Hope and Waiting in Post-Soviet Moscow

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It is hope that maintains most of mankind.

— Sophocles

To what extent can we think the phenomena of waiting and hope together? At first glance, these seem to be two very different temporal modalities of being-in-the-world. A prereflective everyday understanding of waiting, we might say, seems to be a passive resignation to that which comes to us (for recent anthropological claims about the activeness of waiting, see Hage 2009; Han 2012). Even when our waiting has a directedness, for example when we wait in line at the airport, our ability to act seems limited by the conditions of waiting. The line will only move at its own pace, all we can do is wait until our turn arrives. Hope, on the other hand, seems to entail a more active modality of being. Hope does not guarantee anything but it does suggest that something can still be done. But yet hope too seems to have a passive aspect. For no matter how we act, no matter how hard we might try, the fact that no hoped-for end can be guaranteed remains, perhaps, the most essential characteristic of the phenomenon of hope. In this chapter, I explore the phenomenology of these two temporal aspects of hope. In doing so, my intention is not only to cast light on the experience of hope in everyday life, but to consider how that aspect of hope – the passive aspect – most closely associated with waiting may be best considered as the temporal structure of being-in-the-world.

I pursue this task through a hermeneutic analysis of life-historical narratives I collected over the course of thirteen months of research in Moscow in the early and mid-2000s on the moral experience of some practising artists and actively practising Russian Orthodox Christians living in the city.¹ In taking a critical hermeneutic approach (Zigon 2014a; Zigon forthcoming) to my analysis, I intend to disclose the temporal structures and orientations of my interlocutors'

ways of being-in-the-world. As will become clear, this analysis discloses that being-in-the-world is perhaps best understood in terms of a continuous temporal shift and slippage that I interpret as revealing the two essential aspects of hope. As a result, I will argue that hope is not so easily conceived as either passive or active, or as the hope for a better future, as the tendency has been in recent anthropological engagements with the concept (Crapanzano 2003, 2004; Hage 2003; Miyazaki 2003, 2004, 2006; Allison 2013), and as such, hope may, in part, have more in common with a prereflective understanding of waiting than might appear at first glance.

In particular, I will show that my Muscovite interlocutors articulate hope in two ways (Zigon 2009a), and that these, in fact, match well with the two ways in which they articulated their moral experience. Thus, on the one hand, many of my interlocutors articulated hope as the temporal structure that sustains an already accomplished life, and, on the other, as the temporal orientation of intentional ethical action in certain moments of what I have elsewhere called a moral breakdown (e.g. Zigon 2007, 2013), or the conscious reflection and questioning of one's way of being-in-the-world. These two aspects of hope, then, can be seen as the temporal aspects of the anthropological theory of morality that I have developed from this research (see, for example, Zigon 2009b, 2010, 2011, 2012). This theory of morality makes an important distinction between morality as one's unreflective and non-conscious everyday way of being-in-the-world, and the reflective and conscious ethical action necessary in moments of what I call moral breakdown or ethical dilemma. Therefore, what I intend to show in this chapter is that like this anthropological theory of morality that views being-in-the-world as partially characterized by the constant shifting between morality and ethics, hope is also best understood as a constant slippage between the two aspects of the temporal structure of everyday life and the temporal orientation of intentional ethical action.

Recasting hope: from the active/passive dichotomy to hope's temporal aspects

Having grown up in a small, predominately Catholic rural town, I found nothing strange about sharing a few beers with Grigorii, a twenty-six-year-old Russian Orthodox Seminary student living in Moscow. Indeed, somehow I always thought it was the norm that priests, at least on occasion, have a drink or two. Eventually I felt comfortable enough to tell Grigorii this. He laughed a bit and

told me about the 'spirit' of alcohol, but then turned to telling me, with a more serious tone, about his pre-seminarian life. Grigorii would not describe himself as having been an alcoholic, but certainly he drank too much. It was not only drinking that had been a problem for Grigorii but, in general, how he lived his life. As he put it, too much chaos and not enough focus. One day Grigorii woke up and realized that he did not know what his life was all about, what he was living for, and where he was heading. It was this realization that he was living his life without stability, without a goal, without meaning that gave Grigorii hope. For, as Grigorii told me, from the upheavals of his life grew the hope to change. With this hope Grigorii found motivation to alter his path in life, to give up the drinking (for the most part) and partying, and turn to the life of God.

I had been interested in the notion of hope for some time so when Grigorii brought it up I could not resist. What is this hope that motivated? And how could what Vincent Crapanzano (2004) calls an attitude that is so often considered passive provide Grigorii with the motivation to begin to alter his life? When I asked him about this, he told me:

There are two kinds of hope (*nadezhda*). The first kind is when a person is lying underneath the tree with his mouth open and waiting for the apple to fall into his mouth. The second kind of hope is when a man starts to work hard and he hopes and is patient that his task will sooner or later give him some result, some benefit. And when I speak about hope I mean the second kind.

In other words, although Grigorii recognizes both the passive and active aspects of hope, it was the latter aspect that provided the capacity to change his life. When he realized that his life had become something he did not want, that is, when he found himself in the midst of a breakdown, Grigorii could not wait for his life to change, but rather he had to begin the ethical work to bring about this change, and it was active hope that provided what we might call the motivating ethical force to do this.

