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A Kantian Account of Political Hopes as Fundamental Hopes

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Abstract

In this article, I argue that the current literature on political hope overlooks its non-instrumental value. By proposing a Kant-inspired account of treating reasonable hopes as fundamental hopes, I argue that it is rational for people to hold certain political hopes not only because such hopes promote particular ends but also because they are constitutive of a person's practical identity as a responsible political agent with limited power to make changes. This view reveals that victims of injustice face an affective injustice because the unjust social system forces them to face a double bind in upholding their fundamental political hopes.

Keywords: political hope; Kantian reasonable hope; affective injustice; the rationality of hope

1. Introduction

The value of hope in political life has received increasing attention in recent decades.¹ Whether hope plays a productive or an unproductive role has been debated.² For instance, Vincent Lloyd (2018) argues that hope can foster solidarity among participants fighting for racial justice, while Calvin Warren (2015) suggests that ‘politics of hope’ preserve the metaphysical structures that sustain Black suffering, and that people should thus instead embrace ‘Black nihilism’.

Since hope plays a significant role in Kant's practical and religious theories, many scholars have discussed the productive functions of hope in political or moral life from a Kantian perspective (O'Neill 1996; Goldman 2012; Chignell 2018; Cureton 2018; Huber 2019). A mainstream view among Kantian scholars focuses on the instrumental value of hope in political life. In short, hope is valuable due to its varied contributions to political progress. As argued by Jakob Huber (2019), hope can psychologically sustain efforts by defending people from the threat of despair when the prospect of making a difference seems unlikely. According to this line of reasoning, hope is valuable in political life because it provides a stable disposition that allows one to endure and overcome difficulties in pursuit of political goals.

However, the instrumental value of hope in political life fails to fully capture the irreplaceable value of political hopes. First, it is unclear whether the instrumental

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value of hope is irreplaceable – that is, whether hope is necessary for citizens to sustain their moral motivation in the face of despair. As noted by Lisa Tessman (2009), individuals living under oppressive conditions find the motivation to act against injustice even in the absence of hope that the injustice will end. The self-respect and moral integrity of pessimists can still motivate them to actively resist oppression. Second, even if hope has significant or even irreplaceable instrumental value in political life, hope may still have a negative total value for certain groups of people. According to Katie Stockdale, one should question the notion that ‘hope is really practically rational for members of oppressed groups in resisting their own oppression if we take into account all of the unproductive roles it plays in political life’ (Stockdale 2019: 37).

In this article, I argue that the current discussion has overlooked the non-instrumental value of hope for citizens. I propose a Kant-inspired account of reasonable hope that treats reasonable hopes as fundamental hopes. As observed by Claudia Blöser and Titus Stahl, there are two kinds of hope: fundamental hope and non-fundamental hope. Fundamental hopes are constitutive of a person’s practical identity and thus have non-instrumental value (Blöser and Stahl 2017: 350). I argue that, from the Kantian perspective, reasonable hopes are fundamental hopes in that they allow a person to uphold their practical identity as a finite rational being striving to become morally good. According to this line of reasoning, reasonable political hope is non-instrumentally valuable because it is constitutive of a person’s practical identity as a responsible citizen pursuing political goals within their agential limitation.

In addition, I aim to demonstrate that focusing on the non-instrumental value of hope opens up space for discussing the relationship between respect for persons and respect for people’s fundamental political hopes. My discussion reveals the practical dilemma faced by victims of injustice in terms of holding and achieving their fundamental political hopes. While this view may or may not be exactly Kant’s, it can contribute to the broader Kantian account of how to respect individuals, especially other citizens in a community, from the perspective of respecting their fundamental hopes.

In section 2, I briefly summarize the instrumental value of hope in the political and moral world from a Kantian perspective. In section 3, I introduce the distinction between fundamental hopes and non-fundamental hopes. I then provide an interpretation of Kantian reasonable hopes as fundamental hopes. In section 4, I argue that the conceptual framework of treating reasonable hopes as fundamental hopes can reveal the overlooked non-instrumental value of hope in political life and the practical dilemma faced by victims of injustice when it comes to upholding and achieving their fundamental political hopes.

