



## **Illuminating the "Brain Rot" in the Logic of Hope as a Transcendental Human Force: A Critical Philosophical Analysis of Cognitive Decline in the Digital Era**

**Ignasius Ngari<sup>1\*</sup>**

Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Teologi  
Fajar Timur,  
Indonesia

**Yohanes Kore<sup>2</sup>**

Universitas Okmin Papua,  
Indonesia

**Maximilianus Bos**

**Pegan<sup>3</sup>**

Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Teologi  
Widya Sasana,  
Indonesia

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**\*Corresponding author:**

Ignasius Ngari, Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat  
Teologi Fajar Timur, Indonesia.

✉ [ignasiusngari@yahoo.com.au](mailto:ignasiusngari@yahoo.com.au)

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**Abstract**

**Background:** The phenomenon of "brain rot" the decline of intellectual abilities due to excessive consumption of shallow digital content has become a global concern after being named Oxford Dictionary's Word of the Year 2024. Although digital cognitive decline has been widely documented, its philosophical dimension, particularly the role of hope as a transcendental counter-force, remains underexplored.

**Objective:** This study analyzes brain rot philosophically and proposes recovery strategies through hope as a transcendental human force, using the Pandora's box metaphor. It argues that hope understood as an active cognitive-affective disposition rather than passive optimism forms the philosophical basis for resisting and recovering from brain rot.

**Methods:** This research employs a qualitative philosophical approach utilizing conceptual analysis, comparative philosophical analysis, and critical hermeneutic analysis. In-depth examination is conducted on the thoughts of philosophers regarding hope (Kant, Kierkegaard, Marcel, Fromm, Bloch, Byung Chul Han) as well as negative conceptions (Spinoza, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Camus).

**Results:** Hope is an active mindset that motivates action and enables individuals to mobilize social, cultural, and institutional resources. Strategies to overcome brain rot include improving digital literacy, limiting screen time, balancing digital and non-digital activities, developing diverse interests, strengthening social relationships, and engaging in physical activity.

**Conclusion:** This study proposes hope as a philosophical basis for cognitive recovery in the digital era. Despite cognitive degradation caused by digital culture, hope remains a liberating force that helps individuals overcome despair and restore cognitive agency. Further empirical research is needed to validate these ideas across different cultural contexts.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the contemporary era, many people encounter laptops, smartphones, and AI almost every second. All of this affects the dynamics of communication, professional activities, and especially the fulfillment of various forms of recreation amid very important matters. These advances are not without negative consequences. We find many terms such as post-truth, echo chamber, filter bubble, FOMO, and confirmation bias, not to mention bullying in various forms.

Growing scholarly attention has been directed toward the phenomenon of digital attention decay, cognitive overload, and information fatigue syndrome. Research by Haliti (2024) demonstrates that short-form digital content significantly reduces attention span and academic performance among undergraduate students. Similarly, Lakilaki (2025) document how digital overstimulation directly impairs the learning process, while Harsanto, (2025) confirm the link between excessive TikTok and Instagram Reels consumption and focus disorders in teenagers. Aribowo (2025) further show that social media use associated with "brain rot" negatively impacts adolescent mental health. Yousef (2025) provide a comprehensive review of brain rot as a cognitive decline phenomenon in the digital era.

In 2024, Oxford University Press announced brain rot as its Word of the Year. This designation reflects a growing body of literature (2020–2025) that documents the deterioration of cognitive capacities in the age of algorithmic content delivery. The term was first coined in (Thoreau, 2015). For him, this term referred to a decline in intellectual ability that many people overlook. He wrote, "While England endeavours to cure the potato rot, will not any endeavor to cure the brain-rot, which prevails so much more widely?" (1854: 168). Today, this term still refers to a lifestyle that affects intellectual abilities, now situated within the context of the digital world.

This article addresses a specific research question: How can philosophical reflection on hope provide a conceptual framework for understanding and counteracting brain rot as a contemporary cognitive crisis? Existing literature on brain rot predominantly adopts empirical-psychological approaches Mishra (2024) and Yousef (2025), yet the philosophical dimensions, particularly the existential and transcendental resources of hope, remain understudied. This constitutes the research gap that the present study seeks to address. This article aims to discuss the hope of recovery from brain rot. Why hope? Because hope, in its complexity, is a mental state poised to facilitate the birthing of something entirely new. It is closely related to what is known as learning and thinking. The brain must be healed by learning and thinking. Hope makes that possible.