Grigorii was not the only one with whom I spoke in Moscow to make a distinction between the active and passive aspects of hope. A young Orthodox priest, who in addition to the work at his parish also edits a journal on the Orthodox faith and life for young persons, characterized hope similarly.

There are some situations when there is nothing to do but to hope. And there are some situations when we can act and hope together. Our belief is tightly connected with hope, of course. Now when we are preparing for the fast, there is confession in the church. Sometimes it is said that we are so sinful that all we can do is hope. But when we sin we understand that we need to do things,

through our actions and prayers, as we hope. We know that God is very kind and forgiving but we need to take pains to help Him forgive us for our sins. Of course we hope, but we try to do something to be more perfect, to help Him. Of course God is very kind to us, but we cannot wait for Him passively to forgive us. We should hope and do something to become better.

Like Grigorii, the Holy Father acknowledges that there is a passive aspect of hope, which as articulated seems to be more like waiting. But according to the Holy Father, this passivity comes about not because the hope itself is passive, but because the situation, the condition in which hope arises, precludes the ability to act (on the concept of situation, see Zigon 2015). This is the condition when one is so sinful that there is nothing left to do but hope. Perhaps this would be better expressed as a hopeful waiting (see Reinhardt in this collection). Fortunately, this is not the regular state of affairs. For in most cases it is expected that one combine their hope with certain activities, such as prayer, to be forgiven of their sins. In other words, it seems that the passivity that the Holy Father describes comes about not because it is a necessary characteristic of hope, but because of the conditions in which hope sometimes arises.

Although I know of no sustained Russian Orthodox writings or discursive tradition on hope, it is not uncommon for Orthodoxy to be described as a religion of hope. Thus, for example, in writing of Orthodoxy in general, Peter Berger (2005: 446) has pointed out that the Orthodox focus on Easter and resurrection rather than Western Christianities' focus on Good Friday gives the former a more hopeful and liberating theological focal point than the 'gloomy' and 'penitential piety' of the West. Similarly, Vasily Zenkovsky (1963: 49) describes the Russian Orthodox 'conscience' as motivated by a 'hope for the possibility of ... moral resurrection and renovation', which in turn leads to a 'spiritual transfiguration of man'. This focus on moral resurrection is closely linked to the Orthodox view of personhood that sees each person as constituted with both the image and likeness of God. While the image of God is given by grace, the likeness of God is merely a potentiality, the realization of which one must ethically work to attain. As such, Orthodox moral theology has it that the purpose of each human life is to ethically work on oneself in order to attain the likeness of God. This dynamic view of personhood, then, can be interpreted as containing within it the two aspects of hope that I will further delineate below.

This dichotomous characterization of hope by Grigorii and the Holy Father as active and passive is common among theological discourses of hope and most probably has its roots in the writings of Paul. For on the one hand, as one of the fundamental virtues of a Christian life, hope is a disposition that must

be actively acquired, maintained and perfected. Hope must be embodied or, perhaps better put, ensouled. While on the other hand, Paul writes of hope as a passive patience or endurance. As he writes in his letter to the Romans about the hope for immortality: 'if we hope for something we do not yet see, then we look forward to it eagerly and with patience' (Romans 8.25).

Although the active/passive dichotomy of hope has its roots in early Christian writings and theology, it remains today in contemporary, secularized characterizations of hope. Thus, for example, Vincent Crapanzano (2004: chap. 4) has maintained this dichotomy by characterizing hope as passive, as 'a sort of positive resignation', or a 'waiting-induced paralysis'. At best, this 'resigned hope' can be transformed 'into active desire' through the presence of a concrete hoped-for object. According to Crapanzano (2004: 222–223), however, this transformation only serves to conceal 'the resignation that lies, inevitably, behind' what he calls abstract hope. Thus, even the transformation of 'resigned hope' into 'active desire' seemingly serves primarily to cover over the passive character of hope. Hope for Crapanzano, then, is essentially 'desire's passive counterpart' (Crapanzano 2004: 100). Hope, in this formulation, does not seem to differ all that much from what we might otherwise call hopeful waiting.

Crapanzano does not, so it seems, characterize hope as essentially passive in order, as does Paul, to reveal its nature as patience or perseverance. Rather, Crapanzano is attempting to express the necessary contingency of hope. Hope is passive not because there is nothing one can do to bring about or realize one's hopes. Rather, hope is passive because ultimately no matter what one does to realize their hope, hope's realization depends on an other, whether that other be a god, fate, chance or some other human individual (Crapanzano 2004: 100). While many of the Muscovites with whom I spoke would agree with Crapanzano on this, they would not, however, characterize such contingency as passive. As Grigorii and the Holy Father have already suggested, although they know that the realization of the hopes about which they spoke to me are ultimately contingent on an other – in this case, God and the Church/Seminary – they nevertheless act – for example, pray, confess, attend classes, study hard, actively avoid alcohol – so as to create the best possible situation for the contingent realization of these hopes.

