

# The Psychology of Nothingness II: A Variety of Emotions

**William Bergquist, Ph.D.**

Imagine that you are a composer facing an empty sheet of manuscript/staff paper or a novelist looking at an empty screen on your computer. You are awaiting inspiration: “where is the muse when I most need her!” Instead, imagine that you are delivering a report on research findings at a major disciplinary conference. You are offering part of the report with your major professor delivering the other part of the report. You have finished your section and then your professor ties up with stage fright. He can’t speak and signals to you with his flaying hands that you must provide the second half of the report. This actually happened to me many years ago. I invite you to consider a third situation. Imagine being on a diving trip with your companion in shark-filled ocean waters. By mistake, your diving boat has left the two of you behind. Your partner has been hit by a shark, and you are left stranded with nothing but your limited supply of air. This has also actually occurred.

What is it like for the composer/novelist? What was it like for me or for the stranded diver. Obviously, it was a much more serious situation for the diver. Yet all three of us, for at least one moment, experienced a Void. The composer/novelist has chosen to confront the void. For me and the diver, the Void was foisted on us. For me, the Void and encounter with nothingness was present as a speech segment to be delivered without preparation or a manuscript to read. For the diver, it was a much more profound Void and experience of nothingness that was associated with a sense of hopelessness and prospects of non-existence (death). In both instances, a flurry of emotions, anticipations and actions were activated by the performance-based prospect of delivering the remainder of the speech and existential prospect of facing one’s death in a violent manner (shark attack) or a slow, prolonged manner (drowning).

## Anxiety

As I noted in the first essay in this series (Bergquist, 2026b), a major source of anxiety comes from the confrontation with “non-being.” The remarkable theologian, Paul Tillich (2000), identified anxiety as the existential awareness of nothingness (non-being). Anxiety is often associated with helplessness and hopelessness (Seligman, 1992). By contrast, hopefulness and an existential (and theological) “courage to be” is based on an acknowledgement of one’s being and one’s becoming in the world. If human beings are minds, and not just brains, if they live in dynamic interaction with other people and events in their life, then they require a “courage to be.” Tillich believes that this courage is not embedded in a secular world. Rather courage is inherently spiritual in nature or at least there are spiritual demands being made on us as we are confronted with the dynamic universe in which we live.

If we are to embrace (or at least tentatively accept) Tillich’s proposal about the courage to be, then the engagement of existential anxiety is based on personal and collective agency: the willingness to make decisions and take action despite the uncertainties of life (as well as mid-21<sup>st</sup> Century volatility, complexity, ambiguity, turbulence and contradiction) (VUCA-Plus (Bergquist, 2026a).

## Craving

This second feeling is rarely portrayed, except in songs (such as K. D. Lang's "Constant Craving") and in melodramatic movies about unrequited love. Basically, craving is a negative feeling about that which does not yet exist. The human capacity to imagine something that doesn't exist (such as unicorns and lions that will attack us in our workplace), not only produces nonproductive anxiety, but also nonproductive and unrelenting emotional wishing for something. We not only "long" for the love of some other person, but also for recognition by our boss of a job well done. We long for the hidden satisfaction that comes with fulfillment of a desire, or even more basically for a sense of order ('Peace and quiet') in a VUCA-Plus world.

Building on a concept provided by the noted Jungian theorist, John Van Eenwyk (1997), we might consider craving to be a pattern of isolated and often contradictory desires that come together, much as order is combination of neural firings (van Eenwyk, 1997, p. 66). Van Eenwyk introduces a concept from the field of chaos theory called the Hopf bifurcation (Van Eenwyk (1997, p. 61), In essence, systems often contain elements of the system that are in tension (bifurcation). In the case of a system such as the human psyche, tension might exist in the presence of hope for the fulfillment of a desire, and the counter presence of fear and a sense of hopelessness regarding the unlikely fulfillment of this desire.

Van Eenwyk notes that when a bifurcation fails to stabilize itself then there is a cascade of bifurcations. In the case of hope and hopelessness, this means the unsuccessful resolution of the tension between these two feelings. A specific hope of fulfillment attracts other related hopes of fulfillment (such as past loves), as well as fears of rejection that were realized in the past. We consider asking our boss how they feel about the work we have done. We can imagine our boss saying that we have done a good job; however, can we trust our boss's appraisal since we "wrenched it out of this person in authority. And what if our boss indicates that they don't particularly like what we have done or identifies several flaws in our performance. Perhaps it is better not to inquire about our performance. In this case, we will continue to have an unresolved tension. We will continue to crave some form of positive feedback from the person to whom we report.

Van Eenwyk (1997, p. 61) describes the outcome of a cascade resulting from an unresolved bifurcation: "The boundary between regular, ordered behavior and behavior lead[s] to chaos. [The chaos] occurs at a point of instability, where some influence acts upon dynamic to change its behavior". As portrayed in many movies, the resulting behavior often leads to unproductive outcomes. The craving suitor makes a highly emotional and inappropriate appeal to their elusive love-object. A humorous version of this inappropriate appeal is found in the repeated unsuccessful courting of Andie Mac Dowell by Bill Murray in the very popular movie, *Groundhog Day*. Alternatively, the behavior is never enacted but is instead repeatedly dreamt by the obsessed lover. We find this obsession in novels such as Márquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera* and virtually all the Brontë sister novels.

In a less romantic and dramatic setting, we fumble in asking our boss for feedback. Our emotions mess up our communication. And our boss knows immediately that we are rather "childish" in asking him to praise our work. Alternatively, we just imagine our request for feedback. Whether our imaged request is successful or not, we feel "embarrassed" about not "having the nerve" to make the request of our boss. We might even grow a bit angry that our boss has placed us in this difficult, tension-filled situation. The resulting cascade of craving might draw in other tensions related to our ambivalent feelings about authority, or to our fear about confrontation with other people. Our craving expands and gains more emotional force.

Van Eenwyk (1997, p. 63) offers a further analysis of the Hopf bifurcation that seems applicable to the dynamics of craving:

“What goes round, comes round,” as the saying goes. Consequently, the conflict between order and disorder that rages at a Hopf bifurcation does not disappear from the system when it becomes chaotic. Rather, it remains as a latent potential in the dynamic. When it reappears, it manifests itself as the opposite of the chaos, that is, order. Like flowers in the spring, order reemerges without an advance notice of its presence.