2. The instrumental value of political hopes from a Kantian perspective

Political hopes have two kinds of instrumental value for democratic politics from a Kantian perspective. The first is that hope plays a unique motivating role in defending against despair in adverse circumstances. As noted by Loren Goldman, from the first-person perspective of a political agent, the practical belief in the possibility of progress is a prerequisite for the collective endeavour: ‘Even if we cannot accept progress as a fact, we may still need it as a fiction for practical purposes’ (Goldman 2012: 499).

In Huber's view, by 'giving us the strength to muster the energy and constancy in the face of obstacles, [political hope] helps us to pursue democratic goods that appear difficult yet possible to obtain. Hope rescues us from inertia or despair when the prospects of making a difference are dim' (Huber 2019: 12).

Both Goldman's and Huber's arguments are grounded in Kant's assumption of a psychological feature of human agency. According to Kant, 'a final end cannot be commanded by any law of reason without reason simultaneously promising its attainability' (CPJ, 5: 471). As suggested by Huber, 'Kant seems to assume that, for psychological reasons, we can only act and sustain our commitment to action over time if we regard it as at least possible for us to make a difference, i.e. to causally contribute to the realisation of our goals' (Huber 2019: 9). For this reason, if people have a moral duty to promote the highest good and if human agents can only strive for ends they deem attainable, people need to regard the highest good as being at least possible to fulfil their moral duty. Similarly, people have a political duty to strive toward political progress. For psychological reasons, they can only act and sustain commitment to action over time if they regard it as possible for them to make a difference. Hence, in cases where the odds of making a difference are dim, people need political hopes to sustain their commitment to action.

However, it remains uncertain whether hope is the only available resource for providing a motivating force in adverse circumstances. As noted by Tessman (2009), pessimists can sustain virtues, such as self-respect, integrity and 'a sense of a "claim" on the sort of flourishing that is unattainable under conditions of oppression', that allow them to actively resist oppression even in the absence of hope that the injustice will end (Tessman 2009: 14–15). It is not the case that the hope that the injustice will end loses its instrumental value for pessimists. On the contrary, it is often when we are pessimistic that hope is most urgent. However, Tessman's argument shows that hope is not an irreplaceable resource for providing a motivating force for people when the chance of the expected outcome is low.

The second instrumental value of hope in democratic political life is that it fosters valuable attitudes towards other members of one's community. In Huber's view, 'the hope that inspires us to keep going amidst the obstacles of democratic life strengthens the trust in our fellow citizens and their assistance' (Huber 2019: 15). Trust among citizens and an emerging sense of collective agency in turn lead to the emergence of 'collective hope' that is held in common with others (Huber 2019: 15). That is, hope is instrumentally valuable because it is conducive to the cultivation of these relational attitudes towards other members of the community. However, Huber's argument only demonstrates that hope has significant value but cannot fully capture the irreplaceability of hope in political lives. There are other attitudes or practices which are also conducive to the cultivation of trust in other community members, such as showing empathy to each other. It is unclear whether political hope is a necessary precondition for cultivating trust, respect and civic friendship in a democratic community. This question is empirical, and answering it will at least partially rely on the outcomes of psychological studies.

Ultimately, if political hopes only have instrumental value, even significant instrumental value, one can always doubt their irreplaceability in political life. Is it not sufficient just to show the significance of hope in political life? In section 4.2, I will argue that *only* focusing on the instrumental value of hope leads us to underestimate

the mental suffering a person goes through in giving up their fundamental hopes. Emphasizing the intrinsic value of hope does not need to downplay its instrumental values but reveals an easily overlooked aspect of the value of hope.

3. Fundamental hopes and practical identity

In this section, I distinguish between fundamental and non-fundamental hopes and argue that Kantian reasonable hope is a form of fundamental hope. Furthermore, I argue that the rational ground for Kantian reasonable hopes stems from its constitutive role in our practical identities as self-formative rational animals.

3.1 Two kinds of hope

According to Blöser and Stahl, there are two kinds of hope: fundamental hope and non-fundamental hope. Fundamental hopes are the hopes that are constitutive of a person's practical identity (Blöser and Stahl 2017: 350). For instance, a mother's hope for her child's happiness is a constitutive part of her practical identity as a loving parent. Even if the hope for her child's happiness has no instrumental value in promoting her child's happiness, it is a rational hope because it is 'essential to the hopeful person's being the person she is' (p. 354). This particular fundamental hope is constitutive of a mother's commitment to the relationship between her and her child. The absence of this hope is a threat to the integrity of her practical identity as a loving parent (p. 355). In other words, the absence of this hope is a reflection of lacking a fully endorsed attitude toward the parental relationship. In Blöser and Stahl's view, 'a cancer patient's hope for a full recovery, a political activist's hope for the end of world hunger, or a religious person's hope for life after death' are all examples of fundamental hopes because they 'play a crucial role in how that person sees and interprets the world' (p. 350). By contrast, a person's hope that they will catch the morning bus is a non-fundamental hope since the absence of this hope does not negatively influence their endorsement of their practical identity.