The article frames brain rot within the metaphor of Pandora's box. The most heinous and far-reaching harm wrought by COVID-19 is brain rot. Brain rot represents the most insidious threat to human cognitive existence in the digital era: man is allowed to live but no longer to be homo sapiens or man is allowed to live but only by accepting a reality degraded to an ontological level no longer befitting one who thinks, but one who merely grows, moves, and feels. Yet at the bottom of Pandora's box, there is hope that must be understood, interpreted, and used. The novelty of this study lies in its systematic philosophical mapping of hope as an active, multi-dimensional cognitive resource, drawing on both positive and negative philosophical traditions, and its translation into concrete strategies of liberation from cognitive decline. This box emits various evils. Therefore, in the first part, we define brain rot. This is followed by a discussion of symptoms and consequences. The third part analyzes the essence of hope as the basis for formulating a strategy of liberation from brain rot. The fourth part discusses concrete steps to liberate oneself from brain rot.

This research's central thesis is that hope, understood philosophically as an active, action-oriented, and communally-embedded transcendental force, provides the necessary conceptual foundation for individual and collective resistance against the cognitive decline wrought by digital culture. This thesis has both descriptive significance (explaining why humans are not entirely powerless before brain rot) and prescriptive significance (guiding the formulation of practical recovery strategies).

## METHOD

### *Research Design*

This study employed a qualitative philosophical approach using logical-critical analysis a systematic method that combines conceptual clarification, critical evaluation of philosophical arguments, and the construction of reasoned conclusions to examine the concept of brain rot within contemporary digital culture and to explore hope as a philosophical counter-force. This method was distinguished from other qualitative approaches (such as phenomenological or grounded theory methods) by its primary reliance on the critical interpretation and logical evaluation of philosophical texts and arguments, rather than empirical data collection from

informants or field observation.

### *Object of the Study*

The object of analysis was the concept of brain rot as articulated in contemporary digital discourse and the philosophical reflections on hope found in both classical and contemporary philosophical traditions. The analysis focused on the conceptual structure of brain rot (its definition, symptoms, and consequences) and the multi-dimensional philosophical understanding of hope as a transcendental human capacity.

### *Data Sources*

Primary sources included philosophical texts from ten key thinkers: four who articulate negative conceptions of hope (Spinoza, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Camus) and six who develop affirmative philosophical frameworks of hope (Bloch et al., 1986; Craufurd & Seaton, 2010; Fromm, 2023; Han, 2024; Kant, 1999; Kierkegaard, 1995). These thinkers were selected based on their systematic engagement with hope as a philosophical category and their relevance to the contemporary problem of cognitive decline and technological alienation. Secondary sources included peer-reviewed academic literature (2018–2026) on digital cognitive decline, philosophy of technology, and recent philosophical scholarship on hope.

### *Analytical Techniques*

The analysis employed three complementary techniques: (a) conceptual analysis clarifying the meaning and logical structure of key concepts such as "brain rot," "hope," and "cognitive agency"; (b) critical philosophical interpretation applying hermeneutic and comparative methods to evaluate the philosophical arguments of the selected thinkers; and (c) logical argumentation constructing and evaluating arguments for the thesis that hope constitutes a philosophical basis for recovery from brain rot.

### *Stages of Analysis*

The analysis proceeded through five stages: (1) conceptual clarification of brain rot and its philosophical dimensions; (2) critical examination of negative philosophical conceptions of hope; (3) systematic exposition of affirmative philosophical frameworks of hope; (4) philosophical interpretation of hope as an active and enabling transcendental force; and (5) formulation of a conceptual framework linking hope to practical strategies for cognitive liberation. The scope of this study was limited to philosophical analysis and did not include empirical testing of the proposed framework.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

#### *The Essence of Hope*

The philosophical analysis yields four core findings that structure the results and discussion:

Finding 1: Hope is not reducible to optimism it accommodates negativity, uncertainty, and the possibility of disappointment, making it a more robust cognitive resource than mere positive thinking.

Finding 2: Hope functions as an action-oriented cognitive-affective disposition it is not passive waiting but an inner preparation that inspires, motivates, and sustains purposeful action.

Finding 3: Hope requires a rational, though non-deductive, basis it is grounded in available capitals (social, communal, religious, legal) and is therefore neither irrational nor merely wishful.

Finding 4: Hope becomes a liberating force against digital cognitive decline it provides the philosophical foundation for practical strategies of recovery from brain rot.

The following discussion interprets these findings in relation to the philosophical traditions examined, the phenomenon of brain rot, and their contribution to the study of digital culture, philosophy of technology, and human flourishing.

This possibility, which at the bottom of Pandora's box above is referred to as hope. Hope is a peculiarity of Jewish thought, not Greek. Therefore, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, three main pillars are affirmed: faith, hope, and love. This idea is theologically well reflected by Jürgen Moltmann on the theology of hope. Also we are faced with the pilgrimage of hope from Pope Francis. In that spirit, although it will not be discussed, here we refer to the philosophical idea of hope. Before discussing positive attitudes toward hope, we need to discuss negative views about hope.

There are some authors who defy expectations. We will name four figures that are randomly chosen. Those figures were Baruch Spinoza, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Albert Camus.