Crapanzano further attempts to link the passive and the contingent character of hope through the coupling of hope and hopelessness. As he puts it, hope 'can never be fully divorced from hopelessness any more than hopelessness can be divorced from hope' (Crapanzano 2004: 114). I agree with Crapanzano that to some extent the conditions out of which hope arises create the possibility for

hope in such a way that there is a precarious line between hope and hopelessness, in which there is always the danger of slippage. In this sense, we can talk about the necessary coupling of hope and hopelessness, a coupling that constitutes each. But this constituting coupling does not necessitate the passive and resigned nature of hope Crapanzano emphasizes. For as I will show throughout this chapter, hope and its interplay with hopelessness is often described as the vital force behind one's ability to act and be-in-the-world. Therefore, I disagree with Crapanzano when he places hope outside of the active, or Minkowski (1970: 92) when he situates hope, like desire, 'above activity'. Rather, I contend that for my Muscovite interlocutors, hope in its various aspects is necessary for the very possibility of being-in-the-world and acting in that world.

In his various writings on the production of hope among some Japanese traders in the financial markets, Hirokazu Miyazaki seems to associate hope with novelty and the new. In describing the reorientation these Japanese traders create in their lives, and in so doing creating new dreams and ideals for themselves, Miyazaki (2003, 2006) contends he is showing us the production of hope that helps maintain these individuals' lives. This is particularly seen, so Miyazaki tells us, in the dreams or career aspirations of one of his informants in the Japanese financial sector. I certainly agree that dreams (including daydreams), ideals, goals and utopian visions can, at times, help produce hope (Grigori's story of his turn toward the priesthood is just one example of that kind of hope). I hesitate, however, to limit hope to an attitude that is always, or for the most part, hope for the new or something better or ideal. For my research suggests that hope (as articulated by my Muscovite interlocutors) is not primarily aimed at a better life or attaining the good. Nor did anyone articulate utopian, activist or progressive aspirations. Rather, much of the hope articulated to me was similar to how some have recently described agency as an aim toward continuity, stability or living sanely (Asad 2003; Mahmood 2005; Yurchak 2006; Zigon 2011). Therefore, although I am sympathetic to recent attempts by social scientists and philosophers to reappropriate the concept of hope for progressive politics (e.g. Harvey 2000; Zournazi 2002; Hage 2003; Allison 2013), ultimately I find their use of this concept to be too narrowly focused on what might be called the Augustinian folk-model of hope, as pointing down the linear path of time toward the better future. Thus, Harvey's (2000) focus on hope as optimism and Zournazi's (2002: 18) claim that revisiting hope can allow us to revisit possibilities of freedom, in my view, too narrowly conceive of hope as a future-orientation toward the good (for a critical engagement with recent anthropological adoptions of notions of the good and right, see Zigon 2014a).

Throughout this chapter, then, I will try to move away from these views of hope that either maintain the passive/active dichotomy or see it pointing toward the new and better future. This will be done through a critical hermeneutic analysis that recasts the traditional dichotomy of hope as either active or passive. That is, I will contend that hope cannot be rendered as an either/or, but instead should be considered in its shifting aspects of both/and (see also Hage 2003). To do this, I will try to show that hope as it was articulated by my Muscovite interlocutors is better considered as, on the one hand, an existential modality of being-in-the-world. In this way hope can be thought of as the temporal structure that allows one to keep going or persevere through one's life. This aspect of hope can be seen as similar to what is often characterized as the passive nature of hope. On the other hand, hope can take on the temporal orientation of conscious and intentional action in moments of moral breakdown. This aspect of hope is similar to what is often called the active nature of hope. As such, this aspect of hope is the temporalization process – the intentional and creative uses of the past and the future – that allows for intentional and ethical action (see also Zigon 2014b). In recasting hope in this way, we might begin to think of hope as a way of expressing the temporality of being-in-the-world. As such, we can better see how hope works not only as motivation for ethical activity in moments of breakdown but, perhaps more importantly, as a temporal structure for persevering through the life into which one has been thrown. In this way, hope is not necessarily aimed at the future good, but primarily at the perseverance of a sane life.

In support of this argument, I borrow heavily from Alain Badiou's reading of St Paul's concept of hope, and combine it with his view of ethics as motivated by the maxim 'keep going!'. For Badiou (2003: 93) hope is best characterized as perseverance and rendered by the 'maxim enjoining us to persevere in this trajectory'. Hope is that which enjoins us to 'keep going!' (Badiou 2001). In this way, Badiou challenges the traditional reading of Paul, which most likely has its roots in St Augustine, who writes that hope 'is concerned only with good things, with things future, with things pertaining to the one who purports to have the hope of them' (1953: 6). For most Christians, it is commonly understood that the primary future good to be hoped for is the salvation of immortality. But Badiou poses an important challenge to this reading of Paul and reinterprets the latter as intending hope as perseverance along the trajectory established by the event of Christ's resurrection. In this sense, hope is not simply a looking-forward-to-the-better-future, but more importantly it is a referencing back to the founding event that makes a certain kind of life possible (Badiou 2003). But such hope as persevering does not imply, as Heidegger (1996: 317) argues, that hope is

essentially past-oriented. Rather, while hope does reference back to a founding event, in this case Christ's resurrection, in this referencing back it allows, or perhaps it is better to say it necessitates, continuance. In this way temporality can be conceived of as the continuous recycling of past and future ecstasies in the constitution of multiple presences (Zigon 2014b), rather than a linear flow out of a past into a future. It is the former geometry of temporality that I suggest best describes the dynamics of hope.