In applying the Hopf Bifurcation to the matter of Craving, we might predict that a specific craving does not go away. Rather, it remains latent only to once again arise attended by full passion at any moment in time. As portrayed in *The Rose*, a song written by Amanda McBroom and sung by Better Midler, the craving and passion may remain frozen in the ground of Winter, only to be reemerge (like van Eenwyk’s flowers) in the Spring, “without an advanced notice of its presence.”

The nothingness of Craving would seem to exist not only in the absence of what one fervently desires but also in the absence of directly experienced cravings when they remain frozen in our psyche. As the Craving reemerges, it is accompanied not only by passion, but also by the original tension between hope and hopelessness that established the original bifurcation. “What goes round, comes round” concerns not only our bad behavior, but also our cravings.

## Envy

This is among the darkest of all emotions associated with the confrontation of nothingness in self or at least low self-valuing. Whether it be the conspiratorial envy of Iago in Shakespeare’s *Othello* or the aspirational envy of Eve Harrington in *All About Eve*, there is the deeply resentful feeling that “I have nothing, you have something”.

It also should be noted that envy comes with a sense of appreciation for the person whom we envy. The challenge is to turn this envious appreciation into a moment of illumination regarding how we might improve. Appreciation transforms envy regarding the other person’s accomplishments into learning from this accomplishment. The other person’s achievement and expertise is transformed into a sense of overall purpose and the collective valuing of this expertise. The remarkable essayist Roger Rosenblatt (1997) revealed just such a process in candidly describing his sense of competition and envy regarding other writers. He suggests that the sense of admiration for the work of other writers can play a critical role in his own life:

Part of the satisfaction in becoming an admirer of the competition is that it allows you to wonder how someone else did something well, so that you might imitate it—steal it, to be blunt. But the best part is that it shows you that there are things you will never learn to do, skills and tricks that are out of your range, an entire imagination that is out of your range. The news may be disappointing on a personal level, but in terms of the cosmos, it is strangely gratifying. One sits among the works of one’s contemporaries as in a planetarium, head all the way back, eyes gazing up at heavenly matter that is all the more beautiful for being unreachable. Am I growing up?

While envy can produce positive outcomes, such as envisioning how one can become better (more accomplished, wealthier, more powerful, higher self-esteem), it also can produce outcomes that are quite negative. We essentially seek to bring the other person down to our level, rather than seek to rise up to their

level. It is with a heart filled with envy that we point out the other person's flaws, seek to diminish their accomplishments, or work actively to thwart their progress.

## Melancholia

These are negative feelings regarding what does not exist yet resides in our consciousness. A poetic statement seems appropriate: melancholics is "sorrow to be found on the tip of an angel's wings." While melancholia is often associated with our mourning the death of someone we care about deeply, it can also arise regarding the death of a dream, the death of a relationship, or even the death of a vision we have for better society.

One of the most influential and disturbing concepts of melancholia comes from the writing of Sigmund Freud (1915/1957). Freud draws an important distinction between Mourning and Melancholia. He pushes well beyond the description of melancholia that I have just presented. According to Freud, while mourning is the normal, conscious process of grieving a specific loss, melancholia is a pathological form of grief. When we are mourning the loss of a loved object or person, we are gradually detaching emotional energy (libido) from it. A specific object or person is being mourned, and the detachment is finite and sometimes even transformative. Over time, the mourner accepts the loss, reinvests emotional energy elsewhere, and re-engages with the external world, allowing life to continue despite the absence of the lost object. One description of this detachment and eventual reintegration centers on our entering into the world of the dying and dead and then returning to the world of the living.

By contrast, Freud proposed that melancholia involves a loss that is often unconscious or not fully recognized. I would add to this an assumption that the loss appears not as the absence of a specific object, person or idea, but rather as a peering into the void. Everything is lost and there is no leaving the world of the dying and dead. As Freud noted, the person suffering from melancholia may be unable to identify the object of loss. To use his words (Freud, 1915/1957, p. 245):

[In the case of melancholia] there is a loss of a[n] . . . ideal kind. The object has not perhaps actually died, but has been lost as an object of love (e.g. in the case of betrothed girl who has been jilted). In yet other cases one feels justified in maintaining the belief that a loss of this kind has occurred, but one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost, and it is all the reasonable to suppose that the patient cannot consciously perceive what he has lost either . . . [H]e knows whom he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him.

I would slightly alter what Freud has said. That which is lost is not clearly seen and is of an "ideal kind" because everything rather than something is lost. When the loved one in our life dies or leaves us behind, our entire world collapses into non-existence. Freud's jilted girl finds nothing for which she wishes to live. When a prized project must be abandoned, then there is no reason to hope for anything good or productive in the future. When an ideology collapses, then a believer wanders aimlessly on the streets, finding nothing of lasting value in their life. I personally witnessed this ideologically based melancholia when I was working in the country of Estonia during the years when the Soviet Union was collapsing (Bergquist and Weiss, 1994). I found that many of the Estonians who were closely aligned with the Communist doctrine that they had been taught in school and that they believed deeply in their heads and hearts was now shattered. These "believers" (who were often men) seemed to be totally alienated from any sense of personal values or purposes (Hoffer, 1951).

Freud proposes that in a state of melancholia, one does not redirect emotional energy outward, transferring this energy to new objects, persons or ideas. Instead, the melancholic person directs the energy inward—there being nothing outside of oneself to which the energy can be directed. There is only a void and the absence of any reason to attend to matters outside oneself. For Freud, this internal direction produces self-reproach, guilt, and harsh self-criticism. We are somehow responsible for the undefined loss that has occurred. I once again offer Freud's (1915/1957, pp. 246-247) own words:

The melancholic displays something . . . lacking in mourning—an extraordinary diminution in his self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale. In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself. . . [A melancholic patient has] suffered a loss in regard to an object; what he tells us points to a loss in regard to his ego.

At a later point in his career, Freud (1923/1990) suggested that the inward turning of energy is directed not by one's ego (which is focused on adapting to external circumstances), but instead by one's superego (which is focused, like the Id, on internal conditions). For Freud, the inward turning of libido can create an internal division, where the ego seeks to somehow cope with the lost object, person or idea (if the ego can identify what this elusive object, person or idea is), while the superego is engaged in a critical and judgmental onslaught of one's sense of self.

## Regret

In his book, *Stumbling of Happiness*, the noted psychologist, Daniel Gilbert (2007, pp. 195-196) provides an excerpt from the final scene of a famous movie:

Who can forget the scene at the end of the 1942 film *Casablanca* in which Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman are standing on the tarmac as she tries to decide whether to stay in Casablanca with the man she loves or board the plane and leave with her husband? Bogey turns to Bergman and says: "Inside we both know you belong with Victor. You're part of his work, the thing that keeps him going. If that plane leaves the ground and you're not with him, you'll regret it. Maybe not today. Maybe not tomorrow. But soon and for the rest of your life."

