

PREFACE

This volume collects the proceedings of the *Conference* entitled “*The Future of Hope: an Interdisciplinary Dialogue*”, promoted by the Centre for Integral Formation of the European University of Rome and held in Brussels in November 2024. This *Conference* represents the second stage of an interdisciplinary research project conceived by Prof. Guido Traversa, and inspired by the Papal Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee Year 2025, whose central theme is Hope.

This collection of essays reflects the methodological approach that characterizes the Integral Formation of the European University of Rome: the dialogue among disciplines as an essential tool for addressing the complexity of reality and offering humankind – defined as *homo viator* in the Jubilee’s papal Bull – new keys to interpret and engage with life. Multi-disciplinarity here is not understood as a mere juxtaposition of different competencies, but rather as an authentic conversation among disciplines that, while preserving their specific identities, mutually enrich one another in the pursuit of a deeper understanding of human and social phenomena.

Hope is presented as a privileged hermeneutical category for interpreting the challenges and opportunities of our time. This research project aims to explore crucial themes at the very foundations of the contemporary human condition, including: the dialogue between theology and philosophy in conceptualizing hope, the ethical implications of artificial intelligence, migration and social integration, prospects for global peace, university innovation, and inclusive education.

This second year of *The Future of Hope* project confirms the fruitfulness of an approach that combines scientific rigor with openness to dialogue, analytical depth with breadth of vision, and critical reflection on

the present with responsible planning for the future. An important goal has also been achieved: establishing a dialogue between the world of academia and the world of politics, bringing together university scholars and members of the European Parliament. The essays included in this volume provide readers with tools for understanding and reflection, to continue a research journey which, in its third and final year, aims to outline concrete perspectives for action and commitment.

In publishing the proceedings of this *Conference*, we wish to extend special thanks to Team Service, represented by its President Dr. Emilio Innocenzi, and to Envision, represented by its President Eng. Matteo Gattola, whose generous contributions made possible, respectively, the organization of the *Conference* and the publication of these proceedings. We also thank Dr. Marina Bresciani and the Italian School Committee in Brussels for their valuable and expert support in organizing the event.

In conclusion, Hope is not only a virtue or a complex and seemingly abstract concept that crosses various dimensions of human experience, but becomes a subject of study and a key to understand reality. Hope, as taught by the Christian tradition that inspires our University, is to *hope against all hope*: the ability to perceive possibilities for truth and goodness even in the most complex and contradictory situations.

FR. ENRICO TRONO, LC
Director of the Centre for Integral Formation
European University of Rome

INTRODUCING HOPE: WORDS, DEFINITIONS, ROOTS

RENATA SALVARANI

In common sense, Hope can be defined as a desire of some good, accompanied with at least a slight expectation of obtaining it, or a belief that it is obtainable.

A double dimension characterizes this concept: Hope always is oriented in a positive attitude, and gives pleasure or joy; whereas wish and desire may produce or be accompanied with pain and anxiety¹.

Hope – as well as the corresponding words in different modern European languages –, carries with it the meaning of Hebrew תִּקְוָה (tikva), expectation, and יָחַל (yachal), to wait.

It includes also the meanings of the greek ἐλπίς, expectation of good, anticipation of what of positive is forthcoming².

The term, therefore, broadens to include the concepts of future, attitude, propensity, scenario, horizon, perspective.

It generally coincides with a glimpse oriented towards the future.

This stratification of nuances and differences corresponds to the intertwining of contributions that have converged in the semantic structures of the continent: definitions of Hope, along the thousand-year pathway of European and Mediterranean cultures, imply a plurality of references, as well as an internal dialectic, some semantic oppositions, and sometimes a certain level of ambiguity.

A primary implication is the relationship with time, and secondly, by consequence, with memory.

¹ Treccani Enciclopedia Italiana.

² Encyclopedia of the Bible <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/Hope>.

Bridging past and future, the term refers to a dynamic dimension.

It is no coincidence that the most extensive and complex reflections on its implicit contradictions were developed during periods of crisis, conflict and irreversible change.