Hope, then, as Badiou renders it, and as I will suggest many of my Muscovite interlocutors express it, does not for the most part look forward to the better, although it certainly does at times, but is principally a modality of maintaining the world as it has already been achieved through that world's founding event (for the prevalence of such a modality in Eastern Christianity, see Hann and Goltz 2010). In this sense then, persistent hope, following Badiou, is hope to maintain the world as it has been found and lived through. It should be pointed out, however, and this is essential, that new worlds can be established, as in Grigorii's entering the Seminary, after which it is this new world that is maintained through hope.

Nevertheless, this radical change of one's world is not always the main goal of hope. Instead, I suggest, it makes more sense to think of both aspects of hope as seeking to maintain what Talal Asad (2003) has called a sane life. To live sanely in the world is to practically know and to be known practically in the world. To live sanely in the world is not to have agency in the sense of resisting the social order or actively working for an ideal future. Rather, it is the attempt to live acceptably both for oneself and others, and to do so within the world in which one finds oneself (see also Mahmood 2005; Zigon 2011). In the rest of this chapter, I will show how my Muscovite interlocutors, by means of the two aspects of hope, attempt to do this.

'You can put your hopes in God, but you still have to act'

There is a Russian proverb that runs like this: you can put your hopes in God, but you still have to act (*na Boga nadeicya, a sam ne ploshai*). This proverb, I suggest, can be seen as formally articulating the hope of many of my interlocutors. For as the proverb suggests, one can indeed have hope in God, and in doing so remain, for the most part, passive. As I argued above, this 'passivity' is best thought of in terms of the temporal structure of the non-conscious everydayness of being-with. But this 'passivity' does not fully describe the nature of hope in God. For even in this most abstract of all hopes,

as the Holy Father indicated, one must perform some actions, for example prayer. The point of the proverb, then, is that this 'passive' hope in God is not enough. One must also act in order to realize hope. And while the hoped-for is not necessarily realized simply because one acts, both in this proverb and according to my Muscovite interlocutors, acting is indeed inseparable from hoping in many situations in their lives.

Take, for example, Andrei, a theatre director and teacher at an institute for theatre directors in Moscow. When I met him, Andrei was in his late-forties, and, as he put it, finally living the life he always hoped to have. But it did not come easy. He worked hard to get the position he now has, for example, accepting many jobs he did not want or that could not pay him, and sacrificing many other parts of his life, for example, a steady and good income and a wife. In fact, still today Andrei can afford little more than a small room in a communal flat on the outer edges of the city. Nevertheless, Andrei maintains the necessity of the connection between hope and acting in one's life. This is how he put it:

If you want to see your hopes fulfilled you need to have a strong will. I think that when I want to achieve something in my life I need to show everything I can do, I need to show people that I can do this or that or I have some skills and abilities. And in my opinion a person shouldn't be inert, he should act, work hard and never lose that energy that keeps everything moving forward.

Here we see Andrei slipping between the two aspects of hope. Hope for Andrei is not simply focused on a particular goal or act – in other words, it is not only the temporal orientation of the act-moment. Hope is also a way of life; it is the need to persevere. Hope is 'that energy that keeps everything moving forward'. As Badiou would put it, hope is the fidelity to a certain way of life. In Andrei's slippage, we see the workings of fidelity. For fidelity, like hope, has these same two aspects. On the one hand, to have fidelity is to have perseverance in the maintenance of a way of life. On the other hand, fidelity on occasion necessitates active and reflective work to reinforce that which must be maintained. This is what Andrei does. He perseveres with the energy of hope in the trajectory of his life, even and especially in the difficult times, and he also works hard to attain certain goals or overcome certain difficult times along the way of this life.

The same can be seen in the life of Irina. Irina is a twenty-six-year-old theatre actress who had recently moved to Moscow from a small city in Central Russia, and now works in the library of the same institute in which Andrei works, and to which she had unsuccessfully applied to be a student. Perhaps more than anyone else I came to know while living in Moscow, Irina had experienced much recent

hardship. Her experiences of being far from home in a large, demanding, and at times, unforgiving city, her general lack of success in finding work in the theatre, and her recent separation from her boyfriend would be enough, so it would seem, to leave her disheartened. Not so for Irina. When I asked her what she hoped for, she turned to her professional life first.

Well, I like my profession very much. It took me quite a long time to get to where I am today. It is not the end, of course, I still have a very long way to go. I want to develop as a person and as an actress, I want to achieve a high level of professionalism and move forward step by step. I don't want to be like a flash that goes out just after shining brightly. I want to cover very much in my life.

When I asked her if there was anything she could do to fulfil these hopes she told me, 'What can I do? I can do what I constantly do – work on myself in order to improve and be better. Being an actress means constant work. And it is very important to have a strong will, to have the ability to gather all your strength and move forward.'

The next time I met with Irina, I asked her about what she had said about hope and how she could have so much of it despite the hardships she had experienced.

Irina – When you are in a depression it seems that everything is very bad in life and everything is wrong and there is no way out. But you should always find one thing that you want to do, you have to find a goal and find some strength with which to fulfil this aim. This is hope. When you lose this purpose or you don't know what to do, you are lost. You need this hope.

Jarrett – So hope is something that you have to do, something you have to actively pursue?

Irina – Yes. In bad situations the only way is some kind of action, something you can do, you can't stay like that.

Jarrett – Does the realization of the hope depend only on the person who hopes and acts or is he constrained by outside circumstances?

Irina – Of course when you want to achieve a goal there are people around you who can impede or help, but they have no power compared to you. Everything comes from me. Everything depends on me.

