

Taking Cinderella to the Ball: How a mimetic anthropology restores the theological virtue of hope

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Introduction

I should start by apologizing for my title. For if Hope is Cinderella, then by implication Faith and Charity are her ugly stepsisters. But in reality both are beautiful, and neither is envious. I just couldn't resist the temptation of making an off-Broadway appearance as a fairy godmother. Nevertheless, while the wand maybe mine for this evening, the magic as you all know, is from René Girard.

Grant has honoured me very greatly by inviting me to talk about Hope at this Colloquium, where we are being asked to be constructively self-critical with relation to Girard's thought and our use of it. One of the comments I've heard most frequently about René's final book, *Battling to the End* is that he is very apocalyptic in his assessment of where we are going, and the underlying trends at work; and that there is precious little room in his account for hope. What I will try to do this evening is to challenge not the first part of that assessment, but the second: that there is precious little room for hope. And this not because I find hidden signs of hope scattered among the pages of the book, but because I think the assessment makes a category mistake about the relationship between apocalyptic thinking and hope. Apocalyptic, or catastrophist, thinking involves a certain assessment of the future. Hope is a theological virtue qualifying the present. The confusion between these two helps neither, and, as I hope to show, René's mimetic anthropology offers us a very good way in to making sense of the latter. What I would like to have done by the end of this evening is sparked a reassessment of our take on *Battling to the End*, to which I will hardly refer, such that the relationship between hope and darkness may be more easily fathomed.

1. Three ugly sisters

Many of us live with a characterisation of each of the three theological virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity that is run from within by at least a strong residue of a modern, individualistic, picture of the self. The result is that, without our being able to help it, we find ourselves living a caricature of what those virtues are. So Faith becomes a counterfactual ideological position, called belief, that we are emotionally blackmailed into holding if we want to be “saved”. You must launch a moon-shot into the void, concerning the existence of God and the effect of Jesus on the world. And whether or not there is anything there, your being prepared to launch the moon-shot, and to provide strenuous emotional fuel for it, is somehow considered meritorious.

Charity then appears as a huge demand on the will to continue to think positively of, and act generously towards, others; and especially the bastards, whoever they may be. Despite your disliking and disapproving of them in almost every way. Once again, as though a certain self-punitive effort in forcing yourself to hold a positive attitude towards what you really don't like were especially meritorious.

And Hope becomes a polite way of talking about wishful thinking. A way to put a positive spin on the loss of any firm expectation that such and such a good thing might happen to you: “Do you really think that you've got a snowball's chance in hell of such and such an award?” “Not really, but I live in hope”. As though hope were an emission of longing into a vacuum: what remains when there is no real expectation. But this is no more than a positive emotional spin on wishful thinking, dressing up resignation as a virtue.

Well, as I trust is apparent, these three simulacra have little or nothing to do with the theological virtues as traditionally understood. What I propose to do with you this evening is to show just how much more clearly Hope, alongside the other virtues, can come to be seen for what it is when we reimagine the anthropology that underpins it, following the interindividual understanding of Mimetic desire as elaborated by René Girard, and developed by Jean-Michel Oughourlian.

2. What is a theological virtue?

Before we get to the theological part, what, first of all, is a virtue? A virtue is a stable disposition for the good, which has been generated in

you through your habitual response to this or that set of circumstances. So, a brave person is one in whom the stable disposition of not allowing their actions to be dominated by fear when faced with danger has become a recognisable characteristic of theirs, such that it helps define who they really are. This, by contrast with someone who feels no fear (and so does not properly assess danger); Or with someone who has occasional bouts of chemically -induced bravado leading them to reckless behaviour; Or by someone whose actions when faced with danger are habitually dominated by fear: a coward.

Typically, the habitual responses that become stable in us are ones, as René Girard has always insisted, into which we are inducted by imitation. A good model, if we can avoid being drawn into rivalry with them, will induct us into acquiring the same stable dispositions as they. As we all know, this is an arduous and precarious process, since a healthy distance from our models is not easy to maintain. As we get closer to each other, we find ourselves flipping from emulation into rivalry, as though the stable disposition in question, and the praise and recognition that accompany it, were a scarce commodity, which we can only possess at our model's expense.

I hope it is apparent, then, that a virtue is something relational, part of the way, starting from outside you, by which something is produced in you, becoming something that really is you, and thus has a regular, objective effect on how you relate to others.