The twentieth century, with its two world wars and its troubled final years, saw a succession of lofty interpretations of this theme, which expanded to include a comprehensive meditation on the entire human destiny.

These readings give voice to a wide spectrum of differences and aporias, which derive from the different souls present in Western culture as a whole and from their historical and scriptural origins.

Among the analyses that remain most anchored to the biblical matrix, Max Scheler's theory of the time-consciousness of past, present and future anchors the idea of hope into the life of the communities, emphasizing both centrality of the communities and the foundational role of narratives of common events.

In the same circular perspective, Yosef Hayim Hierushalmi points out that "memory of the past is incomplete without its natural complement: hope for the future". In this sense, in the biblical story the Mount Sinai and Exodus become iconic paradigms of the double dimension of Hope.

David Hartman locates the sources of Hope in the memories of events, distinguishing two types of Hope: the courage to bear human responsibility even within contexts of uncertainty. This Hope stams from the revelation at Sinai, which enhance our capacity to act; secondly, radical hope, that is a mode of anticipation, a faith that ultimately redemption will come, based on the remembrance of Israel's exodic redemption. The exodus experience through pain and doubt becomes the perennial form of future liberation. Hartman adds that the wilderness of the desert, during the exodus march is a reminder of human vulnerability to idolatry, fearfulness, uncertainty.

A similar deep dialectic is evident also in the texts of pope John Paul 2nd, starting from the address speech to the Italian young people in 1978³. Also the complex dialogue of the interview "crossing the threshold of

³ Discorso di Giovanni Paolo II alla Gioventù italiana, mercoledì, 8 novembre 1978 https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1978/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19781108_giovani.html#:~:text=Il%20Papa%20vuole%20bene%20a%20tutti%2C%20ad%20ogni,l%E2%80%99Apostolo%20pi%C3%B9%20giovane%2C%20aveva%20fatto%20il%20suo%20prediletto.

Hope” is structured around the interactions between the Hope announced in the Gospels and the drama of History⁴.

Do the manifestations of evil, wars, exterminations and divisions that repeatedly mark humanity’s path through time, involving the Church itself, nullify the idea of a Hope that can guide human action? What is the basis for the “scandal and mystery” of a faith that nourishes awareness of the future that awaits humanity, within, through and beyond the upheavals and tribulations of the present?

We can assume that the whole European thought is marked by this double dimension.

This dialectic has given rise to various interpretations that have fragmented the picture and reduced the horizon of the future to subjective and relative dimensions.

Such complexity of stratifications requires an analytical reading, both historically and from a contemporary perspective, broadening the view to the various implications of Hope and the semantic richness that this word conveys. This need gave rise to a **three-year “journey”** of conferences and study days on the theme of Hope promoted and organized by UER, Università Europea di Roma from 2023 to the Catholic Jubilee Year.

Dozens of scholars and researchers from Italian, European and non-European universities were involved. Based on their disciplinary expertise, they worked and discussed to define the future our society is facing, to identify models of intervention, and to envisage scenarios in which universities – and Christian-inspired universities in particular – can make a significant contribution.

The conference activities highlighted the practical **implications of Hope in the economic and legal fields**, emphasizing the concrete and tangible social repercussions of a specific mode of “action” – *agere sequitur esse* – based on the perspectives that will emerge from this three-year path of studies and reflections.

The **scientific objective** is to define the **different ideas of Hope** that emerged in the path of European culture, including also the concepts of: future, progress, innovation, scenario, projection, models of future, expectation, desire, salvation.

On this basis, any declination within the different disciplinary areas has been outlined.

⁴ First edition Giovanni Paolo II - Vittorio Messori, *Varcare la soglia della speranza*, Milano (Oscar Bestsellers, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore) 1995, p. 247.

What needs for Hope and of future arise in the different scientific areas? What answers and what readings of the future are elaborated in the individual disciplines? What idea of the human being and society is emerging?

