In his essay *The Value of Hope* Luc Bovens attempts to outline the nature and value of hope, in a secular fashion. Bovens outlines that hope has both instrumental and intrinsic value, but also that there are three requirements; *belief, desire, and mental imaging*; which need to be met before something can qualify as hope.

Bovens begins his theory by proposing that there are two major questions concerning the nature of hope. First, there is a practical question of how much one should in a particular situation; second “there is a puzzle concerning the nature of inner strength and its relation to hope” (Bovens,669).

Bovens then posits that skeptics beg the question of whether or not hope really has any value at all. Skeptics believe it is best to never hope, because of the disappointment, frustration, sadness that can come with not having your hopes fulfilled. Bovens responds to this claim by outlining first the *instrumental* then the *intrinsic* value of hope, stating that, “hope is instrumentally valuable in that it has an enabling function, in that it counteracts risk aversion, and in that it spawns more attainable constitutive hopes“(Bovens, 670). Bovens outlines that hope has *intrinsic* value and that this intrinsic value can be found in hopes ability to give *pleasure, deeper self-understanding*, and its central role in the formation of *love and self-worth*. 
Bovens then outlines his proposal of *the nature of hope* which consists of three necessary conditions: *belief, desire*, and *mental imaging*.

Bovens states that in order for something to be a hope, there must be some *belief* that it is possible. "In other words, one cannot hope for some state of the world, unless one has a degree of credence that it will come about which ranges between some threshold value close to 0 for confidence that it will not come about and some threshold value close to 1 that it will come about.” (Bovens, 673).

Bovens then proposes that *desire* is also a necessary condition for hope. “One cannot hope for some state of the world unless one has some desire that it will come about” (Bovens, 674). Basically, that it is nonsensical to have hope for something without desiring it.

The final condition Bovens proposes is *mental imaging*, which he describes as “devotion of mental energy to what it would be like if some projected state of the world were to materialize” (Bovens, 674). Basically, that hoping involves some sort of daydreaming about what it would be like if your hopes were fulfilled. “I must have at least some intermittent episodes of mental imaging before I can be said to be hoping at all” (Bovens, 675).

In conclusion of his account of *the nature of hope* Bovens proposes that *belief, desire*, and *mental imaging* are all absolutely necessary conditions for something to qualify as a hope (Bovens, 675). In his own words, “‘Is mental imaging in conjunction with the proper belief and desire a sufficient condition for hoping? I think so.’” (Bovens, 675).

Part II:

In objection, we will focus primarily on the necessary conditions for hope, specifically the *desire* and *mental imaging* conditions.
First, to address the desire condition, I feel it not unreasonable for someone to hope for something they do not truly desire. For example my ex-girlfriend; though I truly hope she finds someone else who treats her well, and I hope for her happiness and well-being, I do not truly desire her to find or be with someone else. Another example could be, after getting cut off on the highway you say to yourself out loud “I hope that a**hole crashes his car!” At the moment, clouded by rage, your hope is that misfortune come to that person. But, could one honestly say that they desire potentially fatal injury on every person who cut them off in traffic? I would certainly hope not.

To address the mental imaging condition, I find it less difficult to imagine hope where one has not committed any effort to mental imaging. For example I wish for the health, happiness, and prosperity of every one of my family members, but, each family member has a different concept of prosperity etc and it would be taxing to imagine as such. I even have family members I have never met, so although I hope for their wellbeing, it would be impossible for me to undergo any mental imaging about them, because I literally do not have a mental representation of them. To use the ex-girlfriend example again, I can hope she finds someone else, but I refuse to form mental images because it is painful. All of these are quick examples of hope without mental imaging.

There is also the case of latent hopes, for example, I hope that I will wake up tomorrow, I hope that the world keeps turning etc. These hopes are always somewhere in the back of my mind, but it seems silly to say that I must create a mental image every day of myself waking up, the world turning, etc.

In summary, Bovens clearly proposes that belief, desire, and mental imaging are all independently necessary conditions for something to be classified as hope. But, as discussed
above, it appears not too difficult to imagine hope without desire and mental imaging, therefore, these “necessary conditions” may not be as necessary as Bovens proposes.

Part III:

In response to the desire objection, we will first direct our attention to the ex-girlfriend example. It can be true that while I hope for her happiness, I do not specifically desire for her to find someone else. Bovens could argue that the overarching hope is for her happiness, not for her to find someone else, and that the underlying desire for her happiness is present. This fits Bovens view; the hope for her to find someone else would only be a small constituent of her overall happiness which I do desire.

In response to the traffic example, Bovens could propose once again that our hope that someone would crash their car after cutting us off is misplaced or misattributed. Our hope when someone does us wrong is merely that they will meet some kind of justice, and learn the error of their ways. Though we may vocalize in anger a hope or desire for their misfortune; our underlying desire is that they meet justice for their actions, and our overall hope is consistent with this desire. Any more specific desire would be a consistuant of the overall hope for justice. For example, I would be just as satisfied, if not more so, if that person was pulled over and ticked for their recklessness, compared to them getting in an accident.

In response to the mental imaging objection we will first address the family example. I can desire the health and happiness of my entire family, regardless of their individual views of happiness and health. I still have a rough mental idea of what I am wishing for them; for example, health is straight forward, economic prosperity, food to eat, are all very general mental images I employ while thinking about health and prosperity in general. If I were to remove the
mental image of these concepts, I probably would not understand them very well. Even for the people I have never met in my family, I hold a mental image of them being out there somewhere as members of my family, and I employ the same stock mental image of health and happiness in my hopes for them.

Again with the ex-girlfriend, I hope for her happiness, and at some point I employ a mental representation of what I think that means for her. Just the fact that I have imagined her finding someone new as being constituent of her happiness, is proof that I have employed mental imaging.

In the case of latent hopes, Bovens outlines that we do not necessarily have to hold a mental image in our heads at all times, but at some point we did create one. So, I may not mentally image the world turning every morning, but at some point in the past I have envisioned what would happen if it stopped, and now latently hope without imaging that it keeps on turning.

In conclusion, I find Bovens’ account of hope to be clear and concise. I can also agree with his accounts of the *instrumental* and *intrinsic* values of hope. That being said, I think there are situational counter examples to his three necessary conditions for hope which could use further exploration in finding out what they may be, and how to reorganize Bovens’ theory after they are uncovered.
Bibliography