

Imagining Hope. Viewing a Powerful Social Practice through the Systemic Perspective

Imaginando la esperanza. Ver una poderosa práctica social a través de la perspectiva sistémica

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Abstract

This paper aims to scrutinize through the lenses of philosophy the systemic profile of hope, with a particular focus on its effectiveness. Building up on an expanded definition of the anthropological experience, the author will argue that hope is not inherently incompatible with knowledge, particularly practical knowledge, given its association with the comprehension of the means that give rise to action intention (Anscombe, 1957). From a systemic perspective, the strategic foresight of hope can be elucidated as the response of mind-brain interrelation, according to the dissipative quantum model. The mind (the Double, Vitiello, 2019) suggests the brain's vision of the action to be taken through a main specific engine, which is imagination. This framework not only identifies the temporal texture of hope, which is perpetually suspended between the future and the past, but also demonstrates the profound impact of hope on the environment in which the who hopes is situated. Rather than being an individualistic experience, hope can be philosophically viewed as a powerful social practice that enhances the collective reservoir of the good.

Key words: Hope; Imagination; Intention; Systemic thinking; Dissipative quantum model.

Resumen

Este artículo se propone examinar a través de los lentes de la filosofía el perfil sistémico de la esperanza, con especial atención a su eficacia. Partiendo de una definición ampliada de la experiencia antropológica, se argumentará que la esperanza no es inherentemente incompatible con el conocimiento, en particular el conocimiento práctico, dada su asociación con la comprensión de los medios que dan lugar a la acción intencional (Anscombe, 1957). Desde una perspectiva sistémica, la previsión estratégica de la esperanza puede dilucidarse como la respuesta de la interrelación mente-cerebro, según el modelo cuántico disipativo. La mente (el Doble, Vitiello, 2019) sugiere la visión del cerebro de la acción a emprender a través de un motor específico principal, que es la imaginación. Este marco no solo identifica la textura temporal de la esperanza, que esta perpetuamente suspendida entre el futuro y el pasado, sino que también demuestra el profundo impacto de la esperanza en el entorno en el que se sitúa quien espera. En lugar de ser una experiencia individualista, la esperanza puede verse filosóficamente como una poderosa práctica social que mejora el reservorio colectivo del bien.

Palabras claves: Esperanza; Imaginación; Pensamiento sistémico; Modelo Cuántico Disipativo.

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(This paper is dedicated to Greg Johnson)

Premise

The term 'hope' is complex and encompasses a range of meanings, with the consequence that its definition “differs significantly between disciplines” (Pleeging, Van Exel & Burger, 2021, p. 1681). In popular folk language, hope is often perceived as an expectation or a desire, an experience that involves a passive attitude towards a positive event that can enhance one's life. However, this aspect of hope also reveals an inner tension towards change. Thus, two polarities –passive and active– are immediately given when the idea of hope is evoked. An inner ambiguity that Fromm (1968) has sketched as follows: “Hope is paradoxical. It is neither passive waiting nor is it unrealistic forcing of circumstances that cannot occur. It is like the crouched tiger, which will jump only when the moment for jumping has come” (p. 9).

From a philosophical perspective, the challenge underlying hope is to determine whether this experience should be traced back to the dream of a change (Martin, 2011), a misidentified case of despair (Meirav, 2009), to a sort of spiritual anaesthetic or a substitute for desire/volition, or whether this existential tension is an integral part of the personal being and how it works, focusing on the processes that belong to it. After a general overview of the topic, which identifies hope as an act (Fisogni, 2014), it will be investigated in the practice of hope, which will show the performative power of imagination. Finally the author will seek to elucidate the systemic profile of hope that answers the question: ‘How it works?’, arguing that its performative capacity, fuelled by imagination, does not concern only who hopes, but rather with the multitude of interactions that shape the phenomenon.