If this, then, is what a virtue is, what is meant by a “theological virtue”? Well, it means that the Other who produces in us the stable disposition in question is God. Naturally, if you have an individualistic psychology, where your desire starts in you, then this will have to seem somewhat magical. God illumines your mind in some direct way, may be by some sort of zapping, so that you are able to “know” something that is not at all naturally obvious; or God empowers you to resigned waiting in the face of scarcely imaginable pie in the sky; or strengthens your will to do what you know to be right in your relationships with others, however painful and unpleasant that may turn out to be for them or for you. However, a mimetic understanding of the psychology in question produces both a saner and a much more traditional picture.

For Faith is the stable disposition produced in you by God's truthfully persuading you, through the presence of Jesus' life and death, that you are loved by God as you are. Through this persuasion over time you are

able habitually to relax into that “being known by God as you are with love” and to live without fear of death. That “being known by God as you are with love” is already something in the face of which death is moot, since for God knowing someone, loving them, and holding them deathlessly in being are inseparable, as Jesus both taught and demonstrated. So through the stable disposition of “being persuaded” coming to characterize you, you are already starting to live deathlessly exactly in your being held in the knowledge that you are loved by One for whom death is not.

Because of this, the ordinary emotional correlate of faith is relaxation. You are not having to strain belief towards something unknown. Rather, the effort, strain, and hard work, is on the part of the One who is trying to persuade you to relax into being known as you are. Despite all obstacles of shame, ignorance, and inability to accept yourself as loveable, that One is inducing in you the stable disposition of being persuaded by that One; which persuasion (or faith – the Greek word is the same) is itself God’s gift in you. This gift is in you as a certain, publicly detectable, way of being present in the world, which has incidence in all your relationships.

Charity is the stable disposition by which God empowers us habitually to receive ourselves through giving ourselves away. Once again, typically we imagine that charity involves a self-starting exercise of the will by which we must love God above all things and others as ourselves. And the more difficult and demanding this is, the better. Such a demand very quickly turns us into generous-seeming emotional blackmailers, run by all the pathologies of self-sacrifice that Girard has so well illuminated.

Nevertheless, a sane anthropology, or a sane theology, or indeed anyone who remembers 1 John 4, 10¹, knows perfectly well that it is because we are loved first that we are able to love; and the presence of real love towards others in a person’s life is a sure sign that they are operating out of being loved first. The reason that this is important is because “being empowered to receive yourself through giving yourself away” is how we come to share the life of God. For of God we can say that God’s very being consists in giving Godself away. Hence the abundance of everything that is, and the self-effacement of the One bringing it into being. So Charity is the stable disposition by which we are gradually

¹ In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.

inducted by Jesus the Crucified and Risen one (the Human self-giving one who received himself fully through giving himself away) into sharing the inner life of God already in this life. And the emotional correlate that goes along with this disposition is Joy.

Well, there are no shortage of books about the theological virtues of Faith and Charity. And this is, I suspect, in large part because traditionally, each has been linked with a human faculty – intellect in the case of Faith and will in the case of Charity – about which we have not lacked intelligent conversation. Even when that conversation has been bogged down in individualist and mentalist presuppositions. But it may surprise you to know that the human faculty traditionally associated with the theological virtue of Hope is memory. And it is much harder to come by literature on the theological anthropology of memory.

So I would like to suggest, as an initial definition, and before we move into exploring the role of memory, that the theological virtue of Hope is the stable disposition by which we allow ourselves habitually to be stretched, by an apparently future fullness that is coming upon us, into receiving who we really are, while undergoing a recasting of our past. If the emotional correlate of Faith is relaxation, and of Charity, Joy, then the emotional correlate of Hope is a sense of being stretched into an exciting adventure, with the rejuvenating zest that accompanies that sense.

3. Huiiothesía

However, before we move into a detailed discussion of Hope and what is specific to it, I'd like to make one further general point about why the theological virtues are central to Christianity. And my point is linked to the same critique of the deficient and crippling individualistic view, which we seem to hold as normal. Where faith is a straining to hold a counterfactual belief system, hope is wishful thinking in a vacuum, and charity is a willed determination to goodness, then after a bit, the only element left to matter in Christian Life comes to be morals, since that is the only element which actually has any real bite on our day to day life. So, if we are Protestant, the Bible becomes a fundamental law book for morals, and if we are Catholic, the Church becomes an unquestionable morals-policing operation. Because all the other stuff – faith, grace, liturgy, prayer, the life of the Spirit, hope and heaven - is too vague and insubstantial-seeming to have much incidence in our day-to-day lives.