In Blöser and Stahl's view, these two kinds of hope correspond to two ways of justifying the practical rationality of hope.³ What makes non-fundamental hope reasonable lies in the instrumental value of engaging in hopeful activities.⁴ For instance, what makes the hope that one will catch the morning bus rational is that engaging in this hope enables a person to wake earlier and fulfil their other rational goals. Thus, the practical rationality of non-fundamental hopes can be justified by referring to the benefits they produce. By contrast, the practical rational ground for fundamental hopes is 'not about end promotion but about upholding one's personal integrity' (Blöser and Stahl 2017: 355). In other words, 'these hopeful activities are essential to the hopeful person's being the person she is and ... it is therefore non-instrumentally rational for her to continue hoping' (p. 354).

It is to be noted that the distinction between fundamental hopes and non-fundamental hopes is not exclusive. Fundamental hopes can also have instrumental values. It is just that the ultimate reason for holding fundamental hopes is not their instrumental values. A mother's hope for her child's happiness might be conducive to the flourishing of her child because her hope might motivate her to take actions that can contribute to her child's happiness. However, a mother does not hope for her

child's happiness because she believes that such a hope is conducive to her child's happiness. She just has this hope as a caring parent.

The question thus becomes: is Kantian reasonable hope reasonable because of its instrumental value as non-fundamental hope or intrinsic value as fundamental hope? In the Canon of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant seems to suggest that hope for the highest good is a necessary resource for moral motivation (CPR, A813/B841). However, he rejects this view in his later work and argues that respect for the moral law is a sufficient incentive. Therefore, Kant does not believe that reasonable hope is practically rational and valuable merely because it promotes moral motivation.⁵ If Kantian reasonable hope is a kind of fundamental hope that constitutes a person's practical identity, then what practical identity does this hope correspond to?

3.2 Human beings as self-formative rational animals

In the Jäsche *Logic*, Kant says that the field of philosophy may be summed up in the following questions: 'What can I know?', 'What ought I to do?', 'What may I hope?' and 'What is the human being?' The first three questions all relate to the final one (*JL*, 9: 25). However, Kant scholars rarely discuss how the answer to the last question reveals what people may hope. In the Preface to the *Religion*, Kant clearly states that his four essays are intended 'to make apparent the relation of religion to a human nature partly laden with good dispositions and partly with evil ones' (*R*, 6: 11). Since *Religion* is a significant resource where Kant deals with what people may hope, this quotation suggests that the answer is found in the characterization of human nature.

In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant characterizes human beings as rational animals – 'an animal endowed with the capacity of reason' (*Anth*, 7: 322). The most salient feature of rational animals is that they confront an unceasing conflict between their rational and animal selves. Kant provides three perspectives for understanding this tension. First, from the perspective of humans' motivation, humans possess both moral incentives and inclinations for happiness. In Kant's view, when people attempt to execute their agency as finite rational beings, they recognize the command from the moral law and may experience the opposite drive from their finite and sensible nature. Second, from the perspective of being an independent moral agent, a person possesses both a positive predisposition to morality and humanity (*R*, 6: 27) and a natural propensity to evil (6: 30). In Kant's view, '[t]he propensity to personality is the susceptibility to respect for the moral law as of itself a sufficient incentive to the power of choice' (6: 28). However, Kant also notes that human beings have the propensity to prioritize self-interest over morality in their 'supreme maxim' (6: 32). Third, from the entire species' perspective, humans possess the innate disposition of 'unsocial sociability' (6: 20).⁶ People are social animals with 'the impulse to society' (6: 27) – they need to associate and be in a community with others. Simultaneously, human beings also have 'comparing self-love', which leads them to judge their happiness only by comparison with others (6: 27). This disposition to evaluate happiness based on comparison produces 'jealousy and rivalry', which causes continuous clashes with others (6: 27).