Gilbert (2007, p. 196) offers his comment on this scene:

This thin slice of melodrama is among the most memorable scenes in the history of cinema—not because it is particularly well acted or particularly well written but because most of us have stood on that same runway from time to time. Our most consequential choices—whether to marry, have children, buy a house, enter a profession, move abroad—are often shaped by how we imagine our future regrets ("Oh no, I forgot to have a baby!"). Regret is an emotion we feel when we blame ourselves for unfortunate outcomes that might have been prevented had we only behaved differently in the past, and because that emotion is decidedly unpleasant, our behavior in the present is often designed to preclude it.

In essence, regret is a negative feeling about that which could have existed in the past or, as in the case of Ingrid Bergman, that which could exist in the future. Like melancholic and the other emotions I have identified, regret begins in the realm of nothingness. Our regrets are based on that which did not exist in the past or in the future. While melancholia is concerned with lost objects, people or ideas, regret is concerned with actions taken or not taken.

As Gilbert has suggested, regret is a very powerful emotion. Some research in the field of behavioral economics suggests that regret might be even more motivating than either the hope of success or the fear of loss. While there have been many psychological theories about the nature and power of regret, that offered by behavioral economists seem to be most complete and convincing. One of the most prominent of these behavioral economists, Daniel Kahneman (2011, p. 345), provides the following introduction to the psychology of regret:

Regret is an emotion, and it is also a punishment that we administer to ourselves. The fear of regret is a factor in many of the decisions that people make ("Don't do this, you will regret it" is a common warning), and the actual experience of regret is familiar. The emotional state . . . [of regret is] accompanied by feelings that one should have known better, by a sinking feeling, by thoughts about the mistake one has made and the opportunities lost, by a tendency to kick oneself and to correct one's mistake, and by wanting to undo the event and to get a second chance. . . Intense regret is what you experience when you can most easily imagine yourself doing something other than what you did.

Much as in the case of melancholia, Kahneman has identified the self-punishing nature of regret. We blame ourselves for action taken or not taken. Regret is a powerful emotion precisely because we wish to avoid this state of self-punishment.

At this point, Kahneman (2011, p. 346) offers an important insight: "Regret is one of the counterfactual emotions that are triggered, by the availability of alternatives to reality." I would suggest that this status of "counter-factual" can be applied to virtually all the emotions being considered in this essay. When confronted with the void, we are tempted to fill it with "counter-facts." Perhaps the anxiety associated with nothingness is worse than the potential regret that arises when conceiving of actions that could go wrong.

Humphrey Bogart might have been much less supportive of Ingrid as she decides whether to join Victor on the plane if he had said: "Well Ingrid, it is really up to you. We certainly don't know much about what will occur in your future. There probably isn't one good choice that you can make. Either choice will probably lead to pain." Humphrey might instead have waxed a bit poetic and declared that Love inevitably leads to regret. And regret inevitably leads to loss. I suspect that this poetic expression would prove to be of little help to Ingrid. She would have stood there a bit baffled, probably anxious, and perhaps a bit angry at Humphrey for being uncaring and useless.

Kahneman identifies two major regret-related dynamics. One of these dynamics is operating when one is confronted with major risk. Kahneman (2011, p. 349) identifies this dynamic as the asymmetry of choice. When risk is involved, there is often a bias toward a conservative rather than an "unconventional" course of action:

The asymmetry in the risk of regret favors conventional and risk-averse choices. The bias appears in many contexts. Consumers who are reminded that they may feel regret as a result of their choices show an increased preference for conventional options, favoring brand names over generics. . . . Even life-or-death decisions can be affected. Imagine a physician with a gravely ill patient. One treatment fits the normal standard of care; another is unusual. The physician has some reason to believe that the unconventional treatment improves the patient's chances; but the evidence is inconclusive. The physician who prescribes the unusual treatment faces a substantial risk of regret, blame, and perhaps litigation. In hind-sight, it will be easier to imagine the normal choice; the

abnormal choice will be easy to undo. True, a good outcome will contribute to the reputation of the physician who dared, but the potential benefit is smaller than the potential cost because success is generally a more normal outcome than is failure.

The second dynamic concerns what Kahneman (2011, p. 408) identifies as the two selves in which we operate: “The two selves are the experiencing self, which does the living, and the remembering self, which keeps score and makes the choices”. Kahneman finds that the conflict existing between these two selves can be quite problematic as we journey through our life. When it comes to regret, the remembering self is likely to prevail:

... [C]onsider the common admonition, "Don't do it, you will regret it." The advice sounds wise because anticipated regret is the verdict of the remembering self and we are inclined to accept such judgments as final and conclusive. We should not forget; however, that the perspective of the remembering self is not always correct. An objective observer . . . with the interests of the experiencing self in mind, might well offer different advice. The remembering self's neglect of duration [how long an emotional reaction such as regret is likely to linger], its exaggerated emphasis on peaks and ends, and its susceptibility to hindsight combine to yield distorted reflection of our actual experience.

It is in the experiencing self that we confront time as the ultimate finite resource. There is only the immediate moment. The past and future are in a state of nothingness. By contrast, the remembering self does not acknowledge this reality regarding time. There is ample content (real and fictional) in both our past and our future. There is an ultimately unlimited quantity of time for the remembering self. Furthermore, there is short duration time and long duration time.

Regret is built for a long duration. As Humphrey Bogart declared while gazing longingly at Ingrid, “if that plane leaves the ground and you're not with [Victor], you'll regret it. Maybe not today. Maybe not tomorrow. But soon and for the rest of your life.” While in the short term, Ingrid might find greater joy in remaining with Humphrey, it is in the long term that she will feel lingering, painful regret. The immediate experiencing self might want to continue embracing Humphrey.

And the theater audience certainly wants the movie to end with Humphrey kissing Ingrid and both of them flying off to safety in America. This impulsive wish is embedded in what Kahneman calls “System 1”. However, the remembering self wins out. A potentially unwarranted assumption of the remembered self reigns supreme. As the remembering self projects into the future, it believes that Ingrid will eventually grow to love Victor once again. The audience might leave disappointed that their immediate System 1 desire is unfulfilled; however, their thoughtful mind (what Kahneman identifies as System 2) will leave the theater with enriched insights about regrets in their own life.