Schopenhauer was of the view that hope is natural for humans but not to hope too much. Hope is viewed negatively with the statement, "the folly of the heart (Bradley, 1976)." Intellectually, hope can prevent the intellect from grasping the truth. In relation to happiness, hope is seen as something distinctively human that leads to the anticipation of pleasure. It can be disappointing because the needs are not met or are not met satisfactorily.

The hope contained in Pandora's box was seen by Nietzsche as the worst thing that prolongs human suffering. Hope is used as a metaphor for "a rainbow above a rushing stream of life." It means that hope provides something beautiful after hard difficulties and challenges. However, this is an illusory bridge of solutions. Therefore, the object of hope must be a change in the social order.

Following Nietzsche's interpretation of Pandora's box, Camus asserts that hope is the evil of evil. Man seeks meaning but the world does not provide it, so that life is a futile work (Nietzsche, 2008). No wonder religious expectations about salvation are denied. There is no life after death. Useless work is symbolized by the myth of Sisyphus, whose punishment was to roll a boulder up a hill, only for it to roll back down, and people were asked to imagine that Sisyphus was happy. However, he is aware that man cannot live without hope even if he wants to be free from it.

Expectations that do not encourage action have been articulated before by Baruch Spinoza. He asserts that "People who act on the guidance of reason need not hope or fear (Han, 2024)." He contrasts rational action with hope. Hope is the result of a false belief because it does not accurately describe that everything is governed by the law of the absolute (De Spinoza, 1910). As a result, superstition accompanied by fear emerged (Spinoza, 2024). The existence of fear causes hope to be a bad thing (Spinoza, 2024). We need to free ourselves from hope. Moreover, the same model can be seen in the thinking of Trevor Adams. He emphasized that expectations are not in harmony with knowledge. Expectations are justified if knowledge is lacking. Hope is a belief in success that is possible even if it is uncertain. Here there is a possibility that an alignment between knowledge and expectations can occur.

In addition to negative conceptions of expectations, expectations fundamentally contain a positive tone. The general view also believes this. This affirmative view has a fairly strong foundation in the thinking of some figures. The figures we will mention are as follows. First, Immanuel Kant. We can see the view of hope from Kant's three questions. The questions are: what can I know, what should I do, and what may I hope? (A805/B833). On the last question, the basis of hope is that good actions count. Why is that? People expect it based on ethical obligations that are undertaken. What drives people to act ethically is an absolute obligation, such as doing good and avoiding evil. People act because it is an absolute obligation. This obligation is carried out not for the sake of a certain goal that can be achieved but because of necessity. That is the obligation called the categorical imperative. But what is the guarantee? The hope of an absolute guarantor, which requires people to act, which in religious language is called God. This is the basis for people to hope, even though good deeds do not always bring tangible, imminent results, here and now (AE 7:255).

Second, for Kierkegaard, our lives are events of hope (Kierkegaard, 1995). Hope is a relational effort directed toward the possible good, not the bad (Works of Love, (Kierkegaard, 1995). This expectation may not be understood as to when it will be fulfilled. This is an eternal hope that is different from worldly hope that rests on a sense of possibility. Eternal hope is directed not only to oneself but also to others. No wonder hope is related to love (Kierkegaard, 1995).

Third, according to Craufurd (2010), hope is an existential thing that gives meaning and fullness to life. Hope is a basic orientation toward the world, the future, and openness to possibilities and engagement to create creative transformation within the world. In hope, humans are faced with fear and uncertainty. With hope, one can overcome the ordeal of despair (Craufurd & Seaton, 2010). That hope is not individual but communal. Through hope we connect with others to encourage the realization of hope in various forms of support and encouragement. In addition to its communal nature, hope cannot be separated from its relationship with faith and belief in the goodness and highest purpose of the universe (Craufurd & Seaton, 2010).

Fourth, Erich Fromm (2023), in his work *The Revolution of Hope*, begins with what is not hope. What is not hope is not necessarily the negation of hope itself. This is in accordance with Aristotle's idea that definitions should not be made negative. However, negative things are things that allow positive self-expression to become special. What is not hope is that it is not a desire or a craving for material things. This is a consumptive matter. Hope is not something that is looked forward to passively, although it does deal with the fullness of life. Hope is not directed at waiting for an unrealized future. Hope is based on a consciousness, so consciousness is a state of existence and readiness in the mind.

Hope is a psychic match to life's growth. It needs to be realized, felt, and intended. It is an intrinsic element of the struggle of life and the dynamics of the spirit. It cannot but be associated with faith. Hope is the mood; the basis is faith. Faith is the basis of hope. Faith is meant as certainty from uncertainty. This certainty deals with vision and understanding, not results. It is not something that appears suddenly but is based on experience. Hope is also related to courage in the face of threats, death, and the enslavement of desires, people, and things. Hope is related to the transformation of this life. Therefore, it is an act of revival

Fifth, in a current-contemporary view, we also meet *The Spirit of Hope* by Han (2024). He started with the idea of a pandemic of fear. This pandemic has become a climate of fear. Fear is not an orientation toward a sustainable future. This fear makes us unable to speak and tell stories. We are like being cornered and imprisoned. The opponent is hope. It is an attempt to find the right path to be taken out of deep and darkened disappointment.