Besides characterizing human beings as rational animals, Kant also notes that a human being is different from a mere machine, for the machine only has a 'motive power'. In contrast, human beings possess a 'formative power' (*CPJ*, 5: 374). He also

states that his pragmatic anthropology concerns what the human being ‘as a free-acting being makes of himself, or can and should make of himself’, which is different from physiological anthropology, which takes human beings as causally determined entities (*Anth*, 7: 119). The capacity for human beings to make themselves is their self-formative characteristic.

To summarize, Kant’s characterization of a human being has two aspects. First, humans are rational animals or finite rational beings who unavoidably experience tension between their rational and animal selves. This tension can be revealed from three perspectives: the tension between prudential desires and moral will, the tension between the predisposition to follow moral law and the propensity to disobey moral law, and the tension between the disposition to associate with others and the tendency to clash with others. Second, as self-formative beings, humans possess the capacity and disposition to strive for morally better selves. Kant summarizes the human species as ‘a species of a rational being that strives among obstacles to rise out of evil in constant progress toward the good’ (*Anth*, 7: 333). In summary, according to Kant, a human being is a self-formative rational animal.

In the next sub-section, I argue that reasonable hope is a constituent of humans’ practical identities as self-formative rational animals. This interpretation can reveal that the primary objects for reasonable hope in the Kantian picture correspond to the three ways of characterizing the tension between the human rational self and animal self.

3.3 Kantian reasonable hopes as fundamental hopes

Kant considers three primary objects of hope in his writings: ‘one’s own happiness (proportionate with one’s virtue; *CPR*, A809/B837), one’s own moral progress (*R*, 6: 46, 6: 48), and the moral improvement of the human race (i.e., social progress; *CPrR*, 8: 309)’ (Blöser and Stahl 2017: 14). However, it is not clear on what basis Kant chooses these primary objects of ‘reasonable hope’ and what grounds their rationality. I believe a closer look at why Kant thinks there is reason to hope for these objects indicates that the three aspects of human character constitute the shared ground unifying these three objects. This analysis reveals that, from the Kantian perspective, hope does not play a facilitating role intended to promote practical ends; rather, hope is a constitutive part of humans’ practical identities as finite rational beings striving to become morally good people.

First, as finite rational beings, humans possess moral incentives and inclinations for happiness. A relevant question is what attitude a person may hold concerning these dual motivations for action. In the Canon of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant introduces hope for the highest good to reconcile moral incentives and desires for happiness. He asks, ‘If I do what I should, what may I then hope?’ (*CPR*, A806/B834).⁷ The answer is that one may hope that one’s happiness is in proportion to one’s virtue. In *Religion*, Kant argues that one can hardly avoid asking the above question: ‘For it cannot possibly be a matter of indifference to reason how to answer the question, What is then the result of this right conduct of ours?’ (*R*, 6: 5–6). Thus, holding a hopeful attitude that one’s happiness is proportionate with one’s virtue is a natural attitude possessed by those who self-identify as beings who can recognize the

command of moral law and its unconditional bindingness and, at the same time, feel the inclination to pursue happiness.

Second, from the perspective focused on individual motivation, humans possess both a positive predisposition to morality and one to 'radical evil'. According to Kant, the human being is 'radically evil' because there is a propensity in human nature to reverse 'the moral order of his incentives in incorporating them into his maxims' (R, 6: 36). Thus, holding a hopeful attitude for one's own moral progress is a natural attitude held by those who self-identify as beings with these predispositions but still strive to become morally better people. In Kant's view, when a person realizes the tension between his positive predisposition and evil propensity, 'he must be able to hope that, by the exertion of his own power, he will attain to the road that leads in that direction, as indicated to him by a fundamentally improved disposition' (6: 51). Thus, one must hope for moral progress because forfeiting this hope results in a threat to the integrity of one's practical identity as a self-formative rational being.

Third, from the perspective focused on the species, human beings possess the disposition of 'unsocial sociability'. They possess the need to associate with each other and also possess the propensity to fight each other. From this perspective, holding a hopeful attitude even in the face of seemingly unceasing human conflicts is a reasonable attitude if a person endorses their practical identity from the whole species perspective.