## Hope

Up to this point, I have focused primarily on negative emotions. This is understandable, since nothingness tends to bring out reactive feelings – beginning with existential anxiety. Furthermore, the field of psychology has primarily focused on negative emotions along with dysfunctional behavior over the past two centuries. However, there is one major emotion that emerges from nothingness. This emotion is Hope. And beginning with the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, some psychologists have begun to focus on the more positive aspects

of human emotions and feelings (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Beginning with Martin Seligman's (1991) focus on hopefulness, Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) introduction of a very positive experience called "Flow," and an emphasis on appreciation (Cooperider and Whitney, 2005) there is now an emerging perspective called "positive psychology."

While Hope, like the other emotions I have identified, concerns that which does not yet exist, it is built on the assumption that something could exist in the future that would be beneficial. For Martin Seligman, hope arises from a more general attitude of optimism. He believes that optimism can be learned and has offered many strategies and tools for building a sense of optimism (Seligman, 1991; Seligman, 2009). With optimism comes the capacity to cope with adversity (which is assigned short duration and specific causes). We are hopeful because of this diminution in attitudes of fear, regret (and the other emotions I have identified). With hope, we can set goals that are attainable and meaningful. We can remain motivated even when faced with barriers that can prove to be frustrating (temporarily).

Key to Seligman's concept of hopefulness is the appearance of adversity—which is to be overcome by optimism and hope. Many of the theories of hope arise from the appearance of adversity. I would assign the label *Adaptive Hope* to this perspective. As Seligman would suggest, the alternative to hopefulness is helplessness and hopelessness. We are adaptive in our creation of hope out of nothingness so that we might not sink into a state of despair and depression.

By contrast, I would pose that some forms of hope arise not out of a desire to overcome adversity, but rather out of a desire to attain some higher level of development or at least a moment of bliss. *Aspirational Hope* is to be found in Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow and David Cooperider's concept of appreciation. On an even broader scale it is found in the concept of self-actualization offered by Abraham Maslow (2014) who might be considered one of the influential predecessors of positive psychology. Along with the noted clinical psychologist, Carl Rogers (1995), and the psychological researcher, Henry Murray (2007), Maslow forged a humanistic psychology that provided the foundation for positive psychology and an aspirational perspective on Hope.

## **Adaptive Hope**

Before considering the ways that Hope is manifested on behalf of aspirations, I consider the much more widely accepted notion of Hope that is serving a highly adaptive function. Specifically, much of the work on Hope comes out of studies about abuse, trauma and substance abuse treatment. Long before Seligman studied helplessness and hopelessness, there were strong advocates for the healing and liberating power of Hope. Certainly, Hope is central to the recovery-based processes of Alcoholics Anonymous, and the many other Substance Abuse support group processes. Reliance on a higher power often serves as the primary basis for this Hope. The valuable support offered by others who are also in recovering provides yet another critical source of Hope.

A somewhat more "scientific" approach to Adaptive Hope is offered by Casey Gwinn (a jurist) and Chan Hellman (a social worker) (Gwinn and Hellman, 2022. P. 9) who declare that: "Hope is the belief that your future can be brighter and better than your past and that you actually have role to play in making it better."

Adopting a more humanistic perspective than most of the AA-type programs, and building on the foundations of the positive psychological stance already identified in this essay, Gwinn and Hellman (2022, p. 9) go on to distinguish between people who are hopeful and those who are merely wishful:

Hopeful people embrace this truth [about a brighter future] with all of their being. Wishful people also believe their future can be brighter than their past, but they don't have any goals or critical thinking going on to help make their futures better. Hopeful people are willing to work for their better future. Wishful people aren't willing to do the work necessary to have hope and a better. . . future.

Gwinn and Hellman provide ample guidance regarding how to the hopeful goals and how best to work toward realization of these goals in the future. Fundamental to this perspective and set of practices regarding “the science of hope” is an assumption that things were not so great in the past. There is a strong motivation to set goals regarding a better future because the past was lacking something—or was often filled with abuse, pain or at least disappointment. It is highly adaptive to work for a better future if one has experienced an undesirable past.

Evolutionary progress occurs because human beings are not satisfied with an undesirable condition. They don't just adjust to this unfavorable condition, as do many other organisms; rather, they seek to change these conditions or move to someplace more desirable. This is one of the most important adaptive advantages of human evolution (though it should be noted that the desire for improvement can also lead to actions taken at the expense of other human beings, other organisms and an entire environment).

While Gwinn and Hellman take a more secular approach than do the AA-oriented practitioners, they also take a more cerebral approach than do many other human service providers who work with those seeking to leave behind an undesirable (often abusive) past. For some of these providers, Hope is founded on a very emotional basis—in many ways to combat the strong emotions I have already identified in this essay. For instance, Hope might be embedded in the unleashing of an emotional and behavioral Tiger (Levine and Frederick, 2009). Given that undesirable conditions are often associated with helplessness regarding the ability to approve things, a strong emotion and set of actions might be required to overturn this helplessness. The most undesirable of conditions (resulting in trauma) are often based on the inability to protect against attack and abuse.

It is often healing for someone to image that they have been successful in thwarting the attack. They often envision being like an unleashed tiger who has reacted strongly to rather than passively receiving the abuse. One can hope for the availability of one's tiger. This is a state of mind and heart often called *Agency* (Bakan, 1966; Seligman, 2026). We know from many medical studies that a sense of Agency on the part of patients plays a major role in the process of healing both physical and psychological wounds. Often coupled with motivational interviewing (Miller and Rollnick, 2002), the return of control to the patient through encouraging their agency in selecting among treatment options tends to improve the medical outcomes as well as the quality of care as perceived by the patient (Bergquist, Fish and Teurman, 2026).

It appears that Adaptive Hope comes in many forms. It can be spiritually based, engaged as a scientifically based cognitive process, or based in a sense of personal Agency. Adaptive Hope may be nothing more than imagining or dreaming about a successful recovery from addiction or defense against barriers to successful achievement of some goal. In the case of physical abuse, this form of Hope might involve actual preparation for defense if the abuser reappears. This preparation might include a set of self-defense sessions, a series of

training sessions in which verbal defenses are learned, or a cluster of therapy sessions in which consideration is given to domestic disengagement, job change and/or relocation.

Whatever the conditions of past life, we often wish to make our current or future life better. Adaptive Hope helps to bring actuality to this desired improvement.