Hope is not passivity, a waiting and waiting. For Han, hope is tied to action. Indeed, if it is aligned with the law of logical identity, then it must be said that hope is hope and action is action. These are two different entities. However, in the framework of sufficient thinking, hope is not merely "tuned" to action. Hope is active and inspires action. It is not a compulsion about things that will not happen. But hope is an inner preparation and a sharpening of the senses to what has not yet been born. It is like a midwife waiting for something new. Hope is a state of mind that is "pregnant," waiting for a new birth that does not yet exist. Following Ernst Bloch (1986), Han is of the view that hope is like a daydream that leads to the future. It is not a night dream that often tells stories about the past. Dreams contain communal ideals for the common good. They have revolutionary, political, and utopian dimensions. Dreams are brought to life by hope. Something is expected when dreamed. Hope here takes us out of the shackles of history into something new and unborn. Hope does not give up on bad circumstances but [instills] a strong will to act.

To complete this idea, we quote Bloch's (1986) own view: "This is a matter of learning hope. His work did not give up; He loves success rather than failure. Hope, which is superior to fear, is not passive like the latter, and is not confined in a void. The emotion of hope comes out of itself, making people broader than limiting them, and not being able to know enough about what makes them inwardly oriented, about what might ally them externally. This emotional work requires people to actively dive into what is going on, in which they themselves belong. It will not tolerate the life of a model dog who feels that he is only passively thrown into what is, which is not clearly visible, even sadly acknowledged. The work against anxiety about life and the intrigue of fear is against its creator, which is mostly easy to identify, and it searches in the world itself for what can help the world; this can be found. How richly people always dream about this, dreaming about a better life that could possibly happen. Everyone's life is filled with daydreams: one part of this is just a stale, even debilitating escape, even being the target of deception, but the other part is provocative, dissatisfied with just accepting the ugliness that exists, not accepting surrender.

This other part has hope at its core, and it can be taught. It can be separated from irregular daytime dreams and from its cunning abuse; it can be activated without dimming. No one has ever lived without daydreams, but it is a matter of knowing them deeper and deeper, and in this way keeping them properly trained, useful, on what is right. Let daydreams grow more and more full, as this means that they enrich themselves around a clear view; not in the sense of inhibiting, but being clear. Not in the sense of just contemplative reason accepting everything as it is, but participating reason that takes it as things go, and therefore also how they can walk better. So let the daydream grow really fuller, that is, more clear, less random, more familiar, more clearly understood, and more mediated by the course of things. So that wheat that is trying to mature can be encouraged to grow and harvest."

This idea is to affirm Han's view that hope is not an empty dream that is just a sleeping flower or a Nietzsche-style illusory beauty. Han (2024) rejects Albert Camus's view above, which asserts that hope has no dimension of action, even though hope motivates and inspires actions and the creation of new things. In this sense, hope is part of the mind that creates. If not, then the mind is just a calculation. The assumption that hope does not contain action is an assumption that does not understand the depth and complexity of expectations. In hope there is a determination to act. Hope inspires action by creating stories that drive action. It is not a passive and helpless desire and wait to change and enlighten the world.

Hope is different from optimism, which is always positive and does not see shortcomings. This is a criticism of the view of Ernst Bloch (1986) above. For Han, optimism is always directed and tied to what is positive. Hope accommodates the negativity that is moderate, possible, and will happen. People can be disappointed and discouraged by it. Hope is not something that can be seen. It is open to various possibilities or what does not yet exist. Hope is not passivity; it is related to action amid the darkness of creativity that is often turned off by neoliberalism (Han, 2024).

Hope is a state of mind that is inseparable from faith and love. Hope is the mood; the basis is faith. Hope presupposes in it that which is faith. With faith, following the views of Martin Luther King, we can carve a glimmer of hope out of a mountain of despair. Hope also includes in it love. This is different from the fear that always gets rid of love. It can be studied and taught, but this becomes a great difficulty because of the politics of hope that is often turned off by the regime that spreads fear, namely neoliberalism. It creates fear together. On the contrary, hope creates community. Hope means spreading it. It is the lever of the revolution.

That hope is not irrational. In his discussion of knowledge and expectations, Han makes a very in-depth review that covers the basic character of knowledge as it relates to humans as a whole. Hope is related to thought. Thoughts cannot exist without feelings. It is the feelings that encourage and energize the thoughts. Thinking with him is not just abstract thinking. The view of thought related to feelings is Han's entry point to give critical notes to AI. For him, AI does not think. Feelings and affections are unknown to the algorithm. It is the work of an intelligence that does not know anything new but calculates and predicts from what exists. True thinking is open to the new and not just limited to the calculative and logical. This can be justified if we deal with deductive logic. We only draw conclusions from existing premises. Nothing new is produced. Thinking takes a position to create something new. Thus, it is directed to the future, which Han calls what does not yet exist. Thinking here means passion and the search for understanding and truth. Understanding and truth of thought flow from hope. The spirit of hope becomes material for the mind to proclaim what is to come. The condition for the appearance of truth is hope. It is not too attached to the logic of this world.

