from positive future expectations in that it pertains to believing in even a slight possibility of achieving a particular wish (Krafft et al. 2021; Scioli et al. 1997). Moreover, the belief in the possibility of a specific event is not founded on evidence and objective facts; rather, it is predominantly of a subjective nature (Stockdale et al. 2019). Holding a belief that enables an individual to hope despite negative evidence is neither a sign of self-deception nor an illusion regarding how things appear. Moreover, hope is rooted in the belief that, especially in times of trial, the future will present new possibilities that we cannot yet imagine or contemplate (Lear 2006).

According to Meirav (2009), to understand the true nature of hope, we must recognize that hope is always related to some external factor beyond our resources or agency. The external factor account comprises the belief that the hoped-for good is possible but uncertain, arduous, and not entirely within one's control (Miceli and Castelfranchi 2010). This external factor can be another person or group of individuals, such as our own family; it could be related to social institutions, like the government or employers, but it can also be the belief in fate, luck, or a transcendent higher power. What is central is that, to be hope-sustaining, the external factor must be conceived as favorable to one's values, interests, and wishes (Meirav 2009). Hope is rational and appropriate as long as one believes in the goodness of the external factor. Pragmatist hope is grounded in the conviction that believing in life's benevolence is justified and that, through collective efforts, we can continually make the world a better place (Blöser and Stahl 2017). It is essential to note that relying on external forces is not necessarily a sign of passivity, disengagement, or wishful thinking. Still, it can be experienced as an expansion and empowerment of one's agency, commitment, and willingness to act (Shade 2001).

In a broader sense, beliefs are constitutive elements of worldviews, i.e., assumptions about the nature, quality, and meaningfulness of the world, as well as why it is as it is and how it should be. These fundamental beliefs are theories or cultural narratives that guide our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, particularly in anticipating future events (Janoff-Bulman 1989, 1992). These worldviews are especially significant when a person faces a stressful situation or experiences despair. For example, basic world beliefs pertain to the quality and fundamental character of human nature, determining whether it is viewed as good or evil, and whether the world is perceived as just or unjust (Clifton et al. 2019; Lerner 1980). Hope is therefore heavily influenced by cultural beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes that shape our perceptions about the

world and ourselves, as well as our behaviors (Ibrahim 1984; Janoff-Bulman 1992; Koltko-Rivera 2004).

Beliefs and desires can influence one another. The meaning, value, and importance of a particular desire shape the belief that this desire is at least possible. Furthermore, if one believes that the fulfillment of a vital wish is possible, one desires it even more fervently (Milona 2019). In contrast, believing in the impossibility or difficulty of a wish or desire may lead the individual to adopt a passive attitude toward it, or even to renounce it altogether. This means that the affective state of hopelessness can be transformed, on the one hand, by emphasizing the significance of the desired outcome, and on the other, by modifying the individual's beliefs, evaluations, and judgments. Sometimes, it's merely a matter of reframing and viewing the problem from a different perspective (Ojala 2012).

Several authors agree that hope does not coincide with positive expectations about a probable outcome and that uncertainty is a constitutive element of hope, particularly about realizing the hoped-for end and one's self-efficacy (Miceli and Castelfranchi 2010). But then, what gives people the power to believe, for example, in healing, despite an unfavorable prognosis? What strengthens the belief in a positive outcome despite all negative evidence? Some authors emphasize individuals' capabilities (Snyder 1994), while others highlight the importance of social support from family members or close friends (Scioli and Biller 2009). Still, others highlight faith in a benevolent higher power (Scioli 2007) to whom one can revert when facing critical life situations.

The third element in our conceptualization of hope focuses on the various forms and expressions of *trust* related to resources that encourage people to believe in the realization of hoped-for outcomes in uncertain circumstances. Trust is the ability to transcend current conditions and to courageously be open to new and unknown solutions. In hoping, we experience the world as open to its possibilities and development and trust the power of our own and others' actions (Webb 2007).

Following the work of Earle and Siegrist (2006), we can distinguish between the concepts of trust and confidence. Confidence is defined as a reason-based assessment of a high probability of achieving a goal, fitting the definition of optimism and positive expectations; trust, on the other hand, is a relational phenomenon supported by social attachment and characterized by shared values such as benevolence, integrity, fairness, and caring. Hope is related to trust rather than confidence, as confidence often renders hope unnecessary (Miceli and Castelfranchi 2010). Trust is closely tied to vulnerability, uncertainty, and faith, thereby fostering interdependence with others.