## **Aspirational Hope**

It is now time to turn to Aspirational Hope. As in the case of Adaptive Hope, those feelings of hope that are aspirational come from a base of nothingness. There is nothing to hope for. We are in a state of neutrality regarding the future. It might even be described as a state of limbo, residing somewhere outside of reality. We are drifting on our skiff in the gray waters of limbo without purpose or direction. And then we construct an image of the future that is desirable. We construct hope out of nothingness. As Maslow (1998, p. 3) puts it, “what man can be, he must be.” There is the inherent striving for movement beyond the basic needs of humankind; the push toward what Maslow calls “self-actualization” is embodied in Aspirational Hope.

This form of hope is “autotelic”, (self-purpose) in that it is self-generating and self-guiding. Unlike adaptive hope that is engaged for a specific outside purpose of improving one’s life (such as seeking to overcome an addiction, overcome trauma, or take action against ongoing abuse), the hope based on aspiration requires no motivating force outside itself to be energized. In the case of Adaptive Hope, there is a presenting reality; however, it is often negative (abuse, addiction) and, in that sense, is a negative reality rather than nothingness. However, there is also a nothingness in Adaptive Hope. It comes from its overcoming of helplessness (a sense of nothing to be done).

For someone who engenders Aspirational Hope there is a nothingness that awaits creation of a new image of the future. While one’s present life might be satisfactory, there is still a Void. There is still a lingering aspiration. We seek to fill this Void with some change in the way we view and live in our current world and in our future world. Our hoped-for future takes on a new form or even a new outcome. Glimpses of this future provide us with some motivation and guidance. As Abraham Maslow (1968a, p. 214) suggested: “[T]he future . . . now exists in the person in the form of ideals, hopes, duties, tasks, plans, goals, unrealized potentials, mission, fate, destiny, etc.” If we are without these glimpses of the future and are without aspirational hope then we remain in limbo (Maslow, 1968a, p. 214):

One for whom no future exists is reduced to the concrete, to hopelessness, to emptiness. For him, time must be endlessly “filled.” Striving, the usual organizer of most activity when lost, leaves the person unorganized and unintegrated [in limbo].

Maslow (1968b) writes elsewhere about the Biblical tale of Jonah being swallowed by the large fish (whale) and left vomited on the beach of the city in which he was supposed to reside. As Maslow notes, this is a story of someone seeking to escape his destiny. He resides in the limbo of the whale’s belly and is without his own intentional aspirations (his own agency). It takes the whale to locate Johan in the future where he is supposed to dwell. Similarly, we are given the opportunity to discover and locate ourselves in the place where we are intended by creating our own Aspirational Hope without having to be swallowed by a whale. We need no outside motivator or force (the whale) to be guided to our intended destination. No abuse, addiction or loss is required for us to arrive where we are intended.

Maslow (1964/1970, p. 38, 83) suggests that while Aspirational Hope is without an outside purpose, there are desirable outcomes that accompany this form of Hope (and negative outcomes that accompany a lack of Authentic Hope):

[S]triving for something one lacks inevitably makes one feel that life has a meaning and that life is worthwhile. But when one lacks nothing and has nothing to strive for then . . . ? We are reminded . . . of the ‘neurosis of success.’ People can struggle on hopefully, and even happily, for false panaceas so long as these are not attained. Once attained, however, they are soon discovered to be false hopes. Collapse and hopelessness ensue and continue until new hopes become possible.

Some might argue that hope is never without some outside source. There is always some challenge or opportunity that necessitates the creation of Hope. Without hope, there is no action to be taken. Without hope, there is only hopelessness. Even if this is initially the case with all forms of Hope, there is a type of Hope that eventually operates independent of any outside motive. In alignment with Gordon Allport, another luminary in the domain of humanistic psychology, Maslow (1964/1970, p. 49) writes about the Functional Autonomy that comes with autotelic activities:

Knowledge has become independent of its origins, its motivations, its function. It has become familiar and therefore self-validating. It tends to persist in spite of being non-functional or even anti-functional, in spite of frustrating (rather than satisfying) the needs which first gave it life.

Something similar could be said about Hope. It becomes “familiar” (perhaps related to Seligman’s learned optimism) and may even be “anti-functional (“that is nothing more than hope!” “you are just a dreamer”). Yet it remains in place. Furthermore, it tends to expand in scope. While Aspirational hope might initially be established in one domain – often either the domain of work or the domain of play—it will often expand to include all aspects of one’s life. As Maslow (1968a, p. 207) notes, a “higher, superordinate unity” might be engaged: “Work tends to be the same as play; vocation and avocation become the same things. When duty is pleasant and pleasure is fulfillment of duty, then they lose their separateness and oppositeness.”

I had the joy and privilege of directing a program many years ago, involving a group of faculty members and students from around the United States. We spent a month each summer for three years exploring radically different concepts regarding liberal arts education (Bergquist, 1982). The focus of one “College One” session was the interplay between work and play. Much as Maslow suggested, we found that work and play could be interwoven—creating something we called “plork.” It was in a state of Plork that we discovered ways in which to be playful about the work called “learning.” We also became intentional (learning-oriented) about the various playful activities in which we engaged during this month-long exploration.

## **Eupsychian Management**

Abraham Maslow was given a wonderful opportunity to expand on his notion of superordinate unity when invited by Andrew Kay (the founder of Nonlinear Systems) to spend a year simply hanging around and writing at Kay’s business located in Solano Beach California. Inspired by the visionary leadership of “Andy” Kay, Maslow wrote an entire book, originally called “Eupsychian Management” and later retitled a more user-friendly “Maslow on Management.” While Maslow reaches out to many other organizational theorists and successful leaders of contemporary organizations, I particularly like what Maslow had to say about Kay’s leadership of Nonlinear Systems. I must confess that I am a bit biased in this regard, having purchased one of the first Kaypro Computers produced by Nonlinear Systems and having lived near their headquarters.

Nevertheless, a brief focus on Andy Kay is worthwhile, for he epitomizes the movement from nothingness to hope and on to fulfillment.

At the time that Kay was forming his company, the first portable computer (Osborne) was being produced. Kay's company manufactured a portable, "desk-top" computer that soon competed successfully with Osborne. Andy Kay was not only helping to revolutionize the home computer industry but also providing innovative leadership within Nonlinear Systems. Contributing to Maslow's book on Management (Maslow, 1998, p. 116), Deborah Stephens and Gary Heil highlighted some of Kay's managerial accomplishments:

During the late 1950s, Kay experimented with ways to unleash the potential of the several hundred employees on the assembly lines in his Southern California-based manufacturing company. During those days, factories were not known as environments where people were appreciated, let alone valued. Yet, Kay wanted employees to "think like owners" and to participate in the overall decision making of the company. In his search, he embarked upon one of the most innovative managerial experiments in the country.