Thinking is inseparable from love. With love something can be known more deeply, intensively, and strongly. From knowing and thinking does not get rid of emotions. Loving dedication leads us to knowledge. This idea is not something new. This has been affirmed by Plato, Augustine, Heidegger, and Guattari. I would like to quote what Han took from Augustine: "Only what we love is known." It is precisely by loving that it is possible to think. This love is certainly not possessed by AI.

Hope should not make people anxious. Here he criticizes Heidegger's view of anxiety. Heidegger's view of anxiety makes people isolated, closed to possibilities and something new. Because of isolation, it is impossible to pay attention to others. As a result, for Han, Heidegger's existence is not co-existence. The existence of Heidegger is also a burden that closes the path of

liberation. Furthermore, in connection with this,

So, for Han, hope is a state of mind that surpasses the calculations of reason. It is prospective knowledge, not retrospective. It is not isolated in an isolating anxiety but is open to communion. It is not a freedom of existence but a liberation. It is a thought that involves love, dreams, and an effort to grasp something new. It is not moved on the calculation of data. We need to believe in what has not been predicted and what is unpredictable. We need to fight against the modern order that is controlled and predicted by data that makes us unable to know more deeply.

That hope is an overreach of limitations and openness to diverse possibilities. It allows us to develop knowledge, creativity, and innovation more deeply. We are enabled to be not only bound by mathematical logic and rationality. We are driven to a much broader knowledge. Our knowledge with it is not only about data and facts. It is a love of the search for knowledge and what is to be known. The great potential in knowledge will be opened up more widely. The limitations of the algorithm can be exceeded with expectations. It leads us with courage on new paths. Hope with it is not a matter of protesting against the situation but a vision of a state beyond the present that is not only worrying but also frightening (Han, 2024).

If it is to be concluded, then I would like to use the view of J. P. Day, who affirms that "A expects P to be true if and only if A wants P and A thinks that P has some degree of probability no matter how small".

The characteristics of expectations can be detailed as follows: 1) First, hope presupposes a situation that is not right. Examples of irregularities can be seen from the examples above. 2) Second, the existing "capital," no matter how small, has a probability of being realized. With the word capital, it is meant to be emphasized that hope is not a form of entertainment, let alone an escape from helplessness. It also means that hope is not a bottomless desire. Capital is concerned with the available possibilities that come from the experience of the efforts that have been made, as well as the possible alignment between the effort and the results. Therefore, it is something that makes sense. It must be admitted that the probability of this belief does not meet the scientific requirement of truth as the highest probability. That expectation is rational in a comprehensive and non-fragmented sense. 3) Third, there is a desire that irregularities need to be overcome with an intention and commitment like a *dian tak pernah padam* ("a flame that never dies out"). This is an orientation to a transformation of the present situation. This orientation rests based on hope, i.e., faith, the expectation of a concrete experience that is likely to deny the situation. Hope becomes the spirit, fire, and mood for the dynamics of faith. 4) Fourth, expectations are not always fulfilled but they do not discourage people from keeping their hopes alive. This presupposes the basis of faith as a guarantee. It is inspired by the view of Gabriel Marcel: "Hope is seen as an act to overcome the temptation of despair" (Craufurd & Seaton, 2010) [1952] 2010: 30f.). For example, life may never be fair, but people are still convinced that not everything is lost. This is the hope associated with the existence of God (Craufurd & Seaton, 2010) [1952] 2010: 41). Hope is the courage to trace the darkness with the conviction and fighting spirit that what does not exist will be present as liberation and the reinforcement of the present situation.

## Discussion

### *Philosophical Characteristics of Hope: A Synthesized Analysis*

The foregoing philosophical analysis reveals that hope, as a multi-dimensional transcendental force, is characterized by four analytically distinct but functionally interrelated properties. These are not merely an enumeration of concepts but constitute core findings derived from the comparative philosophical analysis conducted in this study.

The first characteristic is that hope presupposes a situation that is not right. Hope is always hope in and through a condition of lack, crisis, or adversity. The analysis of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Camus, and Spinoza makes clear that negative views of hope arise precisely because they misread this presupposition as a deficiency of hope itself. In fact, the capacity of hope to operate in conditions of adversity is what makes it philosophically significant for addressing brain rot.

The second characteristic is that hope contains available "capital" no matter how small that carries a probability of being realized. This distinguishes hope from mere fantasy or escapism. Hope is not a bottomless desire; it is grounded in the experience of effort already made and the

alignment between available possibilities and desired outcomes. This rationality, though non-deductive, is what makes hope a sustainable cognitive resource.