Trust lies at the core of most sources of hope: trust in our current and future abilities, trust in family members and friends who are ready to support us emotionally and instrumentally, trust in the broader community and social and political institutions, and trust in a Divine Power that is always present and on our side. Individuals in different countries or from diverse social groups may differ in their perceptions of sources of hope (Averill et al. 1990; Averill and Sundararajan 2005). In individualistic societies, hope is grounded in autonomy, independence, and self-efficacy, often relying primarily on oneself, one's capabilities, and commitment. However, at times,

there is little one can do to contribute to the realization of one’s hopes. People in collectivistic cultures may rely more on the emotional and instrumental support of their family members and closest friends. Religious individuals might place their trust and hope in a benevolent Higher Power.

2.4 A Nested Model of Hope

Beyond the basic definition and elements, hope’s complexity has led several researchers to conceptualize it as a multidimensional phenomenon, resulting in a variety of models, including dimensions such as personal mastery, social relationships, collective endeavors, spiritual and religious practices, and several others (Dufault and Martocchio 1985; Farran et al. 1995; Scioli et al. 2011). Research findings from various authors suggest that there is not just one form of hope, but rather many different expressions of hope, varying according to the diverse range of personal, social, and collective wishes, beliefs, and sources of trust. Inspired by systems theory as proposed by Colla et al. (2022) and guided by the idea that different areas and levels of hope influence one another as expressed by Lomas et al. (2015), we propose a model that integrates the three basic elements of hope—wishes, beliefs, and trust—with several interrelated layers represented by a nested model, resulting in different types of hope, ranging from the individual to the transcendent, as presented in Fig. 2.1.

In the following sections, we will describe every layer of hope, present the type of hope distinctive to each layer, and explain the specific qualities of the basic elements

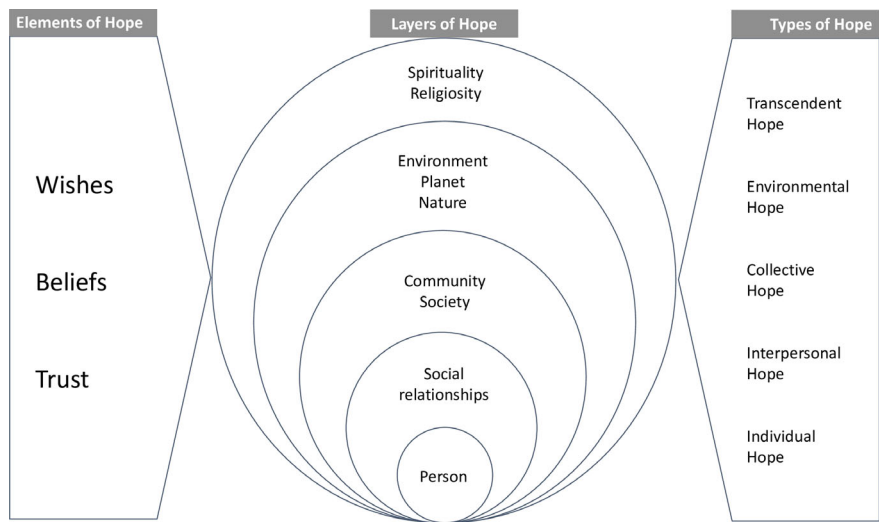


Fig. 2.1 Dimensions of Hope

of hope—wishes, beliefs, and trust—at each level. Furthermore, we will elaborate on how the different layers are interrelated, how they interact with one another, and how each new upper layer contributes to broadening and enhancing the individual, social, and collective capacity to hope.

2.4.1 Person: Individual Hope

In traditional psychological theories, hope is an individual disposition that enables a person to set goals, possess the motivation to commit to achieving those goals, and utilize their abilities to develop pathways to reach them (Snyder 1994; Stotland 1969). These theories are based on self-perception regarding the individual's capabilities to attain specific ends and conceptualize hope as an individual trait or disposition. In this respect, classical psychological hope theories closely relate to concepts such as self-efficacy, self-confidence, and self-esteem (Aspinwall and Leaf 2002).