Relying heavily on Dr. Maslow's book, *Motivation and Personality*, Kay decided to make sweeping changes in the way work was organized. He dismantled his assembly lines and replaced them with small teams of six to eight people. Each team learned every aspect of production. The teams were also self-managed. They decided the hours of work, break times, even scheduling of work. Kay did away with time cards and he also paid his employees 25 percent more than the prevailing wage. He was among the first to offer stock options in the company to employees. Kay even created the post of vice-president of innovation.

Clearly, Andy Kay's psyche was filled with hope and images of the future. He read about new forms of management and dreamed about the introduction of these forms into his organization. Andy Kay offers his own account—focusing on his company's initial production of volt meters (Maslow, 1998, p. 118):

In our business, the assembly line was crucial to our product. One person did this, another one did the next operation. and so on. Almost always, the people in the beginning of the line were unhappy. The happiest ones were at the end of the line that finished the job. We set out to manage so that all people on the assembly line felt like the people at the end of the line. Everyone was encouraged to learn as much as they could about all the operations and to do them. At the same time, the product got more and more complicated. We also had a piece of test equipment we built to see if all of the wires were put in the right place. The goal was to keep it down to one or two errors per voltmeter. People would make up their own notes. We didn't have a staff to make up these things. The employees made up their own guides. Whatever they wanted to jog their memory on how to do things, we encouraged them to do. Throughout all of the procedures and changes, they did not decrease the rate of production. Essentially, each person on the assembly knew what role they played in the entire production and how their work affected the end product.

While this is just one example of the way Andrew Kay approached his business, it illustrates the way in which he envisioned moving from traditional assumptions about the operation of a production line to a new set of humanistic (eupsychian) assumptions. Given that these new assumptions had not been widely tested and were primarily presented in management textbooks, there was an initial void of knowledge that Kay had to confront. There was virtually "nothing" known about this self-management process really worked at the time Andy Kay was starting his business. Aspirational Hope was required to bring realization out of nothingness.

It is interesting to note that Andrew Kay never abandoned his Hopes and dreams. Though Nonlinear Systems eventually went bankrupt with the emerging competition in the desktop computer business of IBM (and eventually Apple), Andy Kay eventually founded another company that produces new versions of the personal Kaypro computer. He was in his early 70s—and still filling his head and heart with Hope.

## **Challenge, Support and Flow**

Returning to the dynamics operating in the emergence of Hope, I propose a third dynamic. It concerns appropriate levels of challenge and support. If we are faced with too great a challenge, then the condition is hopeless. Conversely, if we are faced with too small a challenge, then there is no need for hope. We don't have to spend our time hoping; rather, we should spend our time getting on with the task of meeting this challenge. There is also the matter of support. Not only must there be a moderate, manageable level of challenge for us to be hopeful; an appropriate level of support must also be available. We can be hopeful because we know (or at least believe) that we are sufficiently knowledgeable and skillful and there are adequate resources available to meet the challenge.

As Frank Goble (1970, p. 60) notes in referencing the work of Abraham Maslow, human growth is “benefited by challenge only if the challenge does not exceed . . . human limits. In his work with graduate students at Brandise University, Maslow discovered what he called the continental-divide principle.” The significant challenge of graduate work either led to growth or to failure (they are broken). For the already healthy individual with sufficient support, “stress and challenge were growth -producing.” However, for the insecure, weak individuals without sufficient support, the challenge of graduate studies “was not the answer” (Goble, 1970, p. 60). Another humanistically-oriented psychologist, Nevitt Sanford (1980), similarly concluded that challenges must be matched with sufficient support if significant learning is to occur for everyone, not just graduate students.

The balance between challenge and support might also be critical to another important condition that is identified by Mihali Csikszentmihalyi, who joined with Martin Seligman in heralding the 21<sup>st</sup> century emergence of positive psychology. For Csikszentmihalyi (1975), there is a threshold between boredom (too much support and not enough challenge) and anxiety (too much challenge and not enough support) where the condition of “Flow” takes place.

Extraordinary work was done by Mihali Csikszentmihalyi (1990) about this unique experience called Flow. Flow is a profound, highly motivating threshold experience that can be quite elusive. On the one hand, you can be overwhelmed with anxiety. It would not be pleasant to hang by your fingers on the side of a mountain cliff, as one of my colleagues declares regarding his experiences of mountain climbing in the Cascades of Northwest America. On the other hand, it can be boring because you've done it many times before. The fiftieth hike up to the peak of Mt. Hood might not be quite as pleasant as it was the first and second time. So, when climbing to peaks in the Cascades Mountains, my colleague confronts a challenge but there is a strong sense that he can achieve the goal. A threshold experience took place. It was a peak experience filled with Flow for my colleague. He had been hopeful about succeeding and his hope was justified.

This Flow experience is also what occurs for football players and ballet dancers. Performance for both these actors is compelling not only because of the pay or fame, but also because of the opportunity for Flow.

What's interesting about the Flow experience is its integrative aspects. While we can hope for and visualize a peak experience, the Flow experience typically involves physical as well as mental and emotional. Somehow, they are linked together in the experience of Flow. We can imagine being immersed in a Flow experience, but the experience itself requires immediate, intimate engagement.

There's also something called micro flows. There is micro flow, for instance, during a boring meeting when you're twirling the pencil around in your fingers. That's called a micro flow because you're determining if you can do the twirling. Can I flip that pencil around? It's a physical and mental activity combined. Do we have micro-flows in a meeting when collectively pondering a major reform in a challenging system? Or is this too anxiety-filled to be experienced as a microflow? Maybe we should stick to twirling our pencil or paper clip.

As we have already noted, Csikszentmihalyi, along with Martin Seligman, led a revolution in psychology that began before the start of the 21st century. These prominent psychologists proposed that we focus not just on the negative emotions (such as anxiety and regret), but also the positive emotions (such as hope). What makes us happy? What is meaningful? When do we begin to look at what it is that makes people happy or what constitutes a Flow experience? How do we create something out of nothingness? What are the neural dynamics involved in happiness and in Flow? What happens in the brain when my colleague arrives at a peak in the Cascades? We know a great deal about damage done to the brain. Do we know much about how the brain operates when it's working well?

In a health care forum that I helped to initiate, a noted neurosurgeon, Joe Maroon, adds his own reflections about Flow (Bergquist, Fish and Teurman, 2026):

They have done studies on the Flow experience, in terms of looking at the neurotransmitters and the CSF. Time becomes suspended and you become unaware of your bodily functions. Something special occurs in surgery when you're operating on somebody. It is clearly a Flow experience. Everything gets shut out, and you're focusing entirely on what you're doing. Flow can occur when you are writing a book or a paper, creating a piece of art or playing a musical instrument. Various neurotransmitters, particularly dopamine, the endocannabinoid system, and serotonin, have all been related to that experience.