The third characteristic is that hope contains a desire that irregularities need to be overcome with an intention and commitment. In the Indonesian cultural tradition, this is captured by the expression *dian tak pernah padam* ("a flame that never dies out"), which signifies the sustained inner orientation toward transformation. This is not nostalgia or daydreaming but a "silent action" within oneself what might be called a mental revolution against the cognitive inertia of brain rot.

The fourth characteristic is that hope, even when unfulfilled, does not discourage continued hoping. This is the dimension of hope most powerfully articulated by Gabriel Marcel: hope is "an act to overcome the temptation of despair" (Craufurd & Seaton, 2010). Even when life seems permanently unfair, the person of hope remains convinced that not everything is lost, grounding this conviction in a faith that operates as guarantee what Marcel connects to the relationship with God and the cosmos.

### *Hope Is Not a Dream Without a Basis*

The philosophical analysis reveals four loci or four enabling resources of hope in responding to brain rot. These are not merely practical suggestions but constitute the conceptual contribution of this study: a philosophical mapping of the enabling conditions that make hope's liberating function against brain rot concretely realizable.

Hope is the ultimate force of a rejection of Pandora's curse in the cosmos, and the most devastating of all today is brain rot. Although hope is often interpreted as a new crime that makes people tortured again because of the powerlessness to realize it in the midst of a siege of evil that has been exposed to the outside, it seems to be a crime because it makes people not struggle but can also make people nostalgic for the glory of the past. But hope is a beginning or "silent action" within oneself. This action is a "mental revolution" not to allow misfortune to creep in until the last defense. Hope is an absolute necessary condition for personal and social change. Hope is a positive aspect that escapes the threat of total and eternal evil. This is the starting point for social change. It must not be a daydream but a silent grudge as a keeper of the embers for the flame of the quiet struggle to overcome the almost dying sluggishness. These embers require sufficient conditions.

The first sufficient condition is the existence of supporting capital. The decline in cognitive function remains surrounded by various capitals that are ready to challenge and oppose. What capital is still available for the realization of such a thing? The capitals that we can mention are as follows: social media, community, religion, and law.

Social media capital. Despite the potential for distraction and damage, we have various social media platforms that can help us use them as tools to maintain and advance cognitive abilities. It improves literacy skills. For example, your habit of creating substantial content in a particular field helps social media to present a variety of views through a variety of supporting literature. For example, you have a tendency in the field of philosophy or psychology, and you often state this on social media. Social media will present you with a variety of books that are relevant to your search and research topics. This will certainly stimulate our brains to search for and explore them and use them in our field of study. In addition, we can connect with people who remain close in the heart but far in the eyes. There various stories can be shared. Even social media can upload past events together. From there, people are encouraged to elaborate memories of past events.

Community capital. We are not an anonymous society or a solipsistic individual. We are a community whose members have interests, values, and close relationships. We regularly share a common space, and in it intersubjective relationships occur. This is a positive sight. The problem with a positive outlook is that there is a tendency to be "pigs." There is a story that pigs never raise their faces. She was ashamed that her father was a pig. Submission is a problem because it keeps us confined to various self-interests. As a result, having eyes but not seeing is becoming more real in our lives. Good events, enlightening talk, and various other things no longer move us. Therefore, we need to build the spirit of Advent: "Lift up your head, the great gate. Welcome the noble king to your city." We need to return to the spirit of community to share views, concerns, and if

necessary *fraterna correctio*. From it we need to build relationships. Because good relationships improve cognitive function, reducing depression, which is harmful to cognitive health.

Religious capital. Religion teaches norms, values, and contemplation. Important religious values in relation to cognitive matters include respecting the body and the mind, as well as building love and concern for others. The body is a temple of the Holy Spirit that must be maintained, nurtured, and developed, not destroyed by various forms of selfish and destructive screen time activities. Deep contemplation can only be done through a directed thought process. Deep thinking is born from giving time to oneself and one's own mind and controlling the mind to be able to come up with the best ideas for oneself. In addition, in the religious community we are given symbols and rites that invite us not only to celebrate but to celebrate with an awareness of the depth of meaning that needs to be interpreted appropriately. These are religious capitals where we can develop ourselves.

Legal capital. The rules must be clear so that we can give a warning to those who are prone to falling into error. Our problem is that our legal regulations do not fully cover the use of gadgets. Some countries have imposed strict restrictions on the use of social media, such as in the United Kingdom, America, and Australia. Our country in PP No. 17 of 2025 has only given recommendations for the duration of safe use. Of course, this creates difficulties. That is the hard and difficult life that must be embraced. In another work entitled *The Expulsion of the Han* (2024) is of the view that there is a tendency to reject everything that is negative, that is unpleasant, that is opposite. But life is always a diverse dynamic of reality. We cannot live in a realm of positivity alone.