Dispositional hope involves aspects that the individual can control or at least believes he can. The act of hoping is a mental process that connects one's abilities and actions to the expected outcome. According to Snyder (2000), people who are hopeful feel in control of their lives and take responsibility for their circumstances by actively seeking solutions to their problems. Individual hope encompasses the perception and belief in one's abilities to discover potential ways to achieve goals, especially when obstacles and challenges arise along the path to those goals. Thus, this belief can be linked to coping competence, which is grounded in mental flexibility and creativity. Hopeful individuals tend to be ambitious, setting increasingly demanding goals compared to those who are less hopeful. Self-confidence encompasses beliefs in one's ability to succeed, which is related to persistence, courage, and achievements (White 2009).

As Snyder (1994) acknowledges, dispositional hope is an egocentric phenomenon because it centers on the perception and evaluation of oneself and one's personal goals. Moreover, the dispositional hope theory remains entirely neutral regarding the goodness or moral values of the goals. It does not matter whether a goal aims at something positive or negative or whether it is ethical or legal (Snyder 2002). Goals need only be meaningful and desirable for the person hoping, so they will persist in focusing on them, even when faced with resistance.

The risks of an overly individualistic perspective are that hope can evolve into blind, compulsive, and selfish actions that consume and constrain the individual. Through willful hope, as McGeer (2004) calls it, people can become so focused on achieving their goals that they ignore others and treat them as mere instruments. When the realization of one's goals takes precedence, it can justify all means, regardless of the undesirable consequences that may arise. Individuals driven in this way show little interest in or understanding of the wishes and hopes of others. In a negative sense, willful hope can lead to overestimating oneself and isolating oneself from others.

Put in a broader perspective, we must acknowledge that we cannot always be in control and that we must accept our limitations and dependence on others (Bruininks and Malle 2005). People can still hope, even if they cannot achieve the desired result solely through their efforts. These considerations pave the way for a broader, individual as well as interpersonal, social, cultural, environmental, and spiritual conceptualization of hope and agency.

2.4.2 Social Relationships: Interpersonal Hope

To achieve one's goals, people often need to work with, rely on, and trust others. For Marcel (1951), hope is that quality through which we can see beyond ourselves and our limitations, directing our attention to what is possible with the help of others. At the core of the interpersonal account of hope lies a relational understanding of the self and agency. Hope is not merely a private mental state; the activity of hoping thrives in the interaction between a person and his social environment. Hope is an interpersonal and self-transcendent phenomenon. Other people strengthen our hopes through their encouragement, presence, and active support. We expand our capacity to act by placing our hope in others, whether they are family members, friends, colleagues, or healthcare professionals (Martin 2019). Therefore, hope encompasses not only personal mastery and individual goals but also interpersonal trust and connection with others (McGeer 2004).

The value of social relationships is most evident in critical or deeply personal life situations, such as illness and adversity, where one feels lost and relies on the assistance of others (Marcel 1951). The recognition and acceptance of one's vulnerability, coupled with the conviction that human flourishing is only possible within a community of people who care for one another, make compassion and solidarity a vital element of hope (Kadlac 2015). Social hope begins by accepting one's limitations and those of others, but without surrendering to them. When we trust others, we acknowledge our limitations with humility and recognize the need for support and care. Moreover, it empowers individuals to develop their agency and willpower, as well as their capabilities and possibilities, transcending current limitations while caring for and supporting each other in a process of mutual growth (McGeer 2004, 2008).

Interpersonal hope broadens awareness of what life is truly about and what is worth hoping for (Braithwaite 2004; Stitzlein 2019). The focus is not only placed on an object or a personal goal, but, above all, on another person for whom we hope (Howell and Larsen 2015). By doing so, we convey to them the sense that their wishes and hopes are important to us. Simply by caring about and taking an interest in the hopes of others, we signal to them how valuable their hopes are, which gives their hopes new energy and vitality. This makes people realize how powerful and invigorating mutual attention, encouragement, and support can be for maintaining one's hopes and those of others.

In tough times, people need the availability and supportive affection of others who believe in and for them, especially when they can no longer do so on their own (Howell and Larsen 2015). By believing in them, family and friends reinforce their belief in the realizability of their wishes and encourage them to persevere and not give up (McGeer 2008). When people are there for others, believe in them, encourage them, and stand up for them, this bolsters their hope, faith, and willpower (McGeer 2004). The appreciation that others express through their faith and trust revitalizes their overall capacity for hope and confidence in their abilities. Thanks to the encouragement from others, people can feel motivated again, recognize their strengths with more confidence, and cultivate a positive and hopeful outlook toward the future.