It's important that Joe Maroon identified neurotransmitters other than just dopamine. Many people trivialize and dismiss peak experiences, such as Flow, by saying: "You're getting a hit of dopamine". Joe has indicated that there's so much more operating when we experience Flow. It is not just a pleasurable experience. Many functional operations are taking place.

Another member of this Forum, Jeremy Fish, added to Joe Maroon's list and reflects on the Flow experience:

I think the alpha and theta brain waves dominate during Flow states. So, Flow might be on the spectrum with meditation. However, Flow would be more active. It's fascinating because I think all of us have had Flow experiences, and, for many of us, these are peak experiences. I'm sure Flow occurs during my triathlons, I have Flow during my time of running time, and during my cycling. These and other sports tend to be where I experience Flow the most. I think that's something to keep in mind, because I do think we overestimate that it only happens to elite athletes, you know. But we used to call it "a runner's high" when I was in high school. We said, "Yeah, I had a runner's high." For me, there was an aura of time stopping as I kept running. I had as much energy as I've

ever had in my life. I remember talking about my runner's high with my friends in high school. We had no idea what Flow was, but we had heard of and experienced a runner's high.

Much is going on when we are in a Flow state. That may be why Flow seems very compelling. During our Forum discussion about Flow the following observations were made:

You would think people would want to increase the number of Flow experiences they have in their lives. However, when they try to pursue Flow it is common for the Flow pursuers to get trapped in little dopamine cycles. Dopamine addiction might be going on. This would particularly be the case if we are seeking Flow in a digital environment, for most of the algorithms were written to actually stimulate dopamine. That's been part of our problem. Everyone's getting addicted rather than getting Flow states, which is what they're seeking. Internet "addicts" don't just want information, knowledge, and related things when accessing the Internet. They are also looking for Flow on the Internet (or at least a dopamine rush).

One of the Forum participants, Mark Vukalcic, added his insights and personal experiences:

The search for Flow certainly relates to the endless social media saturated with algorithms and dopamine? You're really eliminating the physical and the challenge component of Flow when you seek it on the Internet. That's why ever since I've been kayaking with Mitch and Jeremy, I find myself in Flow states. Because when I first did it, and I capsized, Jeremy had to rescue me. I still got back in the kayak every day. So, there was definitely a continuum from boredom to anxiety. I was on the threshold of anxiety, but I got back in the kayak. Ever since, I've been challenged. The waves get a little treacherous, or the winds, or the currents, and I'm just really focusing, I'm in a Flow state. Likewise, in music, when I'm playing with people who are more accomplished than myself. After getting over that fear, and then being free to make mistakes, I can get into the Flow state.

Mihali Csikszentmihalyi was on the faculty at the University of Chicago. His mentor was Victor Turner. Turner (1977) identified the threshold experiences and transitional ceremonies that cultures all over the world enact. The most obvious would be the initiation rites into maturity, but thresholds can be engaged in many ways and many settings. Part of what Turner and Csikszentmihalyi were proposing is that there are social structures that can be put in place at different times that relate to thresholds in our life experiences: marriage ceremonies, funerals. Ceremonies are structured in societies so that we might successfully grapple with the Void that is filled with anxiety. Ceremonies take us beyond anxiety, the sense of being overwhelmed by the death of another person, the anxiety associated with getting married, or the transition associated with becoming an adult. How do we create a threshold experience that is enthralling?

Csikszentmihalyi essentially said that thresholds relate to Flow. Furthermore, Flow really begins with the social structures. These structures exist in many settings. I identified some of these settings in my first essay in this series and in some of the following essays. One of the most important settings is the psychotherapy office. Therapists help people find the threshold between boredom and anxiety. On the one hand, we can treat therapy like just another conversation with friends—a lot of support but no challenge. On the other hand, we can become highly anxious when engaged in a deeply-penetrating, highly threatening therapy session: "My God, I've been shrunk by this horrible, evil person." How does the therapist and patient find something between boredom and anxiety? More generally, how do any of us find supportive thresholds that enable us to find Hope in confronting the challenges of nothingness and our mid-21<sup>st</sup> century VUCA-Plus conditions.

## Assessment of Hope

In their writing about Hope, Gwinn and Hellman (2022) not only offer an adaptive perspective on Hope but also bring up the issue of assessment. Can Hope be assessed? Gwinn and Hellman claim that Hope can be assessed and even more dramatically claim that it can be measured and offer a Hope Scale for its measurement. I would agree that Hope can be assessed but would differentiate between a measurement of hope (which Gwinn and Hellman provide) and an assessment that provides clarity, understanding and examples of what Hope is and how it impacts our life.

The measurement of Hope requires a quantitative mode of assessment. This measurement is associated with what's called a *Nomothetic Approach* to assessment. A nomothetic assessment produces numbers. Many people can be measured regarding a specific phenomenon, with accumulated measurements producing statistics that provide some degree of validity regarding specific magnitudes of the phenomenon being measured. The purpose of nomothetic measurement is to generate general principles, trends, or laws that apply to populations, groups or all people.

By contrast an attempt to provide clarity, understanding and examples of a specific phenomenon is assigned to something called an *Ideographic Approach* to assessment. An ideographic assessment is usually conducted with individuals. Information is gained through qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, or review of existing documents. The aim of an ideographic assessment is not to attain validity; instead, an emphasis is placed on personal experiences, context, and subjective meaning. An ideographic study is directed to the exploration of human behavioral complexity. The results of a qualitative assessment are often presented not on an Excel spread sheet or on a statistical table presenting levels of significance; they are often presented in case studies, biographies or extended hypothetical narratives based on a composite of actual life events.

While Gwinn and Hellman's book is presented as a Science of Hope, it contains many case studies—suggesting an ideographic approach to the study of Hope. However, the unique contribution made by this jurist and psychologist is their nomothetic presentation of a tool that can produce an Adaptive Hope score. I propose that Aspirational Hope can also be measured and that an ideographic approach can also be engaged with both Adaptive and Aspirational Hope. I offer a brief description of all four approaches that can be taken.

### Adaptive Hope: A Quantitative/Nomothetic Approach

Gwinn and Hellman (2022) offer a clear example of this approach. They present an Adult Hope Scale (Chapter Five), as well as a Life Satisfaction Questionnaire (Chapter Four) and a set of Hope Scales related to specific domains of life (Appendix). In each instance, descriptions are each rated as to the extent this description is “true” for the person completing the questionnaire. Gwinn and Hellman provide extensive guidance regarding how to interpret and use scores from these quantitative assessments.