Capital is potential. The relationship between potential and actuality is referred to as motion in Aristotle's conception. This relationship is referred to as *entelechy*. This relationship is within the self, or *entelechy* is the part of us that moves it. Therefore, we need to listen to those possibilities and integrate them with the various external strategies that are around us.

### *Sites of Hope*

The philosophical analysis of hope's enabling loci translates into six practical sites of hope concrete strategies for liberating human cognition from the grip of brain rot. These strategies are grounded in the philosophical framework of hope developed above and are presented here as part of the Discussion, interpreting how the philosophical findings extend to practical application.

This capital must be brought to the pragmatic realm. It is right because it directs us to act appropriately. Of course, this is not an optimism that denies all the opposites of positive results. However, this is a step to give steps to realize hope. Realization is certainly not an easy thing. There will certainly be various denials disguised as difficulty, fatigue, and complexity. But measurable measures not to make hope an illusion or a fading rainbow bridge eaten up by time are needed. Therefore, strategy remains a characteristic of expectations that contain consistent rational actions. What is the strategy to minimize the decline in cognitive function? The strategy is as follows.

First, Digital Literacy. It is the competence and skills needed to direct people in a fragmented and complex information ecosystem (Falloon, 2020). It contains competencies and skills to understand and use visual information, process digital stimuli, evaluate and combine various information, and explore various decision-making possibilities in various webs, applications, and digital platforms, according to needs and objectives, to reproduce something new. These things are referred to as curating media feeds. This means that content from various digital platforms is selected, organized, and presented in a structured and meaningful way. Digital literacy deals with at least three important things, namely finding and consuming digital content, creating it, and communicating or sharing various digital content. All of this certainly requires competence and skill. The most important skills needed are the skills to use technology, the ability to think critically in managing information, and the ability to communicate (Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2011).

One of the important elements in digital literacy is digital thinking. An important component of digital thinking is critical, creative, and innovative thinking. Critically, thinking in the digital world contains elements such as the existence of a living awareness in the implementation of tasks about the functions and roles of digital equipment. This is important so

that we do not get caught up in doomscrolling and zombiescrolling. In the comfort of the digital world, there is always insecurity. For this reason, "stay safe" is important in the digital environment. People need to open themselves up to alternative facts amid a flood of information, because there are no editors, reviewers, and no authoritative authors. Through it, people can identify fake news, misinformation, disinformation, post-truth, echo chambers, filter bubbles, and confirmation bias. At crucial socio-political and economic moments, vigilance and caution are needed in accessing, affirming, and sharing digital information (Ozkan-Ozen & Kazancoglu, 2022; Puig et al., 2021; Sulzer, 2018).

Second, the arrangement of "airtime" in front of gadget screens and a temporal moratorium on the digital world. We need to determine what time we go to bed. The timing determines when all digital equipment is turned off. The sooner we fall asleep the better. This speed is influenced by the effectiveness of filling the day. An ineffective day will make it difficult for us to sleep and even help us regret the days that have passed. Place is an important element that needs to be arranged. A place without digital equipment or gadgets must be determined or mutually agreed upon. For example, they should not be used in places or times of praying, at meals, and at recreation together.

Setting screen time can be done by selecting what must be accessed and when to be accessed, for example during lectures. We need to select the content and when to use it in the teaching and learning process, so that a smartphone is indeed a smartphone. It is used to support lectures, not to replace lectures. We need to train ourselves not to carry digital equipment for certain activities that are seen as not too long and that require intensive involvement. From the digital detox perspective, we also need to set the time when we do not use cellphones at all. For example, during recollection and retreat. Our religious capital makes this possible.

Third, creating a balance with non-digital learning materials. Countries such as Finland, Japan, the USA, India, Australia, and South Africa have regulated this in their state laws. Not only that, but the state also ensures that textbooks are books that have been tested to have high quality. For early-year students, it is necessary to arrange clear visiting hours at the library. Lectures must also use non-digital materials. Indeed, this is not imposed if the age of the student is considered. At this age, they are in the category of adults. This maturity needs to be shown by integrating quality things. It is time to solidify theoretical skills that are pragmatic for life. The problem that is often faced is that increasing age is often not in harmony with maturity and wisdom. Arrangements are a way to ensure efforts to educate the nation's life.

Why is the use of non-digital materials important? Non-digital materials can deepen cognitive understanding and create a balance with digital things. People can engage more specifically. This model also makes the learning process accessible to all. Distractions can be reduced with non-digital materials, because the diversity of content and access from the digital world can reduce concentration. Non-digital materials provide a richer sensory experience.

