



La speranza è un tratto peculiare della condizione umana. Prima di essere oggetto di convinzioni religiose, progetti politici o ideologie, la speranza è una tensione costante inscritta nella natura umana, una tensione verso un bene futuro, verso qualcosa che non è ancora e attualmente sembra essere fuori della nostra portata. Ma non dobbiamo dimenticare che la speranza è qualcosa di più della semplice aspettativa. Infatti l'aspettativa è una previsione basata su modelli di sviluppo già accertabili nella nostra esperienza del passato e del presente: «Dato questo è il modo in cui le cose si svolgono di solito, è ragionevole aspettarsi che  $x$  accadrà». La speranza, invece, è diversa, perché è tensione verso un 'non ancora' che trascende i limiti del presente e che spesso va oltre le aspettative (se non contro di esse). La speranza è un dinamismo del nostro senso temporale dell'esistenza, è un'apertura proiettiva ma è anche un impegno attivo per produrre un futuro con crescita di significato e di consapevolezza.

I saggi qui raccolti esaminano la questione della speranza sotto diverse prospettive: storica, filosofica, letteraria, politica e teologica. Per la maggior parte si tratta di versioni rivedute e ampliate di comunicazioni presentate e discusse in un convegno che ha avuto luogo a Evanston (Illinois, USA) il 27 e 25 aprile 2012, come espressione di una collaborazione scientifica tra l'Università di Pisa e la Northwestern University, coordinata dai professori Adriano Fabris e Kenneth Seeskin.

Un primo gruppo di saggi esamina la prospettive filosofico-teologiche, anche attraverso analisi di

testi letterari: dal messianismo sganciato dalla tensione apocalittica (Seeskin), alla religiosità odierna a rischio di perdere il suo rapporto con il futuro (Fabris), al ribaltamento di temi della tradizione ebraica in Leopardi per veicolare un messaggio di nichilismo e radicale disincanto (Perfetti), alla 'speranza assoluta', cioè svincolata dalla temporalità, come senso di una giustizia che trascende la mancanza di senso del mondo in Tolstoj, Dostoevskij e Wittgenstein (Morson). Mettono a fuoco il mondo antico il saggio di Wallace sui tratti controversi della speranza nella cultura greca classica e quello di Tataranni sul ruolo della *Spes* nella vita politica e religiosa della Roma repubblicana. Gli ultimi due saggi, in chiave di analisi sociale e di filosofia politica, propongono un'indagine delle coimplicazioni tra eticità e utopia nel pensiero moderno (Tundo Ferente) e l'esame del rapporto tra speranza e modelli di normalità/anormalità in tre opere cinematografiche contemporanee, come

*Avatar*

,  
*Transamerica*

,  
*The Piano*  
(Monceri).

*Hope is a trait peculiar to the human condition. Before being a theme for religious beliefs, political projects or ideologies, hope is our constant striving for a future good, for something that is 'not yet' and, perhaps, seems presently out of our grasp. But hope is more than simple expectation. For expectation is based on the patterns of development one can perceive in his/her experience of past and present: «I know this is the way things usually develop, therefore I expect x to happen». Hope is different, because it strives for a 'not yet' that transcends the limitations of the present and often goes beyond (or even against) expectation. Hope is a dynamism of our time-bound sense of existence, a projective openness and an engagement to foster a growth of awareness and meaning in our future.*

*The essays in this collection look at the issue of hope from a number of perspectives: historical, philosophical, literary, political, and theological. Most of them are revised and expanded version of papers read and discussed in Conference which took place in Evanston (Illinois, USA) on the 27th and 25th April 2012, in the framework of a scientific partnership between the University of Pisa and the Northwestern University, coordinated by prof. Adriano Fabris and prof. Kenneth*

*Seeskin.*

*A first group of essays examines hope under a philosophical and theological angle (by means of analyses of literary texts, too): messianism without apocalypticism (Seeskin), present-day religiosity at risk of losing its relationship with the future (Fabris), the reversal of themes of the Jewish tradition in Leopardi, in order to convey a message of nihilism and radical disenchantment (Perfetti), 'absolute hope', that is not time-bound, i.e a sense of the rightness even in a world without meaning, as expressed by Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Wittgenstein (Morson). The focus shifts on the ancient world in the essays of Wallace (on the manifold controversial traits of hope in ancient Greece) and of Tataranni (on the role of Spes in the political and religious life of the Roman Republic). The last two essays investigate hope in terms of social analysis and political philosophy, offering a survey of the original co-implication between ethics and utopia in modern thinkers (Tundo Ferente) and the analysis of the relationship between hope and models of normality/abnormality in three contemporary films Avatar, Transamerica, and The Piano (Monceri).*

*Stefano Perfetti*

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Kenneth Seeskin

**Messianism: A Brief History of a Complicated Idea**

pp. 9-17

Kant maintained that «What can I hope for?» is one of the central questions of philosophy. But how are we to answer it? I reject the idea that «Not much more than we actually have» is an acceptable answer. On the other hand, history teaches us that the idea of a messianic future is fraught with danger. Can we embrace messianism without succumbing to mythology or visions of apocalypse? This essay argues that we can and attempts to show how.