These three arguments indicate Kant's belief that the answer to the question of what a human being is provides the answer to the question of what they may reasonably hope. In Kant's view, *Religion's* purpose is to make apparent the relation of religion to human nature (R, 6: 11). People reasonably hold these fundamental hopes because they are who they are as self-formative rational animals. Ultimately, this means the primary Kantian reasonable hopes are fundamental hopes that are based on rational grounds given their constitutive role in humans' practical identities as self-formative rational animals.⁸

On a constructivist reading of Kant's ethics, the rational ground of reasonable hopes thus stems from people's endorsement of their humanity despite their agential limitation. As suggested by Korsgaard, this endorsement of humanity then becomes the source of normative reason. In her view, '[i]t is necessary to have some conception of your practical identity, for without it you cannot have reasons to act. We endorse or reject our impulses by determining whether they are consistent with the ways in which we identify ourselves' (Korsgaard 1996: 120). On this line of reasoning, it is practically rational to hope for the highest good, for personal moral progress and for social progress because they are the source of people's normative reasons – these hopes provide normative reason to 'strive among obstacles to rise out of evil in constant progress toward the good' (*Anth*, 7: 333).

Since Kant does not directly use the term 'endorsement', it is worth considering what endorsement of humanity means from the Kantian perspective. I suggest that the endorsement of humanity for Kant means valuing the position of human beings in the moral world as both 'elevated' and 'humiliated'. According to Kant, when humans contemplate the authority of moral law, they have a feeling of humiliation that 'takes place only relatively to the purity of the law' and accordingly experience a 'lowering of pretensions to moral self-esteem'. At the same time, humans also experience 'an elevation of the moral esteem' and accordingly 'a feeling that is positive in its

intellectual cause' (*CPrR*, 5: 79–80). As a result, the moral law 'lets us discover the sublimity of our own supersensible existence and subjectively effects respect for their higher vocation in human beings, who are at the same time conscious of their sensible existence and of the dependence, connected with it, on their pathologically affected nature' (5: 89).

At this point, my interpretation differs from Korsgaard's constructivist reading of Kant's ethics. For Korsgaard, 'a human being is an animal who needs a practical conception of her own identity' (Korsgaard 1996: 123). As a result, the endorsement of humanity for Korsgaard means valuing the fact that our practical identities are normative for us. In my reading, Kantian reasonable hope shares the same rational ground as respect for the moral law and for other finite but rational beings. In his practical philosophy, Kant argues that as finite rational beings we should treat other self-formative but finite beings in accordance with their dignity. On this line of reasoning, the rationality of fundamentally reasonable hopes for Kant derives from the moral reason of treating a rational agent of the human sort in a respectful way.

Thus, to respect the moral law without having a reasonable hope of making moral progress is not respect in its fullest sense. In contrast to Tessman's belief (2009) that individuals living under oppression can find the motivation to act against injustice even in the absence of hope based on their self-respect and moral integrity, a Kantian analysis of the value of hope indicates that certain fundamental hopes are constitutive of one's self-respect and moral integrity. Upholding one's self-respect and moral integrity in the fullest sense requires the possession of certain fundamental hopes.

Ultimately, in the Kantian picture, it is reasonable to hope for the highest good, for personal moral progress and for social progress, as these are fundamental hopes entailed by people's endorsement of humanity.⁹

4. The non-instrumental value of political hopes

4.1 Respecting others through their reasonable fundamental hopes

People have a moral duty to respect others in virtue of the dignity of their humanity. This implies that people need to respect others' reasonable fundamental hopes – hopes that (a) are constitutive of practical identity and (b) are consistent with moral and political duties.¹⁰ One way of understanding what Kant means by 'If I do what I should, what may I then hope?' (*CPR*, A806/B834) is as follows: 'If I do what I should, what do I have a right to hope?'

However, it is unclear what the moral duty to respect others' reasonable fundamental hopes amounts to. I do not aim to provide a full-fledged answer to this question in this article. However, I believe that this question is of significant practical value when considering how to respect individuals in their daily lives. In this article, I focus on one crucial requirement for respecting others' reasonable fundamental hopes: people must appreciate the value of fundamental hopes beyond merely measuring their instrumental value. I will discuss how to fulfil this requirement from two distinctive perspectives – the perspective of personal relationships and the perspective of the social system.