Well, I hope to convince you that this is nonsense. Faith, Hope and Charity are not vague, somewhat wishful, intellectual sideshows about which it is nice to know while the real work – learning properly approved behaviour - goes on elsewhere. They are not something extra, to go along with morals. They are the three structuring dimensions of what Paul refers to as *Huiothesía*,² and which is normally translated as “sonship”, “adoption as Son” or “being turned into a son”.

In English we face the difficulty that the gendered nouns “son” and “daughter” have different roots, so we can’t easily translate *Huiothesía* without sexism. “Filiation” in romance languages is a better match, since it works for both *Filia* and *Filius*. Our alternative gender-free expression “becoming a child of God”, is not entirely felicitous, since “child” has connotations of infantile, or minor, status, which is not what *Huiothesía* is about at all. And “children of God” is even less helpful, since it leaves us as a plural collective, where Paul saw *Huiothesía* as turning us, admittedly plural offspring, into something singular. I propose, somewhat perversely, the old English term “bairn”, still in use in the northern parts of Great Britain, to refer personably to offspring of either sex. This is not because it is a better translation – it isn’t - but because by its oddness it may serve to remind us of some of the resonances which our usual translations of *Huiothesía* tend to obscure. Faith, Hope and Charity are the three structuring dimensions of bairndom, the stable dispositions by which we are inducted into being bairn of God.

But please notice what this means: there are not, in one compartment of our lives, the theological virtues, and in another, morals, or ethical behaviour issues. No, our bairndom of God unfurls itself, deploys itself, in our lives through each one of us being inducted into having the stable dispositions of knowing as we are known, and thus relaxing; of being stretched into a future freedom that is already coming upon us; and as these operate, of being empowered to receive ourselves through giving ourselves away, and thus to share the life of God. These stable dispositions induced in us actually turn us into who we are to be, and as they do so, we find ourselves insiders in, and free owners of, the reality of creation.

In other words, these stable dispositions produced in us by God structure the operative centre from which we live out our bairndom. The dispositions are totally non-directive – not telling us what to do. They

² For instance, in Romans 8: 15, 23; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5

give shape to the way we work out for ourselves what to do. And what we will want to do will flow from what we discover ourselves becoming. It is because of this that there are no specifically Christian morals. There is just what it is authentically good for humans to do, as discovered from within by those who are in the process of coming into ownership of everything as bairn of God.

4. Life as an heir

Essential to this picture of us being stretched into bairndom by what is coming upon us is the image of the heir, which Paul also uses³. I would like to take time with this image, since it helps us avoid one of the major pitfalls in any discussion of hope, which is the tendency to regard hope as essentially a subjective matter, a form of inner assurance or conviction, something independent of objective reality. That would be misleading. The whole point of being an heir is that your inheritance is not some vague hope that might or might not some day come upon you, like winning the lottery. Rather, it is an entirely realistic expectation that is coming closer to you, as a promise moves to its fulfilment, for as long as the person whose heir you are inches towards death. And from the moment that that person dies, it is in fact unalterably yours. For a properly executed will is a promise made before witnesses that is fulfilled on death and cannot be altered posthumously.

So, at the moment my Mum died, a couple of years ago, my sister, my brother and I were already, under law, the equal owners of everything promised us in her will. Now in fact, processing a will takes time: we didn't have immediate access to what was in fact already ours. First the estate had to be reckoned for probate, which takes forever. Then Her Majesty's sabre-toothed inheritance tigers took 40% of the total, as is their wont. Finally, about eighteen months after my Mum's death, the rest was divided out as specified in the will.

Now, my relationship to that inheritance during the eighteen-month gap was not one of wishful thinking, or of longing in a vacuum. Something that was already substantially mine in law was gradually coming closer and closer to being mine in practise; meaning: being at my disposal. The difference between wishful thinking on the one hand, and objective expectation on the other is very clear. Wishful thinking is what any of us engage in who play the lottery and fantasize about what we might do on

³ For instance, in Romans 8:17; but also in Galatians 3:29; 4:1,7; and Titus 3:7

the exceedingly remote off chance of winning it. Unless we are mad, such wishful thinking does not cause us to alter our pattern of living as if we were certain of something. Expectation of an inheritance, on the other hand actually does have a palpable effect on us during the period of time between the promise being made, the promise being formally fulfilled on death, and what was promised actually coming to be at our disposal.