Jarrett – So if your will is strong enough, then nothing can stop you?

Irina – Now everything depends on me and my strong will and my hopes. Nothing can stop it right now. But you never know, something really bad and unfortunate can happen and change everything.

Again, this is very interesting if not a bit over optimistic considering her current situation of not being able to find work in any theatres and not getting accepted into the director's institute to which she applied. Even though she does not admit it, Irina's hopes have been and are contingent on others. Hope is not centred on the individual will as Irina describes it in words, but is instead, as it is revealed in Irina's greater life narrative, a social relationship imbued with shifting levels of power. But perhaps it is this not-admitting of the contingency of hope that allows her to continue hoping. Perhaps it is this very denial of contingency that keeps Irina's hopes alive. Perhaps it is this denial that allows her to continue to work on herself and believe that her future is still in her own hands despite her lack of power in most of her social relationships.

In fact, there are deep cultural-historical roots that support both Andrei and Irina's focus on the necessity of individual's working on themselves to realize their hopes. And, indeed, as we saw with Grigorii and the Holy Father, and as will be seen in the next section, they were not the only ones who spoke in these terms. Not only can these roots be seen in the Orthodox image/likeness distinction I described above, but it can also be seen in the Soviet project of building the New Soviet Man, a project that clearly has its foundations in the Orthodox tradition of working on the self (Kharkhordin 1999). This Soviet project necessitated that individuals work on themselves not only to become proper socialist persons, but also to participate in the collective hope of realizing socialism in one country (Fitzpatrick 2005). Thus, the call to work on oneself was one heard and practised in various everyday and institutional contexts in the Soviet period, and one that remains central to post-Soviet conceptions of personhood (Ries 1997: 119; Fitzpatrick 2005; Zigon 2010, 2011).

As will become clear in the next section, it is this connection between hope and working on the self that helps many of my Muscovite interlocutors to continue living their lives as best they can, despite the hardships they face. For in both Andrei and Irina's case, they have maintained their hope in the face of continuous career disappointments and setbacks, and several personal difficulties. In the next section I will further elaborate on the connection between these kinds of hardships and the greater social context of contemporary Russia. For now, however, it is important simply to note that hope is that which is expressed as necessary in times that some might consider hopeless.

In this section, I have tried to show that in the words of my Muscovite interlocutors it is clear that hope cannot be simply rendered as either passive or active, but instead must be understood as a complex temporal concept that shifts from context to context and, in fact, within a particular context. Hope,

then, is a resource that can be called upon not only for perseverance, but also for the activity needed to maintain this perseverance. Hope as conceptualized by my Muscovite interlocutors is the fidelity to the life trajectory upon which one finds oneself.

Hope and hopelessness: the social context of hope

When Pandora opened her box and unleashed evil into the world, she was left only with hope. This origin myth suggests not only the necessity and power of hope for human life, but more importantly for our purposes, it reveals the conditions in which hope is manifest and put to use. While these conditions need not be as extreme as evil, certainly (as I was often told in Moscow and Irina's story shows) they are difficult. This difficulty most often took some socio-economic form in the narratives of my interlocutors. For this reason, hope was often in reference to career and family, and this reference was always an expression of hope for stability. Related to this is that hope was often described as arising most easily and effectively out of social conditions that are seemingly less than hopeful. That is to say, according to most of my interlocutors, hope is not something one has if life is comfortable and convenient. Hope does not arise in good times. Rather, hope is born out of the conditions of struggle. Hope is what we find when we might expect to find hopelessness – and as such, we always risk that slippage into hopelessness. As will become clear in this section, Irina and Andrei were not the only ones who told me of the importance of hope in times of hardship.

One sunny spring afternoon I was walking with Anna, a poet in her late twenties, each of us enjoying a bottle of beer on the crowded streets of central Moscow, when I told her how surprised I was about the way people were speaking to me about hope, that is, its necessity for life and when it is most important. She told me:

Yes, I agree and I absolutely agree with the famous expression: 'you live as long as there is hope' (*zhivyosh' poka est' nadezhda*), which means that you live even if everything is very, very bad around you because if you have hope you can live, you can survive, you cannot live without hope, if you have hope you can fight.

Anna's expression, which seems a bit awkward, was echoed, however, by many others with the much more common proverb – hope dies last (*nadezhda umiraet poslednei*). The anthropologist Dale Pesmen reports having heard people make

a connection between hope and *dusha*, which is glossed in English as soul and is still today one of the central colloquial and rhetorical markers of Russian identity: “If there’s soul, there’s hope”, “Filled with *dusha*” means full of hope’ (Pesmen 2000: 63). Whether one speaks of life, living or *dusha*, what is clear is that for many there is a definite and unbreakable relationship between living a human life and having hope.

As my conversation with Anna continued I told her that several people had also said that hope is very important for Russians – that to be Russian is to hope. She replied:

I think that is right in some way. Because you know our level of life isn’t as high as Europeans or Americans. So many people are now living for tomorrow and hoping that tomorrow will be better. They did the same fifty years ago when people were fighting for communist goals, when people hoped that the future would be better for their children. It is the same today.

I should add that Russians have been doing this for a very long time. Indeed, one could read the entire history of Russia – from at least the reign of Peter, but probably before – as a history of hope maintained by a history of temporal incongruity (Miyazaki 2003, 2004; see also Verdery 1995). But I am quick to ask: could we read any history differently?

