

Hope Against Death

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'Precisely because of its ability to keep the unfortunate in continual suspense, the Greeks considered hope the evil of evils, the truly insidious evil.'

'Love, faith, hope - in that order.
The Greeks were wrong. Of course
hope is real, and of course it is not
evil. It is the enemy of evil, and
an ally of love. Which is goodness.'

What is hope?



Hope's 3 essential characteristics

1. a thought directed exclusively to the future
2. is always experienced as good and pleasant
3. focusses thinking

Mortality:

'Hope lives in time and is lost, ceases in the timelessness of eternity or the instant of the moment.'

Harold Boris, Psychoanalyst, 20th century 8

Human hope

- 'we maintain ambiguity in order to preserve hope'

Harold Boris, Psychoanalyst, 20th century

A hit of hope

Gambling

» On-line poker

» Loteri Nationale

» casino

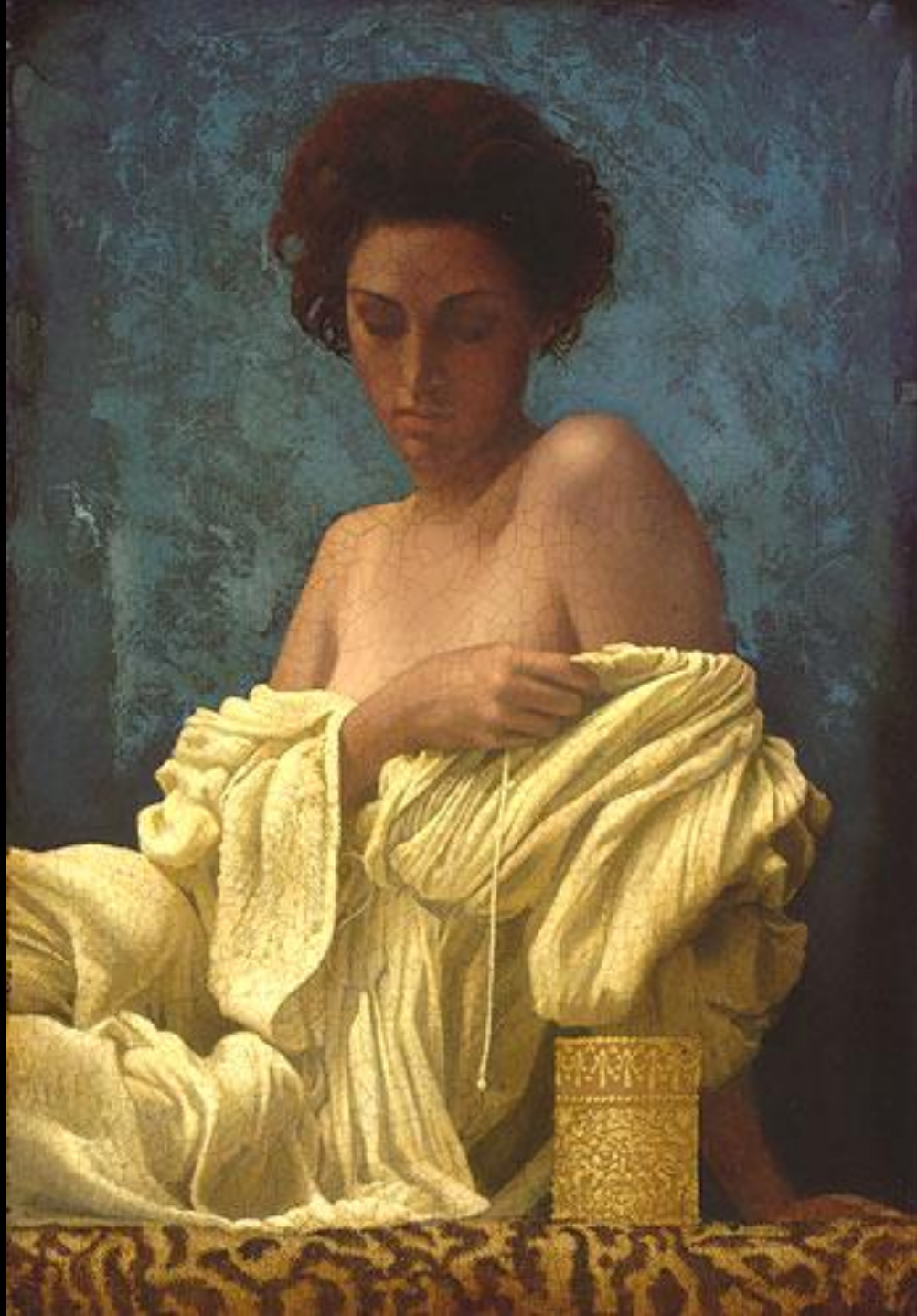


Seduction of Hope

**'In flirtation one does not take risks,
one only sustains their possibility.'**

On Flirtation by Adam Phillips, p. xxi

Faber & Faber, 1994, London



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'prisoner of hope' Zechariah 9:12

**'The prisoner of hope is
sustained and encouraged by
his hope, even as he is
confined by it.'**

**Jane S. Gerber (Editor), The Illustrated History of
the Jewish People**

**'The camp's law is that those
going to their death should
be deceived until the end.'**

**Tadeusz Borowski, Polish poet,
Auschwitz-Birkenau,
quoted at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem**

'When you give up treatment you have to confront the reality (that you will never have a child). You have to give up hope.'

Or else what...?

The Age newspaper, 8/12/2001, An IVF candidate

Hope's 3 essential characteristics

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'Indeed, there is no torment quite like hopelessness. But hopelessness marks the presence of thwarted hope, not hope's absence.'

Neuro-cognitive benefits of hope

- **Hopelessness**

- Thinking: disorganized, disordered, unfocussed, 'all over the place',

- **Restoration of hope**

- Thinking: focussed, effective, directed, organized

Is hope Good or Evil?



**'I understood that hope is an
instrument of evil.'**

**talking about accommodation in a
dictatorship**

**Imre Kertesz, 2002 Nobel prize winner for literature...
from his acceptance speech**