All of this highlights the importance of mutual care and helpfulness in preserving hope. The logical conclusion from these phenomena is that our ability and willingness to hope depend not only on how well we can hope for ourselves but also on how well we can hope with and for others (McGeer 2004; Snow 2019). Hope is a gift that empowers others and, in turn, ourselves. When we respond to the hopes of others and receive their encouragement for our hopes, we participate in their lives and expand our horizons of hope.

2.4.3 Community and Society: Collective Hope

Collective hope represents a distinct form of social hope, characterized by shared visions that aim to positively shape the world toward a meaningful and dignified life within a social community (Braithwaite 2004; Kleist and Jansen 2016). We speak of collective hope when a community of people shares common beliefs and desires, bringing them to fulfillment in a hopeful manner (Blöser and Stahl 2019). Rather than focusing solely on individual objectives, people engage in a larger community to pursue overarching social, economic, and environmental goals (Stahl 2019). From a cultural perspective, individual and social hopes emerge through shared beliefs, which, at a specific time and place in history, constitute collective worldviews (Naderi Farsani and Abolghasemi 2008).

According to pragmatist philosophers such as Dewey (1916/1980) and Rorty (2002), belief in the good in life serves as a prerequisite for a serious commitment to a better world. While a society dominated by fear is characterized by selfishness and mutual competition, a community of hope fosters greater cohesion, solidarity, and cooperation among its members (Stahl 2019). In collective hope, we acknowledge the difficulties of our current circumstances while believing that improvement is possible through our conjoint engagement and efforts. The belief in future possibilities characterizes collective hope and trust in the collective power of determination and action (Rorty 1998). Rorty claims that hope for a better world is the belief in the possibility that “unnecessary human suffering can be decreased, and human happiness thereby increased” (Rorty 2002, p. 154). The hope for a world in which there can be more justice and less suffering is directed towards concrete concerns such

as everyone having enough to eat, a dignified home, access to medical care, and education (Rorty 2002).

Pragmatist philosophers emphasize our dependence on others and the necessity of trusting that others will also strive for a common cause, particularly in hopes of peace, justice, or a sustainable society (Stitzlein 2019). What holds societies together are shared hopes of a better collective future (Rorty 2002). Instead of focusing solely on one's individual goals, community members are committed to achieving shared objectives and work together to pursue them (Rorty 1999). This belief enables the emergence of transformative hope, which, according to Webb (2007), involves developing a vision of the future based on the belief in the socially instilled human capacity to improve the world by changing the status quo. In this respect, political hope needs public trust in social and democratic institutions (Huber 2021; Moellendorf 2006).

A community involves not only a common cause but also the respect and empowerment of each member. Cultural beliefs about how things are and how they could and should be are constituents of the individual's perception and volition (Miller 1999). The quality and role of these fundamental cultural beliefs can significantly impact the quality and the sources of individual hope. Belonging to a social community enhances one's life meaning, effectiveness, and self-esteem (McGeer 2004). What we would not be able to achieve alone can be realized through the collective efforts of a community, thanks to the individual contributions of all its members (Braithwaite 2004). With the community's strengthening power, we can expand our capacity for action and hope. A community thrives when its members can make individual contributions, grow and develop their identities, and feel valued and supported by others (Shade 2019). A collective vision and action for the future, with the aspiration for an improved life, connects individual people with others, fosters the common good, and instills a sense of purpose in people's lives (Stitzlein 2019).

Social and voluntary institutions, including aid and non-governmental organizations, as well as schools and churches, can be vibrant communities of hope where individual efforts and actions intersect with those of others. Serving others is a clear manifestation of hope and faith, fostering belief in and encouraging dedication to a better future. On one hand, such institutions inspire hope in societal goals or ideals, and on the other, they empower action. In institutions of hope, people can learn to believe in the future and actively engage in extraordinary endeavors (Braithwaite 2004).

2.4.4 Planet and Nature: Environmental Hope

The ecological crisis, characterized by persistent global warming, pollution of landscapes and waters with toxic waste, environmental catastrophes, and a continuing decline in biodiversity, poses a significant threat to the future of our world. Since these urgent ecological challenges cannot be addressed by individual efforts alone, people are responding to the threats in three distinct ways: (1) denial and indifference, (2) pessimism and despair, and (3) shared concern and hope (Ojala 2015). The first

two options, denial and despair, imply a significant degree of helplessness and lack of hope that leads to a vicious cycle and a self-fulfilling prophecy (Lueck 2007): The more people believe in the indifference and shortage of engagement of others, the more they will assume that their actions are in vain and refrain from engaging themselves in pro-environmental actions, and the more they will fall into despondency and pessimism (Kretz 2013). Under these circumstances, environmental scientists are now emphasizing the existential role and importance of hope as a motivational force toward pro-environmental behavior. Environmental hope entails a deep concern for the environment, coupled with the belief that not everything is lost and that a positive change toward a sustainable society and environmental regeneration is still possible (Maartensson and Loi 2022).