The point, however, is that hope, according to my Muscovite interlocutors, is necessary to live through difficult times. One needs hope to fight. One needs hope to *perezhivat’* – to live through – or in more dire times, to *vyzhivat’* – to survive – the hardships and difficulties of life. Or as Badiou (2003: 93–94) would put it, one needs hope to persevere, to keep going. As Anna said, hope was not only needed in the past, in history, but it is also necessary today. During a time when most of my interlocutors worked on at least two jobs, and most worked on more, just to maintain some kind of comfortable life in what has become one of the most expensive cities in the world, it is not surprising that they spoke to me about the hope to keep going and to eventually live what Russians call a normal life (*normal’naya zhizn’*). A normal life is simply that, a life of stability without too many worries. As one of my interlocutors once put it to me only partially joking, a normal life is being able to come home after a hard day of work, grab a beer and sit in front of the television. In a social context where most of my interlocutors leave home early in the morning and do not return again until very late in the evening after their second or third job, there is no time for the normalcy of enjoying a beer in front of the television, let alone enjoying free time with friends or family on any kind of regular basis.

This lack of a normal life is intimately tied with the greater socio-economic situation in Russia today. This became clear in something Anna once told me. One evening I went to Anna's for dinner. When we sat down at the table, I found myself face to face with a bowl of about fifty shrimp – one hundred beady, black eyes staring at me as if they were still begging for mercy. At first I was a bit taken back. After all, my past experiences with shrimp, like with most meat and fish in the United States, was of the peeled and packaged kind. I was not used to eating anything with the head and eyes still there, still staring. I tried to make light of it by telling Anna; she gave me a polite chuckle in response and immediately went into the importance of shrimp in Russian life, a fact that I had never known and would never have guessed. The most interesting part of the story, for our purposes, was related to hope, or more specifically, the lack thereof. For as Anna put it, 'Russia is like Dante's inferno – leave all your hope outside.' This lack of hope is metaphorically evident, at least as Anna sees it, because of the price of shrimp. It used to be, so I was told, maybe five or so years ago, you could buy about a half a kilo of shrimp for about one dollar (it was interesting that she used the dollar and not rubles in her story). But now, the price is closer to two or three dollars.

This is because the business in the East is run by mafia and they sell their shrimp to Japan, China and Korea – they really like shrimp and things like it there. But this is criminal! We call it Soviet capitalism. A few years ago maybe there was some hope, some reason to think all would turn out all right, but now we get shrimp here in Moscow from Norway. Can you believe it?

At the time of this research in the early 2000s, millions of Russians still depended on their own or relative's gardens to eat. My interlocutors as a whole were politically apathetic, a condition that the Putin regime at that time and now uses to its advantage to secure centralized control. Add to this the fact that people's homes, the giant, monolithic apartment complexes built most famously under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, are crumbling under their very feet. Pipes are leaking and heating is no longer, if it ever was, very reliable. The future for many of my interlocutors, despite an apparent economic boom related to the high price of oil, did not look so bright. There was not much reason to have hope. But yet, despite the fact that I heard quite a bit about hopelessness, I heard much, much more about hope.

For Anna, the price and national origin of shrimp in Russia reveals the hopelessness of living in post-Soviet Russia. Perhaps in that moment of our dinner, this was true for her. But several other times, Anna expressed to me

the importance of hope, the necessity of hope for living life. Remember, she is just one of the people who told me that one lives only as long as one has hope. But Anna was not the only one who used a particular consumer product as a metaphor to talk to me about the slippage between hope and hopelessness. Dima, a musician and former heroin user in his early thirties, who at the time worked for a foreign NGO, did the same. He used the metaphor of a car – or more specifically, an automobile plant.

When I told Dima that I had read somewhere that today there is no hope in Russia, he told me:

I don't think it is really hopeless. Because there is some inner culture within most Russian people that they don't always show, but it is still there . . . But I don't know if they can learn, in the sense of, I think one of the Russian habits is to lose interest quickly in some things. Just imagine, you think you have mastered something and then it is not of interest to you any more. You don't want to continue with it. A lot of Russians are like that. But speaking of hope, I think deep inside everyone still has some hope that their life will improve. It is just that people tend to think globally; I think a good way out for Russia would be if everyone started thinking about themselves. Thinking about their lives and not thinking about the fate of Russia as a whole, of course it is important to keep that in mind too, this is our birthplace. Of course people would like to live a better life. But there is a serious chance that they will lose interest as soon as they get close to it. Imagine that you are working at a car factory and you have a small role to play in assembling a car. And after several months, you lose interest in it. People don't have this mentality that if I do my part well and if everyone else does their part well, then the car will be a good car, we will assemble a good car. It is not like that, not at all. People prefer to complain about their jobs or the shitty cars they put out.

Although expressed in a manner that echoes the overly individualistic and capitalist spirit of the post-Soviet period, Dima expresses the slippage between hope and hopelessness in a way that reveals the importance of hope for being-in-the-world. For Dima, like Andrei, hope is maintained by focusing on the task at hand – whether that task is working hard at one's job or working on one's self to develop skills, to become a better, more honest person, or just to maintain what has already been accomplished; to persevere with the status quo. These are the hopes of Dima. But it should not be thought that in order to persevere with the already accomplished, one need not continue to 'develop' or work on oneself, for the status quo itself must be maintained. When I asked Dima what he hopes for and if there is anything he can do about it, he told me that he just hopes to stay

on the same track that he is on now in terms of his career and with his fiancée. In order to do this he needs to continue to work on himself – to make himself a ‘better person’ than he is now. ‘Of course I need to develop. I need to develop personally, professionally. I guess that is a lot already.’ Indeed. But again it should be noticed that the hope for development is just another way of expressing a hope to stay on the same track. That is, Dima’s hope is an expression of fidelity to the life he already lives.

