

The Emotion of Hope in Ancient Literature, History and Art

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Call for papers

Organizers:

George Kazantzidis (U. of Patras / Open University of Cyprus)

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In our modern cultures, hope is usually conceived as a positive sentiment. Hope, we tend to believe, is a necessary requirement for a happy life rather than a treacherous emotion that distorts realistic and pragmatic evaluations of our prospects. Ἐλπίζω/ἔλπομαι in ancient Greek is used to express positive hope or one's realistic calculations concerning the future, but it can also designate anticipation of failure and disaster. Already in Hesiod (*Op.* 90-99), hope (ἐλπίς) is associated with fraud and deceptiveness: being the last of 'evils' remaining in Pandora's jar, it is perceived in a negative light as a sense of waiting for the uncertain future to which human life is now consigned; worse even, it may be designed to generate failed expectations thus increasing, through suspense and the illusion that happiness can be restored, the pain inflicted upon the human race. Hope, according to Bacchylides (9.18), affects and distorts our perception of reality; it deprives us from our sense of reason (ὕφαιρεῖται νόημα). As Diodotus states in Thucydides' Mytilenean debate (3.45), 'desire leads and hope follows': though unseen and elusive (ἄφανῆ), they can both prevail over visible dangers and lead to impulsive and catastrophic actions. Plato (*Leg.* 644c) believes that ἐλπίς can accommodate both confidence in future happiness and fear for future pain; whether manifesting itself as expectation of good or evil, however, hope remains restricted to the realm of 'impressions' (δόξα μελλόντων) and blurs our firm grasp and knowledge of reality.

Latin literature displays, to a large extent, this sceptical attitude towards hope (*spes*). The collocation *spesque metusque* is regularly used in Latin, from Cicero onwards, to translate the two prospective Stoic passions, ἐπιθυμία and φόβος respectively. According to Seneca, *De brevitate vitae* 17.1, hope lingers on as a self-perpetuating source of anxiety and disquiet: once fulfilled, old hope gives its place to new ones (*spes spem excitat*), in a never-ending circle of ambition and desire. The antithesis between *spes* and *res* (Lucretius, *DRN* 4.1086-90) is also prominent, especially in erotic contexts: Narcissus' delusion in Ovid, *Met.* 3.417 leads him to 'hope for something immaterial' (*spem sine corpore amat*); Leander's words at *Heroides* 18.178 (*et res non semper, spes mihi semper adest*) point to a similar breach between what one hopes and what can be actually attained. On a larger, epic scale, Lucan warns that knowledge of the future can only bring hopelessness with it (*Pharsalia* 1.522-5); the only way for humanity to retain any hope at all is to remain ignorant of what is to come and to nurture expectations which are almost surely destined to fail: *sit caeca futuri / mens hominum fati; liceat sperare timenti* (2.14-15).

This conference seeks to shed light on the complex **emotion of hope** in ancient Greek and Latin literature, history, and art and trace the development of its ambiguous nature across different times, cultural contexts and genres. At the same time, the conference seeks to raise questions concerning the place of hope in the history of emotions.

Confirmed speakers:

Douglas Cairns (U. of Edinburgh): 'Metaphors for hope in early Greek poetry'
Angelos Chaniotis (IAS): 'Displays of hope in the epigraphic evidence: from the deceived hopes of individuals to the fulfilled hopes of mankind'
Laurel Fulkerson (FSU): '*Deos speravi* (Miles 1209): Hope and the gods in Roman Comedy'
George Kazantzidis (U. of Patras): 'Lucretius' hopeless universe'
Donald Lateiner (Ohio Wesleyan U.): 'Hope is not a strategy': wish and expectation in the *Histories* of Herodotos and Thukydides'
Stelios Panayotakis (U. of Crete): 'Hope in the Ancient Novel'
Sofia Papaioannou (U. of Athens): 'A historian utterly without hope: the narrative dynamics of despair in Tacitus' *Historiae*'
Michael Paschalis (U. of Crete): '*vestras spes uritis*: Hope and Empire in Virgil's *Aeneid*'
Dimos Spatharas (U. of Crete): 'Hope, trust, and *charis* in Sophocles' *Ajax*'
Chiara Thuminger (Humboldt-Universität): 'Hope and the making of the Hippocratic doctor'
Kostas Vlassopoulos (U. of Crete): 'Slavery and hope: complexity and paradox'

Please submit abstracts (**300-350 words**) to **both**
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Dimos Spatharas (spatharasd@gmail.com)
by **May 25, 2015**.

Possible topics for discussion include:

Hope, faith and worship in Greek and Roman religions
Disease, hope and hopelessness in medical texts
Hope across literary genres
Comparative analysis of hope in Greek and Latin literature
Hope as a motive for political/military action
Hope in the context of antiemotionalist moralizing discourse
The psychopathology of despair
Exploitation of hope by marginal social categories / hegemony and the manipulation of hope
Philosophical stances towards hope
Personifications of *ἐλπίς*/spes
Hope and leadership in Greece and Rome
Hope, narratives and plot twists; toying with reader's expectations
Hope and embodied metaphors
Hope and distorted cognition
Prophecy, oracles, and hope; magic and hope
Hope and gender: is hope a gender specific sentiment?
Hope and erotic desire
Hope in the Greek and Roman art
Rhetorical manipulation of hope