An enlarged Standard definition of hope

A short account of hope is required as a preliminary step for the discussion. According to

Downie (1963) the standard definition of hope is grounded on a couple of transcendental conditions:

- on one side, the object of hope must be desired by who hopes;
- on the other side, hope falls under a main criterion: who hopes believes the fulfilment of hope related a certain range of probabilities,

However, some criticism can be raised about these claims. Even if desire can be, to a certain extent a superimposable concept, it cannot be equated with hope. Desire is primarily a movement related to a specific object: it is always a desire for something, a will that inhabits the present. Hope precedes any possible content, because it is above all a tension towards a change. It intuitively inhabits future time. Nor does hope really fall within a certain range of probabilities; it treads on the secure ground of intuition that hope can resist even when every chance has been lost. Nevertheless, in the Greek myth of Pandora's vase where the notion of hope has been forged, *Elpis* (ἐλπίς, the female personification of hope) remains in the vase when all the other contents have been scattered by Pandora's curiosity. In this way, hope transcends the present, the objects, the probabilities, in order to open itself to a not-yet that can become effective. From this point of view, one of the main characteristics of hope is the temporal dimension, which is always balanced between the present and the future, in order to bring the future into the present moment. This is particularly emphasised by the Christian eschatology, so that, as Segalerba notes in the elucidation of Moltmann's concept of hope:

Hope is the point of view for reflecting on the human nature, on history and on the society. Hope is, for the believer, a constitutive orientation of mind and represent the driving force of the way

thinking about faith. The believer acquires, through the hope in God's promise, a new outlook on history, society and human nature. Hope in God's promise is the principle for the interpretation of the whole reality (Segalerba, 2021, p. 8).

The Catholic faith allows one to develop the concept of hope in a more nuanced manner, incorporating the temporal aspect as a dynamic component. This interrelation between the present and the future is a fundamental tenet of Catholicism. In essence, the Catholic faith espouses the belief that Christ has redeemed human beings with his blood on the Cross (in the past), and that salvation (in the future) can be attained through the imitation of Jesus. This entails bringing the past into the future through present behaviour. Such a temporal texture also reveals two other aspects of hope, which can be summarised as follows: firstly, hope does not imply a contradiction between the present and the future; secondly, what is hoped for (future) is already part of the subject's possibility (present).

From a phenomenological perspective, the orientation of the whole person towards the object of hope also calls into question another aspect of the general profile of this anthropological experience, which consists in the *disposition* towards the final goal. At this regard, Chignell introduces the aspect of the focus component into the understanding of hope, however he claims that this theory "can remain neutral on ontological questions about what hope is *constituted by...*" (Chignell, 2023, p. 19).

At this point, the standard definition of hope can be enlarged, and three main features can be identified: 1) a *cognitive tension*, which assumes that p is possible in metaphysical sense; 2) a *conative component*, whereby the hopeful desires that p can be achieved; and finally 3) a *focus aspect*, which is the disposition to achieve the final goal.

Cognitive tension is the primary aspect of hope that facilitates a clear perception of the potential for the act to be realised. This intuitive understanding is accompanied by a motivating drive to act, related to intention, which will be further discussed in the subsequent paragraph of the paper.

The *conative component* highlights the inclination to the end in a special way, in particular as the volition or desire that accompanies the act. In linguistics, the term 'conative' refers to the specific function of language with which the addresser seeks to induce the addressee/receiver to adopt a specific behaviour. Imperative sentences have this character. The utterance of hope exhibits a conative-reflexive

trait, as the addresser transfers the impulse of acting in the direction of herself/himself. Thus, the message being transmitted is subject to a torsion, which also corresponds to a different type of conatus. While an imperative utterance indicates an effort to be carried out (the imperative act), in the utterance of hope it emerges as a desire or an appetite. The notion of desire typically unveils a lack of something and, at the same time, an inner tension of the subject who attempts to reach the desired object. Both cognitive tension and the conative component highlight the inclination of the subject who hopes in the direction of the final result. In the phenomenology of hope the *focus aspect*, concerns the outcome that is under the control of mind that make the object of hope, at some extents, achievable. As Chignell notes:

... the focus involved in hope is often guided by our desire for the object. the focus involved in hope is like sortal perception in taking its object 'under an aspect'. In this case (...) the aspect is modal: a hoping subject is disposed to focus on the desired outcome as *possible*—or, more precisely, *as probable to a non-zero degree*. The aspect is not merely a function of the *Cognitive* modal presupposition, however, since the subject can presuppose that an outcome is metaphysically possible and yet still despair of it (Chignell, 2023, p. 16-17).