So, as my Mum's inheritance moved from promise, to formal fact, towards something disposable, it produced a change in me. It caused me gradually to start adjusting my plans, my sense of possibilities, and so on. It was already, some months before it actually came into my hands, shaping me from within so that I would more realistically be equal to the privilege of possession. This shaping from within started by stretching my imagination, and gradually my habits and my relationships, for instance with both my siblings, and my son, my confidence with relation to my creditors, and so on. By the time the eighteen months were over, I was a recognisably, publicly different actor than I had been.

I stress all this since it bears directly on what is probably the most famous line concerning hope in the New Testament, Hebrews 11, 1.

Now faith is the ὑπόστασις (lit: substance) of things hoped for, the ἔλεγχος (lit: proof) of things not seen.

The verse is slightly misleading since, as no less an authority than Pope Benedict points out⁴, it elides faith and hope. Nevertheless, the verse reads entirely differently depending on whether we are talking about something subjective or something objective. So, the RSV gives a subjective sense to both the words "Hypostasis" and "elenchos", yielding "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" as though faith, or hope, are properly described as certain subjective states in us – assurance and conviction. The sense which I am trying to bring out is something much more like this paraphrase: "Now, our being persuaded, yielding as it does the substance of what is hoped for, turns us into a demonstration or proof of what is not seen". It is exactly in this latter way that an inheritance works: At the testator's death, the promised inheritance is substantially mine even when it is not yet in my possession, and because of that, I already now find myself starting to become a publicly visible demonstration, a reliable sign of what is on its way. Who I am is objectively being altered as someone

⁴ In *Spe Salvi* 2, and 7

else's promise, their desire, moves towards its fulfilment in my reception of it.

5. The human other

Another of the perplexities bequeathed to us by an individualist and mentalist account of the self is that of theological virtues having to be produced in us directly by God without any human intermediaries. With this, not only does hope become a longing in a vacuum, but the whole account of hope, which the New Testament offers us, becomes incomprehensible. For what is central to the New Testament account of hope, is that hope was opened up for us definitively, as an entirely new possibility, by Jesus doing something. In other words, hope is not magically worked up in us by intervention from a removed divine other. Hope is produced in us, anthropologically, just like any other virtue, by another human being. It was what Jesus did on the human, anthropological level that opened up for us the possibility of seeing something as available to us through stretching. He humanly created it and its attractiveness by modelling the desire to achieve it, which we receive as we emulate him.

What was it that he did? He first created the context in which his going to his death was able to be understood, even if only posthumously, as an act of obedient generosity of the sort that was not run by death, its fear, its shame, and our impotence in its face. An act that could only be carried out by someone who was not, himself, run in any way by those forces. Then he genuinely acted that out fully, finally, and to its last consequences. Finally, his resurrection revealed that what he had been saying and doing had been empowered all along by the true sense of everything that is, of all becoming: abundant self-giving life inseparable from the glory of God. In other words, his resurrection was not a post-mortem coda to a well-lived life. It was the sign that the bright effervescence of reality, of what was always really the case, had at last been able to break definitively into the midst of an unnaturally darkened human life and culture. This irruption was wrought by a human being having actually lived, and gone to his death, without being run by, determined by, frightened by or cowed into submission by, death and its pious-seeming outliers. In doing so he creatively modelled the possibility of any of us receiving the contagion of what he had set loose in the world.

I want to stress this, because it means that what Jesus opened up for us, what he promised us, and what he fulfilled for us in going to his death, was access to the fullness of the deathless reality that creation really is. And it is this sense of the stretching towards us of the fullness of what creation really is, and of our being stretched beyond ourselves into being turned into people who are up to the privilege of being the heir and insider in it, that produces Hope in us. Once you understand that Jesus did it for us, that he was the fulfilment of God's ancient promise to us, and that that promise was fulfilled in his death; then, once the testator dies, the inheritance is already there, and starting to be instantiated in us as we are inducted into full possession of what both is, and is not yet, ours. But the whole point of hope is that it is linked to reality. The "new birth into a living hope" to which 1 Peter 1.3 refers is not, and never was, a private religious or moral reality. It was, and is, a realignment of our whole way of being towards what really is, as what really is begins to manifest itself in us.

6. Creation and forgiveness

It was not merely the case that Jesus died and his resurrection revealed eternal life, though that did happen. His death and resurrection had content: he occupied the place of shame, degradation, curse and impotence, the lot of the innocent victim who is cast out by the coming together of the forces of civic and religious leadership. And he occupied it voluntarily and generously. This meant that Jesus' presence as crucified and risen victim opens up the new creation not as a neutral fact, as though he were simply revealing to us the existence of a previously unknown continent. Rather he was opening it up in the only way in which it could conceivably be accessed by us: through forgiveness. For that is how the new creation retrofits us and aligns us with itself.