The research project has been **promoted in view of the Jubilee of 2025**, dedicated the theme of Hope, and is focused on the Homo Viator and on the contemporary walking society, assuming that the human condition is based on change and that the future is an open challenge.

The program have been inserted in the plan of initiatives of **CRUI** (Conference of Rectors of Italian Universities) for the Jubilee Year and is officially participated by **Fuce** (European Federation of Catholic Universities), **FIUC** (Fédération Internationale des Universités Catholiques), and **RIU** (Red Internacional de Universidades Regnum Christi).

Doctoral students and undergraduates actively participated; seminars and open meetings were organised, including a forum with legislators and policy makers at COMECE, the association of European Episcopal Conferences. A series of dialogues will be held between members of the European Parliament, leaders of EU institutions, and professors and researchers involved in the project's working groups.

Key topics included education, migration and European cultures, ethics and artificial intelligence, university and innovation, peacebuilding, and cultural processes.

This volume of studies stems from the need to record such a process of reflection, which took the form of discussions, debates and studies.

It serves as a tool for raising awareness of the importance of thinking of ourselves as a community looking to the future and provides a basis for further theoretical developments, the starting point for a broader debate.

It brings together a series of systematic contributions resulting from the project, most of which were presented during the symposium held in Brussels from 19 to 21 November 2024.

It is divided into thematic sections that reflect the structure of the working groups and the developments in the discussions, from the perspective of both academic research and public engagement:

Theoretical perspectives, che sviluppa il quadro filosofico e antropologico di riferimento, definisce la terminologia e delinea sfide ermeneutiche e critiche che si aprono intorno al tema della Speranza;

New instruments for a critical approach, mette a fuoco le potenzialità offerte dalle innovazioni tecnologiche e la complessità dei cambiamenti etici, sociali e culturali da esse indotti;

Hoping beyond divisions and clashes considera i motivi di tensione e di scontro all'interno e all'esterno della società europea evidenziando che, sia pure nella difficoltà delle situazioni, sono in atto azioni che favoriscono la coesione sociale, la cura dell'altro, la progettazione di un futuro condiviso;

Strategies towards resources and fairness affronta il tema della sostenibilità intesa come equità e gestione etica del creato;

Classical roots for new anthropological visions propone le Humanities come base per declinare nel futuro gli elementi di speranza già presenti nella cultura europea, fondata sui principi dell'Umanesimo;

Looking forward the new generations pone l'accento sulla prospettiva educativa considerata come asse portante per la creazione del futuro e per lo sviluppo di un'attitudine culturale aperta alla speranza;

Acting in a world in labour declina modalità di operare concretamente sul piano educativo descrivendo alcuni progetti emblematici.

The theme of Hope is thus embodied within European society, rooted in culture, alive and capable of emerging even in problematic situations. It takes shape on three different levels:

1 the methodological framework and critical logical tools for addressing and understanding the theme, both within contemporary interpretative categories and in the main historical phases of the development of Western culture; Concepts of human being and humankind; Christian anthropology and its elements across different cultures; Ideas of human destiny and happiness; Humanism and post-Humanism;

2 identification of the main contemporary challenges that universities and European thought are called upon to address; these require specific skills and contributions and only if addressed in their complexity can they become positive ground for openness to the future and opportunities to develop reasons for hope; Knowledge, science and building the future – The role of sciences in contemporary society; Visions of the future inspiring scientific research; Elements of Hope in the knowledge and research professions; Hope and Education visions;

3 discovery and codification of practical interventions that demonstrate how the future can be planned in a positive way, even within the difficulties of a complex world undergoing epochal change; projects and experiences carried out in different countries, in urban societies, in research, in schools and in healthcare institutions are proposed as examples that can become models of intervention to be applied in situations to promote the emergence of a more equitable and integrated society.

The summaries of such complexity, albeit partial, highlight a picture of knowledge that is open to the future and oriented towards highlighting positive aspects of a society in the making, laying the foundations for further developments, both in terms of research and in terms of the public social commitment of universities.