The cognitive aspect and the conative component converge in Snyder's definition of hope as "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful agency (goal-directed energy) and pathways (planning to meet goals)" (Snyder, 2000, p. 8). Nevertheless, the cognitive texture of hope raises a significant problem for philosophy, because by its very nature, hope seems to be at odds with knowledge.

Hope as a mode of practical knowledge

There is a wide consensus among scholars that hope is somehow incompatible with knowledge, being it deeply related to the emotional domain (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002; Scribano, 2023; TenHouten, 2023; Feldman & Jazaieri 2024). The hopeful person aims at a preposition that she/he wants to occur: she/he is confident about a situation, within the frame of a supposed subjective credence. For Benton (2019) hope: "... is among several emotive attitudes which are propositional in structure that is, they take propositions as their objects; their paradigmatic linguistic schema of expression is 'S emotes that p'" (Benton, 2019, p. 8).

However, this is debatable if we consider that there are indeed multiple ways of conceiving rationality and knowledge (Urbani Ulivi & Fisogni, 2021). The lack of cognition about what will happen in the future does not exclude other types of knowledge that are intrinsically part of hope. Consider the case of a woman, whom I will call Mary, who is suffering from a serious illness. I can say:

- I hope that Mary lives.

From the epistemological point of view, it is not possible to ascertain whether Mary will survive. However, it can be reasonably assumed that the likelihood of her recovery is high, given that she is receiving appropriate medical care and treatment, and that her general physical condition is favourable. This suggests that the hope of recovery is not based on a lack of knowledge, but rather on the possibility that Mary has the capacity to overcome the challenges she is facing.

The concept of hope can be understood as a form of unpredictability, as expressed by Gordon, who states that hope entails uncertainty and claims that "a person hopes that p only if he does not know that p " (Gordon, 1987, p. 26).

This implies that the hope of recovery is not based on a complete understanding of the situation, but rather on the expectation that Mary has right the potential to improve.

Nevertheless, there are certain elements that allow who hopes to realize that the utterance is performable, to some extent. In other words, we are dealing here with two kinds of knowledge, which can be expressed by the following two propositions: 1) "to know that" and 2) "to know how". Whereas the first refers to something that exists and is subject to the judgement of true/false, the second emphasises the modality of existence. In the case of Mary, the hopeful does not possess knowledge regarding whether she can live or die, but rather, knowledge regarding the *means* by which she can recover. Thus, the kind of knowledge revealed in the deepest fibres of hope dwells the realm of *intention*. This notion – intention – is here traced back to Anscombe (1957), who defines it as the kind of action one performs without observation that answers the question "why." To illustrate, if I were to say, "I am opening the window," I would be aware of the series of steps that would lead me to that specific action. It is also an action that would answer the question, "Why?" "I open the window because I know the steps." In short, the intentional theory shifts the focus from knowing the fact to knowing the action. It brings to the fore a

kind of practical knowledge that is largely neglected by epistemology. As Sagliani notes in the Italian introduction to Anscombe's *Intention*: "Practical reasoning (...) encompasses all the steps that proceed from an objective towards the implementation of a particular action" (Sagliani, 2004, p. 18) (Translation of the author).

What does this imply in terms of hope? It suggests that the focus is not on the truth or validity of the statement ("I know that") but on its performance ("I know how"), which belongs to practical knowledge. When I say, "I hope Mary lives", I am thinking about what it will take for Mary to get through the critical phase, including the right care, the emotional closeness of her family members, the environment, and the resilience of her body. If we consider the utterance from this perspective, we can see that hope implies a non-observational knowledge that the hopeful individual possesses. At this point in the discussion, we can conclude that hope is a mode of practical action.