What we call the forgiveness of sins is not a moralistic decree made by a magnanimous victor. The forgiveness of sins became possible because Jesus occupied the ground zero of what made human culture viable – the undoing from within of the constructive victimary mechanism by which we build and maintain human togetherness and which has configured our humanity and all our institutions.

Why is this so important? Because opening up the reality of what is without simultaneously deconstructing us, and without enabling us to be disentangled from the falsity of what we were making of it, would leave us with our imaginations still so formed by what we thought we were,

that we would be unable to be stretched into what we are becoming. Forgiveness is how we describe the way that “what we are to be” starts deploying itself in our lives, un-attaching, letting us go, from what we thought we were. Our being personally, narratively involved in that process is something usually realised by us long after that forgiveness has started to manifest itself in our lives. That narrative involvement comes when we are finally able to recognise the ways in which we have been bound, and to consent to a realignment of our being that has long been nudging us into appropriating it by saying the word “I”. As in, “I’m sorry” or “What on earth have I done?” or “Please forgive me!”

In other words, absolutely essential to any understanding of hope is that it reaches us through, and as, a restructuring of memory. And I think it worthwhile spending a little time thinking about this.

7. Memory

For Memory is not something we have. It is memory that enables there to be a “me” at all. Once again, the individualistic picture of who we are misleads us. For memory has a history, indeed it is what makes us historical, which means narrative, animals, possible. We do not know when physical location, something that was just there for many millions of years before us, started acquiring meaning for us – but a good bet is that tombs were the first places in a human sense, and that from them we started to make sense of space, and make of it something in our image. Nor do we know when physical movement of bodies, animate or inanimate, something that just was there for many millions of years before us, started acquiring meaning for us, as time. But a good bet is that it was related to how the definitive before and after of death became meaningful.

There are many different ways of describing how this ape invented ourselves by stumbling into a relationship with place; how endless repetition leading to nowhere in particular, came to find itself impregnated with significance, leading both to sounds becoming language and to our discovering ourselves through time. The entirely contingent nature of our being discovered by place and time coming together, and the feedback loop which this inaugurated through ever more significant imitation and repetition in such a way that memory started to give us a narrative, is part of any account of hominization. Girard’s has at least the value of being extraordinarily parsimonious. For the aleatory victim mechanism he describes, stumbled into by hyper

mimetic apes over hundreds of thousands of years, brings together exactly the qualities of repetition of gesture and of sound such that our being invented by time and by place would be structured from within by the sacred, that is to say by what we now see as victimary distortions.

The sense of our being stretched by memory into a greater reality than we knew must have multiplied over millennia as ritual repetition threw up monuments, which themselves started to stretch our memories further, as we lived with evidence of a past beyond our lifespan, beyond the lifespan of the twenty, and then thirty and then forty years or so for which living memories of particular events are available. The difference made to this by the first scratchings of literacy – probably an account keeping mechanism, which means a way of measuring and assessing debt, which means a mechanism for deferring vengeance - is all part of what produced the enormously subtle and complex memory-holders and inductors which we call culture, and which form each of us from within.

So, it is the case that each of us has a memory induced in us as we are stretched into imitating gesture and sound, and that the flourishing of a healthy memory is the ability of its bearer to share, and to negotiate, their relationships narratively with the “we” that has brought that particular “I” into being. Memory is the way human, narrative, reality stretches us into itself.

I hope you can see why then forgiveness is essential both to the virtue of hope and to our being stretched into reality. For hope is how God’s narrative comes to be lived out in our lives as a stable human reality. It is how, if you like, God, who is without time, befriends the human narrative structured by time. And God’s narrative is of Godself as human giving Godself up to death as our victim, occupying the place of shame, loss, destruction, fear, curse and fatality, so that we might come to enjoy God’s presence. This human narrative of self-giving is not simply an act of “pardon” for miscreancies past. It is the restructuring from within of our process of hominization.

For if imitation and repetition have become suffused with the victimary mechanism, then in all human attempts at being, we, and any of our cultures, or groupings, is grasping onto being violently, so that we can hold onto a self, an identity, a belonging. But the self-giving victim, having become an ever-living source of forgiveness, undoes both time and space, such that neither structures our being and our belonging in the same way. If I start as one who has imitated, repeated, and grasped

himself into being, then my capacity to imagine who I might become will be dictated by what I have emphatically participated in embedding myself into. If, however, I am being stretched into receiving my being from a “not yet” that is coming upon me, then part of that being stretched is my being enabled to stand loose from the ways I have hitherto been bound into what has made me to be.