Ecological hope begins with recognizing that nature and non-human goods possess intrinsic value, independent of our own needs (Kretz 2013). It comprises a self-transcendence attitude, where the desire for the thriving of the entire planet and caring for all life forms pairs with—and sometimes surpasses—people's self-centered wishes (Nolt 2010). The desire to protect, care for, and treat nature as a higher common good is a prerequisite for overcoming indifference and engaging in meaningful pro-environmental actions. However, the wish alone is not sufficient, as strong concerns and feelings of impotence can drive people into despondency. To overcome hopelessness and transform environmental concern into practical action, it is necessary to reorient people's beliefs in several ways (Ojala 2012). Firstly, it is essential to believe that, despite dire prognoses, it is still possible to mitigate, prevent, and even reverse environmental damage.

To foster the belief in a sustainable future, it is furthermore necessary to reconceptualize the relationship between human beings and nature. A significant point is the belief in the regenerative capacity of nature itself. This implies expanding the notion of human agency by recognizing that nonhuman beings, including animals, plants, and entire ecosystems, possess a specific agency themselves (Northcott 2020). Moreover, it is necessary to believe that one's actions are not futile but will have a positive impact and that we are not doing this alone but that many other people are also committed to environmentally responsible behavior (Lueck 2007). Lastly, we must believe that our well-being and flourishing are significantly enhanced by our connection and attachment to nature, as well as by taking responsibility toward the environment (Chawla 2020; Kerret et al. 2016).

To strengthen this sense of belief in nature, in others, and oneself, it is necessary to develop trust in one's capabilities as well as trust in other societal actors and instances, such as the government, science, environmental organizations, technological industries, and fellow citizens (Ojala 2015). However, this trust will not emerge easily, but only through concrete measures of collective endeavors that result from shared values and visions of the future.

In conclusion, environmental hope serves as the foundation for promoting a healthier environment through individual and collective values, goals, beliefs, trust, and actions, fostering a sense of cohesion and community within society, and enhancing both physical and psychological well-being in individuals. By doing so,

environmental hope will have a positive impact on collective, interpersonal, and individual hope.

2.4.5 Spirituality and Religiosity: Transcendent Hope

The realm of religious and spiritual hope is ancient and vast, featuring several peculiarities among different religious denominations and creeds. The theological virtue of hope is rooted in faith and trust in a benevolent and almighty God, grounded in His love for humanity and all of His creation (Pinsent 2020). For moral theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, religious hope differs from human hope because it is a gift from God, who is the ultimate source of everything. The opposite of spiritual hope is not only despair, which is a lack of faith in God, but also the presumption of trusting only oneself rather than relating to and trusting God. Religious hope is transcendent and absolute because it is rooted in what cannot be known or seen, and therefore, can only be believed in (Jeffrey 2019). Faith is the assurance of things hoped for because everything good comes from God's power and mercy (Pinsent 2020).

In most religious traditions, transcendent hope is not directed towards material things and selfish goals. In the Buddhist and Hindu traditions, hope is grounded in gratitude, compassion, and detachment from unnecessary earthly desires (Dunlap 2019; Krafft and Choubisa 2018; McDonald 2008). Spiritual hope is directed towards things that transcend the material world, such as liberation from evil, overcoming suffering and death, eternal life, and unity with God. Hope based on God does not refer to what already exists, but is guided by the idea of a better, yet partly still unknown, world, and serves as the trigger for the hoped-for radical transformation of the world (Moltmann 2021).

In monotheistic religions, transcendent hope is determined by the two most salient qualities of an agentic God: omnipotence and love. Through the faith in an almighty God, believers gain the certainty that things that they hope for but cannot see or understand are nevertheless fulfilled (Pinsent 2020). From a spiritual and religious perspective, there is nothing impossible, creating room for an infinite number of new opportunities. The power of faith and hope is rooted in a belief in a better future and trust in a spiritual, creative force that is mysteriously available to people, enabling them to feel supported and empowered. Religious and spiritual hope can become a new life force, especially where people have nothing more to expect.