Fourth, we also need exercise to improve, balance, and maintain cognitive abilities. The exercises include reading, doing puzzles, playing games, and learning new things. According to the Lingkaran Survey Indonesia made by Denny J.A., in 2023 only 22.5% of Indonesians read one book a year. 72.3% stated that they did not have time for it. Reading is very lacking because before the internet, oral stories became very dominant. After the internet and the very short duration of information, people are more likely to choose this form. The result that is often heard is that reading is boring and quickly makes you sleepy. In the past, in seminary educational institutions, there were compulsory readings for seminary students from generation to generation such as Winnetou, All Stater Hands, Charles Dickens, Siti Nurbaya, and Layar Terkembang. The scriptures were also read several times. We do not have to go back to an era of limited big trends. But the important point is to engage with the big books and stories that matter, not get caught up in doomscrolling, zombiescrolling, or short and low-quality content. The goal is to help individuals have quality and long-lasting ideas in exploring something meaningful.

Variation in learning things is needed by the generation involved in the digital world, because algorithms unconsciously confine people to their own interests and pleasures, so that views, interests, and desires for other things become very minimal. In the old days, if you went to a high seminary then you were seen as a person who could do many things: sports, music, speak English, write, and of course pray. Of course we need to master something deeply. But we need to

learn from the way people from the most advanced parts of the world think. They delve into something but always have a Plan B to learn and delve into something else as a backup. When one's competence no longer promises, people have the competence to do another.

In relation to brain rot, it must be emphasized that diverse movements, relationships, and passions can stimulate brain nerve networks to function properly and be able to survive the aging process. In the latest research, it is stated that, "Passion, strong interest, could be the driving factor motivating individuals to learn new things, thus influencing the development and maintenance of the neural functional network over time... physical training allows one to develop and maintain brain structures during aging, and may be one of the keys for good quality of life as an older person; diverse stimuli are a key factor in maintaining brain structures; motion, relation, and passion are key elements for contrasting the loss of the grey and white matter of the brain (Sigmundsson et al., 2022).

Fifth, Direct Relations. We need to support and advance the community of living together, especially through face-to-face physical encounters. In the community, we need to be well engaged. Communication with people who are meaningful and important in life needs to be done directly in the real world. Because of time, distance, and busyness, relationships through online social media are a good, cheap, and useful alternative as well. However, today, due to the factor of digital relationships, direct relationships in the real world are felt as a burden because they are boring, troublesome, and demanding of moments of passivity and involvement, and require responding to emotional dynamics and tones that are often disturbing. No wonder the best choice of refuge is the virtual world with a variety of variations and uninterrupted freedoms. Even digital devices are a relationship partner.

They become a self that deals with humans. However, life is made possible by real relationships. To be a real human being is to be able to deal with the whole empirical reality of the other person with whom we are dealing. The virtual world is an incomplete and inanimate representation, especially in a biological and spiritual sense. Therefore, in a community living together, it is necessary to establish rules about involvement and the need to communicate directly. Its dynamics and dialectics must be faced. People need to learn and try to respond to it so that intersubjective intelligence emerges that allows people to deal directly with others in various situations and conditions. An important thing in relation to brain rot is that intersubjectivity and direct interpersonal relationships contribute to complex biological factors that provide resilience to cognitive decline.

Sixth, physical activity. Physical activity is important in helping to improve cognitive abilities. Physical exercise can be done individually or communally. Of course, it must be done according to age and needs. John Ratey, in *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*, and research published in (2008), assert that physical exercise stimulates parts of the brain that support learning and memory, planning, and problem-solving. This view is also reinforced in the Guidelines of the WHO, which states that physical activities support physical health and are cognitively beneficial (Mishra & Mishra, 2024; Yousef et al., 2025).

## CONCLUSION

Brain rot represents a profound cognitive crisis in contemporary digital culture the systematic degradation of human intellectual agency through the overconsumption of shallow, algorithmically curated content. This article has argued, through a systematic philosophical analysis of both negative and affirmative traditions of hope, that hope understood as an active, multi-dimensional, and communally embedded transcendental force provides the necessary philosophical foundation for resistance against and recovery from brain rot. The conceptual framework developed here contributes to the intersection of philosophy of technology, philosophy of humanity, and cognitive cultural studies by repositioning hope not as passive optimism but as a structured disposition that enables meaningful action, critical thinking, and cognitive renewal. The study's novelty lies in its systematic philosophical mapping of hope's enabling loci social, communal, religious, and legal capitals and in the derivation of six concrete sites of hope as practical recovery strategies.

Future research should empirically test and validate this philosophical framework across diverse cultural and institutional contexts. Empirical studies are needed to examine how communities that cultivate philosophical dispositions of hope differ in their resilience to digital cognitive decline, and how educational and policy interventions grounded in the philosophy of hope can be practically implemented. The pilgrimage toward cognitive restoration remains open and in that openness, the philosophical case for hope as a liberating force is most powerfully made.

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#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Ignasius Ngari contributed to the conceptualization of the study, philosophical analysis, manuscript drafting, and overall research coordination. Yohanes Kore contributed to literature review, theoretical analysis, and manuscript revision. Maximilianus Bos Pegan contributed to data interpretation, editing, and final manuscript review. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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