8. Presence

If you can stay with me a little further, I trust that you will see how important it is to understand that neither is Hope something principally concerned with the future, nor is Memory something principally concerned with the past. Any of us can understand this quite easily. We find ourselves involved in something, let us say being Aztecs in Tenochtitlán, and for a time, it defines who we were and are, and shapes the sort of future we might imagine. Later something quite unexpected happens, say the arrival of Spaniards and horses, which we could not have imagined, and which alters the whole of our relationship to our past, such that we begin to tell an entirely different story about what we were doing in the past, before the unexpected thing happened. Something that was in an unknown future in the past, radically alters the past that was past, such that the quality of our present, who we are now, say as modern Mexicans, is quite different. The more definitive the future change is, the more definitive is its alteration of the past. Not of course, of empirical facts, but of the whole set of human relationships which alone give empirical facts their sense in the present.

But what this means is that memory is not determined by the past. Memory is the way the apparent future structures the present by narrating the past. And this also means that Hope is not in principle about the future. It is the quality of the present that is made available in and through our being stretched by “not yet” coming upon us. And this seems to me to be something quite vital. Neither the past nor the future exist. Only the present exists. It is hope that empowers memory to enable us to live with a rich present, for that rich present is the only access we have to God.

It is already an extraordinary and haphazard adventure for this ape to have invented itself into being a self-questioning dweller in time and space. Even more extraordinary that God, in whom there is neither time nor space, should have opted to enter into our narrational world, so as to make of those potentially futile and senseless elements the condition of

possibility of us being present, with a rich enough sense of presence and awareness, actually to be able to enjoy God.

This is why, incidentally, it is enormously important that we understand that, in what Catholics call, truly, but with fear and trembling, the sacrifice of the Mass, we are not repeating a sacrifice. For repeating it would mean that Jesus' death had not undone identity grasped by repetition of time defined over against death. Rather it is the case that because Jesus' death opened up Hope for us, bringing an end to sacrifice, so the deliberately, historically opened reality of the New Creation, is just there, longingly drawing us in, restructuring us from within into being really present as humans able to participate in a Real Presence which is in principle quite beyond any of us.

9. Patience

I'd like to conclude this evening by looking at the relationship between Hope and Patience, since in the "wishful thinking" model of hope, patience becomes a particularly unhelpful stable disposition – a passive-aggressive veneer of goodness while feeling impotent in the face of things that are wrong and hurtful: once again, resignation dressed up as virtue. But this sort of resignation is the offspring not of hope, but of despair!

Nevertheless, if the theological anthropology I've been trying to set out for you has some value, then the relationship between hope and patience is entirely different, and much more creative. For it is the sense of the real coming upon you and aligning you with itself that makes it possible to bear with tribulations without being reactive to them. Not allowing them to get you down. And part of the wonder of this is that it opens up time. Where you have no hope, you are constantly at the mercy of what happens, and thus thoroughly reactive. Whereas hope is what allows you to take your time, in the midst of tribulations, to do what you want to do, and thus to forge who you are becoming. And it is this "being able to take our time" and not be panicked that is conducive to the emergence of the creative, the technological, and the scientific spirit. In other words, patience, rather than being a form of resignation, is the stable disposition, true daughter of Hope, of a certain hard-nosed and realistic insouciance in the face of real obstacles which are there, empowering its bearer to inhabit the present time creatively. Nothing victimary or self-pitying about it at all.

I trust, furthermore, that you may be able to see more clearly now why it is that I began by distinguishing between the apocalyptic reading of reality in which Girard engages in *Battling to the End*, and the theological virtue of hope. We are all aware of rose-tinted approaches to reality, which mark a profound inability, or unwillingness, to face up to how difficult and dangerous we are to each other and to our biosphere. We are fairly easily able to sense that this or that expression of optimism masks a profound despair. But it is only the person who has been stretched by hope into an habitually patient attitude towards everything that is who is able to sit alongside hopelessness, give an accurate assessment of it, and not be run by it. That one of us has been stretched, slowly and patiently into being able to get alongside the heart of darkness; and yet not be scandalized by it; is one of the surest signs that the theological virtue of hope is operative.

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not of the English translation, where available)*

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