In brief, to comprehend this assertion, it can be assumed that every hope also outlines an action or series of actions beyond the utterance (the prepositional form). Nevertheless, this practical quality differentiates it from similar expressions such as desire.

The phrases "I wish that Mary lives" and "I hope that Mary lives" may appear to be synonymous, but in fact they configure two conceptually distant perspectives. The first action is entirely on the subject uttering it, in the present tense. The second, by projecting itself from the subject who makes it to the final term (Mary), gives rise to a performance that develops over time, certainly with many unknowns, but also with some certainties regarding the possibility of arriving at the final goal.

It is important to note that practical knowledge is not superimposable on trust or confidence, although in some circumstances the three terms can be used as synonyms. In all the cases, we are in the presence of acts in which the subject does not rely solely on his own strengths, capacities, and aptitudes to perform an action. However, if trust and confidence involve a full reliance on a third party – such as the state that guarantees the monetary system and citizens' savings in banks or a set of values on which is rooted one's conduct – the act of hope always maintains its primary focus in the individual.

An imagine can be a valuable tool for visualizing this idea.

The one who hopes is the one who wants to be seen as a player with a goal-oriented mindset (Feldman & Snyder, 2005). Consider a team sport, such as the football game. The one who hopes can be seen as the footballer who goes to the net to score a goal. Every player on the team has the potential to influence the outcome of the game. They are all capable of making decisions that will affect the final result. This is because they have the knowledge and skills to play effectively the game and make the right moves at the right time. It is not by trusting or relying on others that they will succeed, but by *playing with* the others. And what does “playing with” mean if not entering into a systemic relationship? Consequently, the practical knowledge of hope can be considered a transcendental condition, in the Kantian sense, but it is not sufficient to forge, and consequently to understand, the act of hope. A further step is thus required.

A systemic point of view: imagination as a driver for hope

At this point of a paper, to question hope means to highlight the dynamics of hope as an anthropological practice. It is clear that neither phenomenological observation alone nor the analytical approach are sufficient to frame the sophisticated processuality of hope. While the first perspective helps to configure the act of hoping as a projective drive, the second, by denying the relationship with an epistemic concept of knowledge related to hope, nevertheless reveals its practical attitude. As we have seen, both of these philosophical approaches are undoubtedly valuable for understanding hope. However, they are not sufficient to clarify the main dynamic that we can identify in a constructive or creative imagination, as opposed to a mere 'hypothesis' or 'vision' of a possible future. The systemic approach (Agazzi, 2019; Vitiello, 2019; Urbani Ulivi, 2010; Bich, 2021) allows to discern this essential aspect of the act of hoping and, as we will show, sheds light on the characteristics previously examined, offering a more sympathetic reading of an otherwise paradoxical picture.

A multidisciplinary perspective, GST (General System Thinking) grounds on the notion of system as “an ordered totality of interrelated parts whose characteristics depend both on the characteristics of the parts and on the web of their interconnections” (Agazzi, 2019, p. 10).

The considerations made above have shown the purely systemic dimension of hope, both in its essential texture and in its interrelation with the

environment, with numerous living subsystems (the hopeful, the object of hope, the environment, the means to reach the object of hope), as well as from a temporal perspective.

Furthermore, hope is somehow generative, capable of nourishing the 'new', and having an impact on future time. From this perspective, hoping for Mary's life is, therefore, thinking of concretely practicable strategies for the improvement of her health. We have entered the realm of the *imagination*, an act that is at the same time cognitive, emotional and reflective, and that brings together all personal qualities with extraordinary creative power. The practice of hope meets imagination and uses it as a tool capable of creating reality (Luthans, 1997; Mandel, 2002) in order to achieve one's goal, through a constructive thinking (Ojala, 2012).

Moving into this step, the most relevant in order to address the problem of the paper – How does hope works? - means to introduce briefly imagination within the realm of the brain / mind relationship according to the systemic thinking.