Consider the following example. A mother learns that her child has a rare disease with only a 1 per cent chance of survival. The mother's hope for her child's recovery is

one of her fundamental hopes because it is constitutive of her practical identity as a caring mother. This hope cannot influence her child's outcome of survival; however, the hope is part of the mother's valuing attitude toward her child and their unique relationship. If a doctor suggested the mother should abandon her hopes based on a mere calculation of benefits and costs, such as the concern for reducing the psychological pain of disappointment, one would find it reasonable for this mother to feel angry or even offended. This is because the rational ground for the mother's hope is not merely the likelihood of attaining the desired outcome but also her valuing attitude toward her relationship with her child and her endorsement of her practical identity as a caring mother. Respecting a person's fundamental hopes requires one to treat these hopes as being more than merely instrumentally valuable.

Nevertheless, the consideration of instrumental value is not completely irrelevant. It is legitimate for the doctor to tell the mother about the very low likelihood that her child will recover since the likelihood is relevant to the epistemic rationality of hope. It is epistemically irrational to hope for X if X's happening is impossible. However, a caring doctor should communicate this information in a respectful way by recognizing the conflict between the practically and the epistemically rational aspect of hope. The doctor should acknowledge that giving up fundamental hopes amounts to denying part of who a person is. Being able to appreciate the non-instrumental value of others' fundamental hopes is the first step toward respecting their reasonable fundamental hopes.

This argument only concludes that people should not treat others' reasonable fundamental hopes as having only instrumental value; it leaves open the question of how this goal can be achieved in practice. In reality, the relationship involved in this scenario is much more complicated. It is not only the mother-child relationship that is at stake but also the child's relationships with the father, siblings and friends. The mother's hope for the child's recovery might conflict with others' hopes of saying goodbye to the dying person. My argument thus only aims to demonstrate that, no matter what the best practical choice may be, one should take the non-instrumental value of hopes into account and acknowledge the price of giving up fundamental hopes. In the next section, I aim to show that recognition of the non-instrumental value of reasonable fundamental hopes can reveal the struggling reality of victims of injustice in their political lives regarding holding and giving up their fundamental political hopes.

4.2 The dilemma of hope for victims of injustice

In limiting reasonable fundamental hopes to the narrower scope of fundamental political hopes, we can ask how one should respect other citizens' reasonable fundamental political hopes. A woman's hope for equal rights, for example, is not only a political but also a reasonable fundamental hope. First, this hope is constitutive of her practical identity as a responsible political agent. Second, her hope is consistent with her moral and political duties. This hope is entailed by her commitment to the pursuit of justice and her pursuit of a well-lived life, which she is entitled to pursue as a citizen. Thus, a woman's hope deserves other citizens' respect. These fundamental hopes are of value to victims of injustice not only because of their instrumental values but also because they are constitutive of the victims' practical identities as

responsible citizens striving to achieve legitimate political goals. In Kant's view, there are four attributes of a citizen: 'lawful freedom', 'civil equality', 'civil independence' and 'civil personality' (*MM*, 6: 314). Civil personality is the 'attribute of not needing to be represented by another where rights are concerned' (*MM*, 6: 314). Holding fundamental political hopes formed in response to one's specific life experience is an expression of one's civil personality. The connection between holding fundamental political hopes and valuing one's civil personality suggests that what count as fundamental political hopes for a person should be decided by the person themselves. Not everything that is morally permissible is worthy of our hope and thus a person has the freedom to form, choose from and decide to hold on to the hopes that are derived from their specific life experience.

However, one should not ignore the disadvantages victims of injustice face in their political lives when upholding their political hopes. First, political hopes held by victims of injustice are subject to exploitation. As Warren observes (2015), political hopes can be forced upon a disadvantaged group in society through a 'politics of hope'. '[T]he politics of hope posits that one must have a politics to have hope' (Warren 2015: 219). In other words, 'any existence of hope "outside" the political subverts, compromises, and destroys hope itself' (Warren 2015: 219). In Warren's view, a politics of hope preserves the metaphysical structures that sustain Black suffering: 'Progress and perfection are worked through the pained black body and any recourse to the Political and its discourse of hope will ultimately reproduce the very metaphysical structures of violence and pulverize black being' (p. 218). Thus, one should instead embrace 'Black nihilism'. Warren does not argue that Black people should not hold any political hopes but rather emphasizes that any hope produced within the unjust social system is an 'exploited hope' (p. 233) that 'perpetuates black suffering by placing relief in an unattainable future' (p. 233).