Hope as a value neutral item

- Process versus content
- however hope itself is neither good nor evil

'False hope' is an oxymoron

- 1% chance: futile or hope-generating
 - denial
- 0% chance: hope for a miracle
 - Both are subjectively real

Hope cannot be disproven &
does not depend on truth

Hope in advanced cancer ⁽¹⁾

- Do we give palliative cancer treatment in order to bolster hope?
- For whose hope - the doctor? the patient?
- To avoid conversation about death & dying?
- To maintain the fighting spirit & prolong life?

Hope in advanced cancer (2)

Does telling the truth

diminish hope?

And shorten life?

Hope in advanced cancer (3)

Should we stop the process
of hoping?

- Will this prevent despair, fear,
demoralization & hopelessness?

3 Therapeutic Strategies

1. to live day-by-day

'Was and will make me ill, I
can take a gramme and only
am.'

Lenina Crowne,
reciting an hypnopaedic message about soma,
in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World

The Paradox of Camus

- 'One can still live fully while rejecting hope, and, in fact, can only do so **without** hope. By not having hope, one will be motivated to live every fleeting moment to the fullest.'

**'The one with no hope also
does not fear. Fear about the
uncertain future remains, so
long as hope about the future
remains.'**

*G Scott Gravlee, Aristotle on Hope,
Journal of History of Philosophy, 2000*

Jill Bolte Taylor

My Stroke of Insight, 2006

http://www.ted.com/talks/jill_bolte_taylor_s_powerful_stroke_of_insight

- **‘My consciousness no longer retained the discriminatory function of my dominant analytical left brain...Without the traditional sense of my physical boundaries, I felt that I was at one with the vastness of the universe...my consciousness dwelled in a flow of sweet tranquility...All I could perceive was right here, right now, and it was beautiful...Now released from that restrictive circuitry, my right hemisphere relished in its attachment to the eternal flow. I was no longer isolated and alone.’**

3 Therapeutic Strategies

2. to exchange hope for
'looking-forwards-to-
something'

'I am looking forwards to..'

-an expectation not a hope

-a pleasure not dependent

- A visit**
- A wedding**

3 Therapeutic Strategies

3. to reflect upon a life-lived

the present not the future

Breitbart & a 'life narrative'

- 'The paradox of the end of life dynamic is, that through acceptance of the life one has lived, comes acceptance of death'