Viewing the human person in term of an open system requires to change the paradigm, putting into brackets both the idealist and the unicist vision, which are deeply related to the dualist frame, in order to move into the quantum dissipative model, systemic at heart. While first theoretical perspective assumes that the neuronal activity derives from the mind, the second deny any distinction between mental and neuronal operations (Vitiello, 2019). From the quantum dissipative model's perspective the brain is immersed in the environment, in a continuous interaction that provides the energy needed by neuronal activity. The mind, an emergent property of the person (Urbani Ulivi, 2019) can be recognized as the Double, or the alter ego of the brain, “that projects backwards in time (in the “past” with respect to the expected event) what is about to happen” (Vitiello, 2019, p. 49). A set of processes “inseparably linked to the brain, although functionally distinguishable from it”, the mind / the Double's “anticipatory vision that the brain makes of the world” (Vitiello, 2019, p. 49) creatively works through a number of activities. Imagination is probably the most *effective*.

The experience here sketched refers to the responses that the brain/mind activity provides to the interaction with the environment. From this point of view the act of imagining is not the mere arising of an image for the individual, or *phantasia* in Aristotle's terms (*De Anima*), nor the “‘false belief’ and ‘misperception’” (Branquinho and Santos, 2014,

p. 3) that are often recognized as main features of imagining.

This theory is useful in framing the profile of hope because it sheds light on the opacity that characterises its cognitive texture. Those who hope, in fact, possess a degree of awareness of the act's actuality. If this is the case, it is evident that there is a level of knowledge that is not visible, ungraspable, but founded on a basis recognised by the mind as sufficiently solid to expect the performance of the act. In conclusion, it can be posited that efficacy and effectiveness are two terms that belong to the family of imagination ("The uses, and applications, of the terms 'image', 'imagine', 'imagination', and so forth make up a very diverse and scattered family. Even this image of a family seems too definite. It would be a matter of more than difficulty to identify and list the family's members, let alone their relations of parenthood and cousinhood" (Strawson, 1970, p. 31).

In the systemic perspective, particularly according to Vitiello's theory of the Double, we are in the presence of an interactive, circular model between mind, brain, and environment that brings about a change in reality.

If applied to hope, this model can help elucidate the aforementioned opacity.

The activity of the brain, which is indeed an open system, is characterized by *the action-perception cycle* (Freeman, 1975; Merleau-Ponty, 1942) in its interaction with the world. The brain places itself in the environment by formulating hypotheses and subjecting them to verification with intentional actions, constructing in this way knowledge through trial-and-error steps (Vitiello, 2008). The stimuli received through the perceptive channels are framed in the landscape of previous perceptual experiences and in this process the net of correlations among them is enriched and renewed, "meanings" are thus constructed out of information. Each new perception is not simply added to the perceptual experience already acquired, as it happens, for example, for a new item added to a dictionary. In the case of the brain, each new perception changes the entire landscape of the meanings constructed up to then (Vitiello, 2019, p. 48).

The systemic reading of imagination reveals its creative dimension and effectiveness, while also demonstrating its dynamic texture. Moreover, the dissipative model postulates a constant interaction

with the environment and other living systems. This frame provides a clarification of the phenomenon of the *cooperative profile of hope*, which often occurs in society and presents a viral character.

It is crucial to emphasise that this cooperative feature cannot be equated with the collective dimension of hope (Fromm, 1968, p. 21). However, it is possible to "recognize that within these groups and social formations are systems of relationships that can strengthen (or depress) individual hope, giving it a particular direction" (Gili and Mangone, 2023, p. 23). The focus within the cooperative profile of hope is on the emergent properties that originate from the web of interrelation.

Concurrently, the recognition of the ambivalent dynamic of hope –which extends from the individual to other living systems (including individuals, groups and institutions)– provides a rationale for subjectivist theories, such as Snyder's, which posit that hope is largely a subjective phenomenon.