Furthermore, spiritual hope gains its fundamental character only through faith in God's unconditional love. In most religions, the sacred is characterized by love and compassion. To the contrary, as long as one believes in capricious and punishing Gods, hope will have a fragile basis. Hope, rooted in the love of God, empowers people to persevere in hope even when they feel helpless. In this sense, hope conveys the conviction that, despite all suffering and failure, we are loved and that our lives have meaning and significance (van Vliet 2020). This gives people the courage to stand up again and again, and to persevere.

The belief that hope comes from the Almighty does not mean that religious hope is a passive hope. Hope and faith are not only directed towards the future and the afterlife, but also shape the way people live in this world. As human beings, we are called to receive love and to share it with others (Marcel 1951). Hope anchored in love and faith is combined with positive feelings, expanded awareness, and, above all, the values of mutual understanding, respect, tolerance, appreciation, and helpfulness toward all people (Jeffrey 2019; Osmani 2008). Transcendent hope gives the courage and, above all, the strength to affirm the good, that is, to profess love and to avoid evil, that is, egoism, selfishness, and hardheartedness. Our task is to give hope to others by preventing or reducing their suffering. This motivates religious people to make a personal commitment to the poor, the oppressed, and those in need. For Moltmann (2021), humanity has the mission to work towards the promised world by transforming our own lives and the existing circumstances on earth for the better. Faith in God conveys the belief that the individual is entitled, empowered, and assisted by God to do whatever is necessary to achieve the hoped-for good, thereby expanding and strengthening their individual and collective agency. This faith fosters hope in humanity's ongoing moral development and flourishing.

2.5 Conclusion: Integral Hope for Human and Environmental Flourishing

The current chapter begins by highlighting the multifaceted forms of hope and the various research traditions that have investigated these diverse forms and their general connection to human flourishing. From a positive psychological perspective, we recognize that hope has the property of broadening and building people's orientation toward the future, and that it can be considered a character strength belonging to the virtue of transcendence (Fredrickson 2004; Peterson and Seligman 2004). While philosophers have sought the fundamental properties that define the phenomenon of hope across all its different manifestations, psychologists and health researchers have identified several dimensions that are characteristic of hope in particular situations. The purpose of this chapter was to identify and describe the fundamental properties common to (almost) all diverse expressions of hope; elaborate a transdisciplinary, systemic, and nested model that describes different forms and levels of hope, along with the specific characteristics of the basic elements of hope at each level, and the interaction of the different hope forms with each other; and propose that each level contributes to broaden and build the capacity to, and the effectiveness of, hope for a flourishing life, society, and planet.

Hope fundamentally refers to the human ability that arises from a wish for a desired outcome or situation, coupled with the belief in the possibility of its occurrence—though uncertain and not necessarily probable—and the confidence in the presence of some internal or external resources, whether currently available or anticipated, that could assist in achieving it, particularly when facing challenges and failures. Desires,

beliefs, and trust can relate to various levels or layers: personal, interpersonal within immediate social relations, collective at the community or societal level, environmental concerning the planet and nature, and transcendent linked with spirituality and religion. Our empirical research has shown that individuals who find meaning in personal growth, relationships with family and friends, community engagement, sustainability, and religious faith experience significantly higher levels of hope and well-being compared to those who lack one or more of these sources of meaning (Krafft 2024).

This leads us to reconsider the classical psychological understanding of hope and agency. The emotions, character traits, and behaviors of an individual are inseparably connected to their relationships with their closer and broader social, natural, and even supernatural environment. Moreover, it is questionable whether the distinction between the individual and the physical and metaphysical environment, in the classical Western sense, can still be maintained (Heidegger 1953, 2010). Concerning hope and agency, we argue that the individual and the social, natural, and spiritual realms interact, enhancing and expanding one another. Individual hope and agency are fostered and, in turn, nurture interpersonal, collective, environmental, and transcendent hope. Human flourishing can best take place when individuals can develop a sense of self-confidence and hope for the future by feeling attached to and supported by loved family members and friends, by being connected to and engaging with other people in a common cause for their community or society, feeling energized by the power of nature, and engaging in its restoration, and feeling empowered by a benevolent and almighty higher power. Our task is to transmit this message to as many people as possible and to support people and communities in finding hope for themselves and others.

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Andreas M. Krafft Researcher and lecturer at the Institute for Systemic Management and Public Governance at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland. His main research areas are the psychology of future thinking and transdisciplinary research on hope. For over ten years, he has been responsible for the international research network of the Hope Barometer.

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