Second, political hopes held by victims of injustice might produce a negative total practical value for them. As argued by Stockdale (2019), besides focusing on the commonality of hope among all human beings, one should also pay attention to the variation in people's experiences and capacities to hope. Some people tend to respond hopefully to agential limitations, while others tend to respond with doubt, frustration and sadness. Stockdale observes that hope's objects, character, strength and capacity can all be affected by the social environment. When it comes to objects of hope, '[m]embers of oppressed groups often form hopes that arise because they live under the experience of threat of these kinds of injustice, such as the hopes to be free from violence, harassment, and neglect' (Stockdale 2019: 32–3). When it comes to hope's character, a person's hope might be 'tainted with fear' (p. 33), as in the instance of a woman's hope to make it home safely, which is formed largely because she fears for her safety as a woman. When it comes to hope's strength, '[o]ppression can threaten and damage hope through either diminishing the likelihood that a person's hopes will be realized, through a loss of desire, or both' (p. 34). Finally, the psychological effects of living under oppressive conditions can also threaten an individual's capacity for cultivating or sustaining hopes for one's own life and future (p. 33). Thus, despite the significant value of hope in political life, holding political hope may have a negative net practical value for members of oppressed groups resisting their own oppression when the benefit of hoping is less than its negative values.

With these insights comes a more comprehensive picture of the political hope dilemma that victims of injustice face. On the one hand, certain political hopes are reasonable fundamental hopes that are essential to people's practical identities and to their interpretations of the world they inhabit. Holding these hopes derives from people's endorsement attitudes toward their political goals and as a part of their expression of their 'civil personality' (MM, 6: 314). Thus, victims of injustice have non-instrumental reasons for sustaining their hopes for social justice, equal rights and a better political future. On the other hand, sustaining these hopes becomes an additional burden because these victims may be exploited in their hopes, may endure disappointment from brutal reality and more.¹¹

The dilemma of hope faced by victims of injustice amounts to a kind of 'affective injustice', as Amia Srinivasan argues (2018). According to Srinivasan, a person faces affective injustice when systematic social injustice produces an irreconcilable conflict between apt emotional responses and responses that are prudentially rational to feel. In the article 'The Aptness of Anger', Srinivasan notes that victims of injustice who express apt anger¹² can experience counterproductive effects, including impediments to their epistemic rationality, alienation of potential allies, aggravation of conflict and encouragement of self-harm (Srinivasan 2018: 125–6). Apt counterproductive anger here is prudentially irrational since it fails to serve the self-interest of victims. However, apt anger 'presents its object as involving a moral violation' (p. 128) and is thus 'a means of affectively registering or appreciating the injustice of the world ... anger is also a form of communication, a way of publicly marking moral disvalue, calling for the shared negative appreciation of others' (p. 132). From this perspective, apt anger has intrinsic moral value. Srinivasan argues that victims of injustice must choose between 'making the world as it should be' and 'appreciating the world as it is' (p. 133). Living in such a condition is itself unjust because it forces people into an unfair normative conflict through no fault of their own (p. 133).

This same argument applies specifically to reasonable fundamental political hopes held by victims of injustice. These hopes are apt emotions deriving from one's valuing attitude toward one's practical identity as a responsible citizen. However, the external world is structured in a way that makes it prudentially irrational to uphold such hopes when holding hopes tends to produce more negative values than benefits.¹³ Systematic social injustice thus produces an unfair normative conflict through no fault of the victims of such injustice.

This situation means that when discussing the value of political hopes, one should look beyond their instrumental values to ask how the social system can sustain people's rights to express themselves freely and pursue fundamental political hopes consistent with their moral and political duties.

Thus, from a Kantian perspective, we can discuss how to respect people's reasonable fundamental hopes on two levels. On the level of personal relationships, respecting others' reasonable fundamental hopes requires a person to appreciate the non-instrumental value of these hopes and acknowledge the price of giving up fundamental hopes. On the social structure level, respecting people's reasonable fundamental hopes requires not only appropriate attitudes from other individuals but also the support of a just social system. The discussion should go beyond whether a woman should or should not be asked to uphold her hope for gender equality based on prudential concerns or whether Black people should or should not be asked to

choose between striving to uphold their political hopes or embracing ‘Black Nihilism’ (Warren 2015). Instead, people should also ask whether the existing social system allows victims of injustice to hold their fundamental reasonable hopes without facing unbearable counterproductive effects. Thus, a just society with the goal of granting equal respect to its citizens should allow its citizens to uphold their reasonable fundamental political hopes without facing the current dilemma.