Figure 1

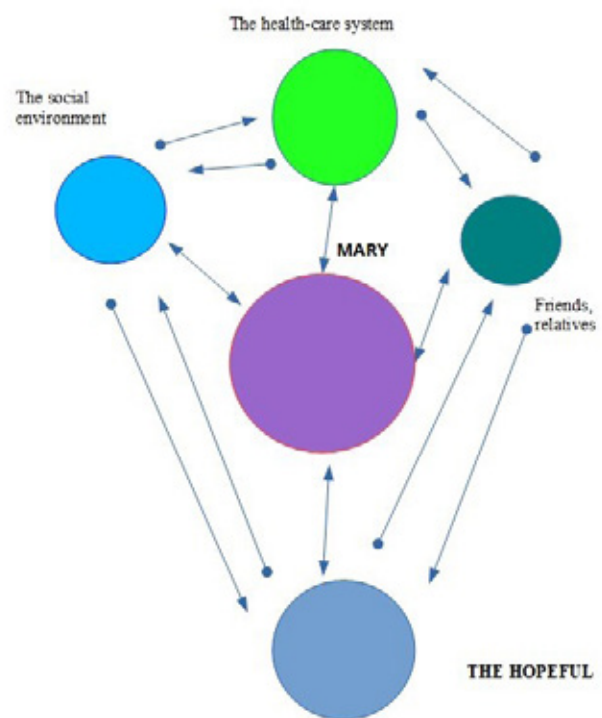


Fig. 1

Source: Own creation.

The act of hoping also has undoubted repercussions outside the actor of hope / the hopeful, enacting ramified social interactions. This is illustrated in Fig. 1. If I hope that Mary will live, despite she is

suffering from a severe illness, I assume an attitude that can psychologically reinforce her circle of family and friends. These, in turn, take on a trusting approach towards the health professionals treating Mary, which also reverberates on Mary herself, on her working environment, for example. A further consequence is that the individual sub-systems of Fig. 1 become subjects of hope by generating a positive energy that has a ripple effect on all parties involved (Kadlac, 2015).

This reduces conflicts, for example, those with the healthcare system that is treating Mary. Treatment (Braithwaite, 2004) and the nurturing of a “virtuous or ethical behaviour” (Pleeging, Van Exel & Burger, 2021, p. 1706) that reinforces the drive for what is good for Mary, in addition to the well-being of her family and friends. In brief: “hope can mobilize large groups of people”, as it frequently happens “in the case of political protests or in addressing societal problems such as climate change” (Pleeging, Van Exel & Burger, 2021, p. 1706; Braithwaite, 2004; Webb, 2010; Kadlac, 2015; Moellendorf, 2022).

Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish between the ways in which hope is applied and the ways in which imagination is used. Without this distinction, it is easy to confuse the two. Hope is a practical concept, in that it is connected to action through intention and knowledge of means. This action is carried out intuitively. What is imagined is already in some way part of the means to complete the action. In contrast, the use of imagination in a fantasy context is free from this kind of inclination to act. For this to happen, it should turn into hope.

More generally, the essential fibre of hope – its being a practice – infects, so to speak, all its manifestations.

The horizon outlined so far leads us to note how, even from the point of view of systems thinking, hope presents itself as a collective practice that encourages positive actions in a community context. We are a long way from the ontology of the Not-Yet theorised by Bloch, for whom hope, primarily an emotion, possesses a protusive character towards an essentially elusive object (Bloch, 1986). In light of what has been argued so far, hope constructs the world, changing it in many ways, at the very moment it is activated. It therefore makes sense to speak of a communitarian practice that also makes the subject who hopes ‘plural’ or ‘collective’. For Barge hope is a form of discursive practice “that involves cocreating discourse with others that generates new images of possibility for social arrangements and mobilizes the

moral and affective resources necessary to translate image into action and belief while balancing creativity and constraint” (Barge, 2003, p. 63).