Dima was not alone in using cars as a metaphor for hope. Olya, an active Russian Orthodox and schoolteacher in her mid-twenties, also spoke of cars in relation to hope. But if Dima, like Anna, spoke about that precarious coupling of hope and hopelessness in contemporary Russia, then Olya focused only on the importance, or I should say, the necessity of hope for not only Russians but for being-in-the-world in general. Truly this says something about all three of their personalities, for while Anna and Dima are sceptics playing with cynicism, Olya is always the optimist. Thus, while for Anna and Dima hope must be continuously maintained so as to avoid slippage into the ever-present despair of hopelessness, for Olya that slippage is impossible. For once that slippage occurs, all is lost. Life ceases and one merely exists. This is so because, as she put it, hope is the petrol of life. On two separate occasions she used this metaphor to talk to me about hope.

On the first occasion, Olya was telling me about how contemporary Russia, and in particular Moscow, can be a place of hopelessness. But this cannot be maintained. Life is impossible in hopelessness. Without hope, one has no energy to continue. As Olya put it, ‘If you compare life with a car: you put a lot of petrol inside but you don’t know where you will stop. You go right and left and the petrol will finish and you will not reach the goal. But if you go straight ahead, you will reach the goal with plenty of petrol left remaining.’ Thus for Olya, if one has meaning and purpose in life – and for Olya these are intimately tied with the Orthodox faith – then one will have plenty of petrol – hope – to fulfil them. Without the focus, without the meaningful activity, the hope runs dry.

On another occasion, I was telling both Olya and her friend Larisa about how so many people were talking to me about the importance of hope in their life. They were not surprised. Olya went on to tell me:

I think a person can be compared to a car, for example, the body [here she points to her heart]. The engine is our heart and all our feelings inside they make us move in our lives. And hope is the petrol. With no hope we cannot move because a person who is hopeless has no life he only exists. He doesn’t live. He doesn’t have a full life.

Larisa agreed: 'And besides, hope helps you not to be desperate in a desperate situation. When you lose your hope you become desperate.' Both Olya and Larisa agree that hope is that which gives one the strength, will, and the energy to live. While Olya, I think, was focusing on the necessity of hope for living a human life – what I have been calling hope as the temporal structure of being-in-the-world – Larisa teased out one of the implications that Olya was making. That is, hope is also that which allows us not to become 'desperate in a desperate situation'. Or to put it in my terms, active hope is the temporal orientation of intentional and ethical action, and is that which allows for acting in those moments of breakdown or what Larisa called desperate situations. Active hope maintains one through; it allows one to live through the breakdown and return to the existential structure of persistent hope as the temporal structure of unreflective being-in-the-world.

I believe that we can see this play between hope as the existential temporal structure of being-in-the-world and hope as the temporal orientation of ethical action when we look at what my interlocutors told me they hope for. When I asked what one hoped for, the most common response I heard was that the person hoped for a family or for children. There is no doubt that this was more commonly articulated by my female interlocutors. Thus, for example, Olya, Larisa and Anna all told me that their biggest hope is to get married someday. As for the married women, they hoped to have children. But it was certainly important for the men as well. Dima told me that he hopes one day to marry his fiancée and Grigorii told me that he hopes to meet a woman who he can marry. It should be noted that Grigorii's hope is actually twofold. Not only would he like to marry, but he also needs to marry. For as a seminary student, he cannot become a priest until he is married. Even the Holy Father with whom I spoke told me that he *hopes to continue* to be a good husband and father to his children.

But even if one is able to marry and have a family, life does not promise to be easy in Russia today. Once when I was talking with Aleksandra Vladimirovna, a very serious Orthodox believer in her mid-fifties, about the role of the family and parenting in contemporary Russia, she told me:

Because of their social position, because their stability was ruined, they are very unstable, and jobless, and practically so poor that, you know, the main thought is how to feed the children, not how to educate them or how to bring them up. They have to work so hard and they are in such despair, and the men took to drinking and fathers, fathers do not exist as upbringers, at least for a number of families. So there is so much despair and they have no hope, it is very difficult.

Here again we see the coupling of hope with hopelessness. Not only Aleksandra Vladimirovna, but many consider that which is hoped for the most as a hopeless situation. But in such situations some are most able to perform hope. In such hopeless situations, breakdowns occur often. When the breakdown occurs, my interlocutors actively hope in order to return to the world. But that this world – in this case the world of the family – is not completely hopeless is revealed by the fact that nearly everyone wants to either return to it or enter it for the first time.