As with all self-assessment tools, there is always the matter of self-deception and honesty in completing the tool. Some of the much more elaborate assessment tools (such as the MMPI) provide specific items that “test” for honesty; however, it is very hard to test for self-deception. Some assessment tools come with a

version that is to be filled out by other people. However, Hope is a very internal matter, so that assessments being made by other people regarding one's level of hope are likely to be of only limited value: they would mostly be assessing the extent to which Hope is being openly displayed. To what extent does the person being assessed "wear Hope on their sleeve!"

### **Adaptive Hope: A Qualitative/Idiographic Approach**

Once again, we can point to the presentation of Hope that is offered by Gwinn and Hellman. They offer many "Stories" concerning women and men who have exhibited remarkable Hope. In many instances, these stories concern Hope arising in the midst of adversity – classic examples of Adaptive hope.

As with the use of qualitative measures of Adaptive Hope, there are several drawbacks associated with qualitative assessments of this complex and often elusive phenomenon. First, the examples being presented are always highly selective. We can find examples of virtually any human characteristic if we search for it. Second, the story being told is always partial. The "whole" story can never be told. It would require a moment-by-moment recounting of the person's entire life. Hope is particularly difficult to capture in a several page description. Moments of despair and nights of bewilderment will always accompany moments of Hope and nights of courage and determination. While thoughtful and caring analyses are offered by Gwinn and Hellman alongside constructive advice, it is virtually impossible to provide guidance regarding all of the emotions and behaviors that accompany any struggle to forge an emotion of Adaptive Hope amid abuse, discrimination or intrusive life events.

### **Aspirational Hope: A Quantitative/Nomothetic Approach**

Investment resides at the heart of the matter regarding behavior that provides evidence of Aspirational Hope. If we are hopeful about the stock market, then we invest heavily in stocks; if we are hopeful about the future value of education and an advanced degree in our society, then we invest in the tuition required for us or our children to attain education and complete a degree program. If we are hopeful about an intimate relationship in which we are now engaged, then we invest in a gift for this loved person, invest in a romantic vacation with our lover, or invest with our soon-to-be partner in pre-marital counselling.

The level of hope and investment could be "calculated" by determine what percent of the total income of a "hopeful" person is invested in a particular domain (finance, education, intimate relationship). This could be done on a mass level, for example, by calculating the percent of income invested during a specific time-period in various financial markets by a large number of people. This could be a nomothetic indicator of overall "hope" regarding the financial future for a particular society. Something similar could be done regarding education and intimate relationships by determining the percent of total income devoted to educational endeavors or "courting" behavior.

As in the case of the use of nomothetic methods to measure Adaptive Hope, there are several limiting factors. While this distant (distal) measurement of investment is not distorted by self-deceptive reporting on personal levels of hope, there are many factors other than just Hope that influence financial, educational, or relational decisions. Furthermore, as already noted, a nomothetic report tells us nothing about Why we are hopeful about the stock market, the future value of education, or the desirability of our potential partner. An

analysis of Hope without knowing Why is rather hollow. Numbers about Hope should lead to a study of Why rather than standing alone as a definitive statement about Hope.

### **Aspirational Hope: A Qualitative/Ideographic Approach**

This fourth approach to the assessment of Hope concerns the creation and engagement of Hope. How do we go about envisioning something that does not yet exist. How, in other words, do we build a compelling image of a desired future. It would be through interviews that we gain this understanding and appreciation. The tales being told at a personal and collective level of dreams, fantasies, and realistic strategic plans for the future are widely available in contemporary mid-21<sup>st</sup> Century life and can be accessed by simply listening to and reading what has been advocated and even prophesized. There are also insightful documents about the building of utopian images--such as Samuel Butler's (1872/1970) *Erewhon* or more recently Aldus Huxley's (1962/2009) *Island* (contrasting with his dystopian *Brave New Worlds*).

An ideographic assessment of Aspirational Hope might be particularly important, if one is to accept Fred Polak's (1972) premise that a society must hold a compelling image of its future if it is to remain viable. Various types of future images are reviewed by Polak, and I have joined with two colleagues in considering ways in which a compelling image of the future might be critical in our creating of settings in which there is true freedom (Bergquist, Weitz and Pomerantz, 2026). At the very least, an individual assessment of one's desired future is central to any effective practice of personal or life coaching.

### **An Integrated Assessment of Hope**

Ultimately, we will only gain a full appreciation of the complex and often elusive emotion we call Hope when we have engaged all four forms of assessment and have integrated the findings from these four approaches to create a comprehensive understanding of Hope. I offer a four-fold model of an integrative approach and "Hope" that someday such an investigation of Hope will be conducted.

|                          | <b>Qualitative/Nomothetic Approach</b> | <b>Quantitative/Ideographic Approach</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <b>Adaptive Hope</b>     | <b>Measured Hope</b>                   | <b>Narrated Hope</b>                     |
| <b>Aspirational Hope</b> | <b>Invested Hope</b>                   | <b>Envisioned Hope</b>                   |

A comprehensive study that yielded an integrated model would require inventories (such as Gwinn and Hellman have produced), along with analytic studies of societal priorities (e.g. percentage of income devoted to financial, educational or relational investments), review of public documents (such as novels, critical essays

and even poetry) that concerns hopes and the future, along with personal interviews and collective interviews (using social technologies such as focus groups, world cafés or open spaces).

If we are to appreciate the way(s) in which Hope fills in nothingness and the Void of helplessness and despair, then we will need this type of integrative study. Without such a study, we are collectively vulnerable to the mixture of negative emotions identified in the first third of this essay.

## Conclusions

These then are some of the dynamics associated with emotions evolving from our confrontation with nothingness. I have concluded this essay by focusing on that remarkable and often elusive emotion called Hope. It is when motivated by Hope that we build an image of the future out of the state of nothingness. It is out of the Void that we create the substance of a dream. It is with Hope that we discover the potential of matching a challenge with sufficient support. We are hopeful that we are not left hanging on a cliff in the Cascades, nor spending hours in a boring meeting about system reform. We Hope for the threshold of Flow and take steps to enter this threshold.

As repeatedly noted, without finding or creating Hope, we are left in a state of helplessness. We act impulsively, without direction. Or, more often, we do not act at all. We remain Frozen in place. It is to this state that I turn in the third essay in this series.

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