Etty Hillesum’s Imaginative Hope

The nexus between imagination and hope drives practice imbued with desire and the future, characterised by active determination. This indows it with the capacity to be factually creative and to exert a systemic impact on the environment in which it occurs. To illustrate this point, we may consider the experience of Etty Hillesum, the young Dutch intellectual who perished in Auschwitz. The final phase of her brief life (1914-1943) was spent in the midst of Nazi oppression, when the future was perceived as a hope against all reasonable hope. Upon reading the letters and the diary, one is struck by the attitude of this woman, who despite her suffering, harbours no hatred for her persecutors.

Hers is not a generic form of compassion; nor is it the outcome of a religious or mystical approach to the human condition. Rather, it is the outcome of a constant practice of rethinking personal being, through the deep feeling of life. Hillesum's introspective journey is both imaginative and analytical. She refers to this mode of thinking as the 'thinking heart of the barracks'.

Hillesum's hope is not to be saved from the Nazi extermination that she knows is coming. Instead, she chooses to surrender herself to it by staying in the Westerbork sorting camp. For Hillesum, hope is an act of reliance on the good, even in the face of extreme evil. Her concept of hope is one of goodness, manifested in small, everyday acts of kindness and compassion. These include enjoying the scent of jasmine, living intensely on a sunny day, or giving oneself to others with a simplicity that, precisely for this reason, possesses the traits of heroism (Fisogni, 2019; 2021).

Hillesum drew upon a number of fundamental anthropological considerations in order to identify potential sources of hope. These included the observation that hatred can result in a progressive withering of being, while love is characterised by an expansive and constructive nature. Furthermore, she noted that any attempt to categorise people or situations can result in a narrowing of perception, which in turn limits one's capacity to empathise with and understand the needs of others.

In her own experience, Hillesum had chosen to focus her attention on feelings, to the extent that

she likened her 'thinking heart' to a furnace. This way of being immersed Etty in the hope that the Nazi regime would not really be able to put up a barrier to the happiness of the human condition.

Hillesum's daily practice of hope was a source of both surprise and spiritual benefit, and it fostered a higher quality of life than the conditions of the Westerbork transit camp could provide.

Conclusions

The aim of this philosophical paper is to reposition hope within the sphere of practical knowledge, according to systemic thinking. From this peculiar theoretical perspective, hope results as an *emergent property* that arises from the interaction between the macrosystem of the person (mind, brain, emotions, action, will), and the environment.

From systemics we derive those epistemological and ontological indications which see in the organization, i.e. in the relationships of the parts among themselves, the emergence of emergent or second-level properties (...) which the individual parts do not possess. This organization (and its properties) cannot be observed separately from the organized parts and the structured whole, but can only be inferred through abduction (...) In this context, a careful and fine phenomenological description, capable of grasping within the structure and in the multiple relationships with the environment, the plurality of aspects, actions, feedbacks, conditioning and constraints, which insert the object within a process, safeguarding its identity over time (Lenoci, 2015, p. 33).

The practical aspect of hope, as perceived by the mind's capacity for visionary thought and the continuous environmental inputs, can elucidate the relevance of its operational trait, which is acknowledged by both philosophy and sociology.

Given the complex matter and the limits set by the purpose of the investigation, it is not possible to draw exhaustive conclusions. There is, however, a brief mention of the role of the observer, which is very promising for hope studies.

The observer is not a neutral bystander; rather, she / he is an activator of processes (Bateson, 1979) that especially the experience of hope brings into light (Fig. 1) through imagination. The one who

hopes, from this point of view, is by no means a mere spectator, nor is the point of view something purely subjective, as Urbani Ulivi notes: "We underline how the constructivism of the observer must absolutely not be reduced to relativism, e.g. arbitrariness of points of views and ordering per arbitrary importance (Fields 2016)" (Urbani Ulivi, 2019, p. 31).

This frame, applied to hope in a specific manner, leads to the recognition of the subject who hopes, as well as the co-constructor of the action that hope conveys. As occurs in the activity of a scientist, the object of hope –that is, the realisation of a certain act that is considered either possible and achievable– is co-constructed (Bich, 2021). In the field of biology, for instance, the constructivist role of the observer is exemplified by the construction of models with which to interpret reality. In the context of hope, however, imagination highly affects the transformation of the world of life.

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