According to Aleksandra Vladimirovna, the family is a place of hopelessness because of the economic situation in the country. People cannot afford to raise a family properly. There are not enough jobs and the ones that exist do not pay enough. For many Russians, the economic and employment situation in contemporary Russia appears hopeless. And yet this was the second-most common topic of people's hopes. Over and over I heard how people hope to secure good jobs or to be successful in their careers. Irina hopes to be a successful theatre actor and director. Dima hopes 'to finally graduate and then continue studying and then go on with my job and my life, no big goals to change the world or anything like that'. Vera, an actress who has performed in both the theatre and film, hopes 'to make my own movie. I know how I want to do it but I know that it is not real in our country – although I must say that in our country the more unreal something is the more possible it becomes. Although for now it's only a hope, I know for sure that someday I will do it. I just have to get prepared very well'. In each case, they are working toward the fulfilment of their hope. They are actively hoping. And in each case, just like with the family, they are actively hoping in a situation of potential hopelessness. But such is the case with hope. For as Ernst Bloch (1996: 5) put it, hopelessness is 'the most insupportable thing, downright intolerable to human needs.' Thus, in such situations my interlocutors actively hope, for they never know when it actually is the case that 'the more unreal something is the more possible it becomes'.

In this section I have tried to disclose the two aspects of hope through the narrative articulations by my Muscovite interlocutors of the necessary coupling of hope and hopelessness. As such we get a glimpse at the two aspects of hope I have been trying to describe – hope as the temporal structure of everyday being-in-the-world, and hope as the temporal orientation of intentional and reflective ethical action that becomes necessary in moments of moral breakdown. As the unreflective temporal structure of being-in-the-world, hope is revealed as that striving toward the not-yet-but-expected of the promised socio-historic-cultural ideal. These promised ideals should not be confused with utopias, as Bloch and others might have it (e.g. Harvey 2000). Rather, they are much more mundane – for

example, a family or success in a career. Many times, my Muscovite interlocutors such as Dima told me, one simply hopes to maintain that which has already been achieved. When such strivings are utopian, if we can call them that, the goal tends to be equally unimpressive – stability. In this sense, hope as the unreflective temporal structure of being-in-the-world is the temporality for living a sane life.

On the other hand, hope is revealed as the temporal orientation of intentional and ethical action in moments of moral breakdown. This is so not only in the future-oriented character of the act, but just as importantly in the way the past is reoriented within the act. It is with this double movement of both the future and past temporal ecstasies that the present of the act is constituted. It is through this temporalizing ethical action that one is able to return safely to the existential comfort of everyday being-in-the-world. While it is true that such hopeful acting can occasionally result in radical changes at both the social and personal levels, it is much more often the case that persons and worlds change through such acts only just enough to allow one to once again live sanely in that world. In other words, through active hoping one is able to return safely to the world of persevering hope.

Some closing words

Throughout this chapter I have intentionally blurred the line between the two aspects of hope – persevering hope as the temporal structure of unreflective being-in-the-world and active hope as the temporal orientation of intentional and ethical action. In doing so, I have responded to Miyazaki's call to use hope as a method (2004), for this blurring is meant to demonstrate the slippage between the two aspects of hope expressed by my interlocutors. Hope not only dies last, but it is also the energy, the petrol that allows my Muscovite interlocutors to live and act. These two ways of describing hope reflect the two aspects of hope. These aspects can be viewed in the way that Crapanzano (2004: 222), invoking linguistic terminology, writes about them as either stative or performative, which correlate, to some degree, with the object of hope as either abstract and vague or concrete and specific.

But I do not think this goes far enough. For hope is more than a way of expressing an attitude about and toward one's life or some object. Rather, as my Muscovite interlocutors describe hope, in its two aspects hope is the temporal structure and orientation of living sanely and ethically acting in their worlds. As Olya put it, without hope we do not live, we merely exist, and as Larisa added, it

is hope that allows us to act in moments of breakdown. In this way, it would be inappropriate to correlate persevering hope with a stative and active hope with a performative manner of speaking. For just as it has been argued that all utterances are in fact performatives of some kind, so too we can argue that both aspects of hope are performative in that both persevering hope and active hope are simply two aspects of the temporality of being-in-the-world. That is to say, the temporality of the ontological condition for being human is that of hope. For to live a human life entails both a persevering hope through the everyday routines of that life, but also the active hope to keep going through the breakdowns that are inevitable.

Although it is beyond the ethnographic limitations of this chapter to address in any detail the experience of waiting, perhaps the hermeneutic disclosure of these two aspects of hope can shed light on the phenomenon of waiting. Just as my hermeneutic of hope disclosed that the passive/active dichotomy is not simply 'about' acting as such, but rather an articulation of the temporality of two different modalities of being-in-the-world, so too we can interrogate waiting in its various modalities that go beyond 'the problematic of our agency' (Hage 2009: 2). For this chapter has disclosed hope as an ontological condition for any action at all, what Hannah Arendt would call 'the human condition', and, I suggest, a similar analysis could be done on the phenomenon of waiting so as to go beyond a sociological structure/agency concern of whether or not 'things are beyond our control ... as opposed to actively doing something or another' (Hage 2009: 2). Such an analysis, however, I will have to leave to others.

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Note

- 1 This research was done with these two 'groups' because at that time in post-Soviet Russia artists and practising Orthodox Christians were among the most publicly articulate about the perceived societal-wide moral breakdown of the country and how things could become otherwise. While I make no claim that these two 'groups'

represent or speak for Muscovites or Russians in general, as those who most persistently and vocally articulated concerns of hope and hopelessness, I engaged them as those who not only were thinking through their particular socio-historic condition, but more importantly for my research, the human condition.

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