5. Conclusion

In this article, I argue that the current literature on the value of political hope overlooks the non-instrumental value of hope. According to Blöser and Stahl, there are two kinds of hope: fundamental hope and non-fundamental hope. Fundamental hopes are constitutive of a person’s practical identity. What makes a fundamental hope rational cannot thus be fully captured by its instrumental values. Based on this distinction, I argue that Kantian reasonable hopes are fundamental hopes. The rational ground for these hopes is their constitutive role in people’s practical identities as self-formative rational animals. In the Kantian picture, it is reasonable to hope for the highest good, personal moral progress and social progress because these are fundamental hopes produced by people’s endorsement of humanity. By proposing a Kant-inspired account of treating reasonable hopes as fundamental hopes, I argue that certain political hopes are rational for people to hold not only because they can promote particular ends but also because they are constitutive of a person’s practical identity as a responsible political agent with limited power to make a change.

From a Kantian perspective, respecting others requires one to respect their humanity, which implies that one should respect other people’s reasonable fundamental hopes. Respecting a person’s fundamental hopes requires one to treat these hopes as having more than mere instrumental values. This perspective reveals that victims of injustice face a kind of affective injustice because they must choose between holding their legitimate fundamental political hopes and giving up these hopes due to their counterproductive effects. The unfair normative conflicts these victims face in their political lives are produced by an unjust social system.

Notes

1 I will refer to Kant’s works with the following abbreviations followed by standard Academy volume and page numbers. Quotations are from the Cambridge edition of Kant’s works. *JL* = *Logik* (ed. Jäsche) (in Kant 1992); *CPrR* = *Critique of Practical Reason* (in Kant 1996); *MM* = *The Metaphysics of Morals* (in Kant 1996); *CPR* = *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant 1998a); *CPJ* = *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (Kant 2002); *R* = *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (in Kant 1998b); *Anth* = *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (Kant 2007).

2 Hope has been identified as an emotion (Drahos 2004), an existential feeling (Ratcliffe 2013) and a disposition (Gravlee 2000). In this article, I define hope as an attitude that can be roughly understood as a combination of affective states, beliefs and behaviours toward a particular object, person, thing or event.

3 In this article, I focus on the practical rather than the epistemic rationality of hope.

4 Bovens (1999) argues that hope is valuable because it can facilitate actions and bring about desired states.

5 Some Kant scholars still grant hope a role as a facilitator in moral motivation but not as a necessary condition. For instance, Insole (2008) believes that hope can have a motivational role but does not consider it a necessary condition.

- 6 For further discussion of ‘unsocial sociability’, see Wood (1991).
- 7 This passage indicates that Kantian hope is not passive but rather active and agency-engaging. We can hope for a desired outcome only if we have done our part to promote this end.
- 8 My argument only aims to demonstrate one way of understanding the rational grounds for Kantian reasonable hope from the perspective of analysing the unity of the objects of hope. Kant provides a number of different frameworks for the rationality of hope across his writings. For a more detailed discussion of other frameworks for the rationality of hope, see Chignell (2013)
- 9 The reasonable hopes in the Kantian picture do not directly provide moral motivation for engaging in actions but instead contribute to the cultivation of moral strength. Having strong moral strength is a necessary condition for cultivating moral character.
- 10 By adding the second criterion, I aim to preclude fundamental hopes that are inconsistent with one’s moral or political duties. It is possible for a person to hold a fundamental hope that is constitutive of her practical identity as a person who endorses racism.
- 11 For further discussion of the counterproductive role hope plays in political life, see Bell (1992), Ben-Ze’ev (2001), Teasley and Ikard (2010) and Dawson (2012).
- 12 In Srinivasan’s view: ‘For S’s anger that p to be apt it must be that p involves a genuine moral violation. But it must also be the case that p constitutes what Grice called a “personal” reason for S – that is, a reason that can serve as her reason for being angry: a reason, plausibly, that S knows. Also, S’s anger must also be properly motivated by that possessed reason and proportional to that reason’ (Srinivasan 2018: 130).
- 13 As noted by Blöser, ‘On Kant’s account, hope is rational if we can trust in the fundamental structures of reality that are necessary for the realization of our hope’ (2022: 14). Without trust in these fundamental structures, victims of injustice often have unwarranted hopes.

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