Adriano Fabris

### **Spes contra spem. The Loss of Future in Contemporary Religions**

pp. 19-27

The expression «spes contra spem» enables us to highlight a particular aspect of the present-day religious situation. Whether we are speaking of traditional religions (especially those where reference to the future is central, as in Judaism and in Christianity) or new forms of religious experience, there is an ever-growing risk of the religious human being losing their relationship with the future. In other words, there is a risk that the required conditions for hope disappear.

In this paper I shall attempt a description of this situation through a brief analysis in which I intend to show how loss of hope in the monotheistic religions arises from the emergence of a fundamentalist perspective, whereas in the new religions it is because the future is being absorbed into the present. Finally, I shall attempt to demonstrate how, under these circumstances, the only way for a further dimension – i.e. the prospect of transcendence – to be recovered is to build «spes contra spem»: hope even when hope itself seems to have been shattered.

Stefano Perfetti

**Posthumanism, Materialism and Midrash: the dissolution of all hopes in Giacomo Leopardi's *Canticle of the Wild Cock***

pp. 29-45

In the *Canticle of the Wild Cock* (1824), one of his *Moral Essays*, Giacomo Leopardi portrays the possibility of a lifeless, post-biological and totally dehumanized world. Life itself and human self-consciousness are depicted as temporary anomalies within the economy of universal naked material existence. At this stage, not having yet at his disposal the conceptual instruments to give these conclusions a materialistic physical foundation, Leopardi reaches them through poetical and rhetorical strategies. In particular, he reverses the midrashic figure of a cosmic rooster: far from being a symbol of awakening and regeneration, this Cock proclaims a chilling message, according to the visual angle of a dehumanized universe, and invites us to dry up all hope. This paper analyzes: (i) cultural substitutions and reversals in Leopardi's discourse, (ii) his techniques of argumentation, and (iii) the relationship between the *Canticle* and Leopardi's nihilism and materialism.

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Gary Saul Morson

**Absolut Hope**

pp. 47-54

We usually think of hope as time-bound. One imagines several possible futures, perhaps fearing one and hoping for another. But there is also a different kind of hope, that is not time-bound, because it depends on nothing that actually happens: absolute hope, the sense of the rightness or safety, even in a world with meaning. This concept is explored through an analysis of passages from Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Wittgenstein.

Robert W. Wallace

### Why did Hope Remain in Pandora's Jar?

pp. 55-63

The ancient Greeks mostly said nothing good about hope. Hope's meaning in perhaps its earliest appearance in Greek literature has been judged more ambiguous. In Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Pandora opens her "jar" (a pithos normally storing food) and all sorts of evils fly out. Pandora leaves only hope within the jar. Is hope a good or an evil? and is hope left in the jar to deny it or to preserve it for mankind? I argue that hope without resources is a deceptive evil, and that an empty food jar means that mankind must work to survive, the principal theme of Hesiod's poem.



Francesca Tataranni

### Hope and Leadership in Ancient rome

pp. 65-78

In ancient Rome hope (*spes*) was a vital component of the religious, cultural and political life of the Romans. In the centuries of Rome's expansion during the Republic, Hope was understood in the public sphere as the genius of the expectation of prosperity deriving especially from military conquest. The literary tradition amply supports the idea that during the Republican age *spes* was strictly associated with military leadership. During the imperial age, it was transformed into an extension of the personality of the emperor and his heirs, thus becoming monopoly of the imperial house. This paper looks at the evidence for the significance of hope in Rome under the Republic in order to better understand and illustrate the tradition which the imperial propaganda drew upon. In doing so, it highlights specific aspects of the Republican tradition which were blended into the imperial ideology, and identifies innovations which were dictated by the necessities of the new regime.

Flavia Monceri

### **Hoping for the Best: Figures of Difference in Contemporary Films**

pp. 79-97

In this article I address the concrete implications and consequences of hope and hoping for those individuals who are variously labeled as “abnormals”. I suggest to define hope as a social institution, that is to say as the set of expectations concerning the range of better future conditions to be considered “reasonable” given one’s own current position in the environment. Such range is intersubjectively (i.e. socially, culturally and politically) (co)constructed and overlaps with the range of possibilities presumably open to a given individual on the basis of his current situation. Then, I introduce three possible meanings of the expression “hoping for the best” with reference to the notions of conformity, dissent and transgression. Finally, I clarify and discuss such different meanings by means of analyzing three films whose protagonists are to be labeled as “abnormals” in the light of dominant models of the human being.

Laura Tundo Ferente

### **Sul rapporto fra Etica e Utopia e sulla coimplicazione utopica di desiderio-vincolo**

pp. 99-137

The essay suggests the existence of an original co-implication and interaction between ethics and utopia and intends to investigate their relationship, traced through the declination of the couple desire-constraint. The aims are two: to observe the structural – and not occasional – link between utopia and ethics and to highlight how the dynamics of the couple desireconstraint constitutes the privileged path thanks to which the Utopian project can go beyond the present condition and describe the just society.

The analysis starts from the elements that bring together utopia and ethics, as to say the sphere of the “practical” and the common methodological perspective. Ethics and utopia conceptual contents and purposes present themselves as distant from reality – from the mere existing – and provide a solid normative perspective.

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