

**FREE WILL AND THE DISPOSITIONAL ASPECT OF
FAITH:
A DILEMMA FOR THE INCOMPATIBILIST**

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One of the ideas philosophers of religion examine is faith, particularly faith in the theistic sense of "faith in God"--i.e., not just the bare belief that there is a God, but rather a personal trust in this God as one who guides and cares for the believer. In this sense, faith is a dispositional property. In other words, the believer has a tendency to act upon his faith, and as the conditions appropriate for such acts are varied and frequent it is safe to say that anyone who has faith will act upon it, at least sometimes. This point can also be expressed in negative terms. I do this in the first section of the paper, arguing that it is impossible for anyone to have faith and yet never act upon it.

Another idea philosophers of religion examine is free will. It is common for these philosophers to suppose that the religious life, or life of faith, is in some significant sense freely chosen, and many of them identify "significant freedom" with a libertarian or incompatibilist account of free will.¹ I believe that there are problems with this position, some of which derive from the nature of faith as a dispositional property. In particular, I will argue that the dispositional aspect of faith--notably its implication that it is impossible for anyone to have faith and yet never act upon it--poses a dilemma for the incompatibilist.

¹ See, e.g., Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 29ff.; and Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1977), 142-145.

The incompatibilist must accept one of the disjuncts of the following exclusive disjunction: *either it is the case or it is not the case that all acts of faith are freely chosen in the incompatibilist sense*. The first disjunct gives us the first horn of the dilemma. I will argue that if **all** acts of faith are freely chosen in the incompatibilist sense, it follows that someone might have faith and yet never act upon it, but that this conclusion cannot be true given the nature of faith as a dispositional property. The first disjunct, then, implies a false proposition (that it is possible for someone to have faith and yet never act upon it) and, since any proposition that implies a false proposition must itself be false, the first disjunct must be false. If the first disjunct is false, then the second disjunct must be true, and this gives us the second horn of the dilemma. I will argue that if it is **not** the case that all acts of faith are freely chosen in the incompatibilist sense, but still true that incompatibilist free will is the "significant freedom" needed to account for the life of faith, then the philosopher who believes this will be faced with a set of perplexing intellectual problems. The incompatibilist's dilemma is the choice between the first disjunct and the second disjunct, between (1) trying to show that the first disjunct may not be false after all, and (2) trying to devise satisfactory solutions to all the problems posed by the second disjunct.

Before I begin the first section of my paper, I need to say a few words about the concept of incompatibilist free will or "IFW," as I will abbreviate it.² There are various ways to describe an IFW free choice, one of which is particularly well suited to this paper: *an act is freely chosen in the IFW sense just in case its agent categorically could refrain (or could have refrained) from performing it*.³ The agent's ability to refrain must be described as categorical so as to distinguish IFW from its standard alternative, compatibilist free will ("CFW"), which permits a

² The literature on this subject is enormous. Modern defenses of IFW include--to name just a few-- Joseph M. Boyle, Jr., Germain Grisez, and Olaf Tollefsen, *Free Choice: A Self-Referential Argument* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976); C. A. Campbell, *In Defence of Free Will, With Other Philosophical Essays* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967); Yves R. Simon, *Freedom of Choice*, ed. Peter Wolff (New York: Fordham University Press, 1969); and Peter van Inwagen, *An Essay on Free Will* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

³ Although there are various versions of IFW, the definition I have given is faithful to the core concept in all the versions--they all suppose that a free act is one the agent categorically could have refrained from performing.

hypothetical interpretation of ability.⁴ According to some of the compatibilist literature, to say the agent "could have refrained" or "could have done otherwise" is to say he "would have refrained, if. . . ." If the agent had felt differently, or if he had been placed in different circumstances--if something had been different--then the agent would have refrained.⁵ In contrast, the IFW account maintains that the agent might actually have refrained. That is, being just what he was and feeling just what he felt, and being in just those circumstances, he might still have chosen differently. It was not necessary that anything **be** different to bring it about that the agent **choose** differently. He might have refrained; that he did not must finally be attributed to his free choice rather than to anything else.⁶

I. FAITH AS A DISPOSITIONAL PROPERTY

Having faith is one of the many properties a person may possess, and most if not all properties are dispositional. I will argue that faith is a dispositional property such that it is impossible for the person who has it never to act upon it; in other words, that faith is a disposition which **will** be expressed in the life of the believer.⁷ The best way to begin is with a general discussion of dispositional properties.

To ascribe a dispositional property to something or to someone is, among other things, to make a claim about what that object or person will do (or is likely to do) under certain conditions. The standard philo-

⁴ The names "compatibilist" and "incompatibilist" are easily accounted for: advocates of CFW regard free will and determinism--at least the determination of choices by the agent's character and circumstances--as compatible; philosophers who accept IFW maintain that free will and determinism are incompatible.

⁵ For a classic compatibilist account of ability, see R. E. Hobart, "Free Will as Involving Determination and Inconceivable Without It," *Mind* 43 (1934) 8-13.

⁶ The incompatibilist's theory does not require that **all** acts be freely chosen, but only that **some** are. An advocate of IFW can easily admit that many acts, perhaps even most acts, are not freely chosen in the IFW sense (this makes possible my argument's "second disjunct"). These acts are completely determined by character and circumstances, and the agent therefore lacks the categorical ability to refrain from them.

⁷ A note on terminology: I will make no distinction between "disposition" and "dispositional property." Some philosophers make a conventional distinction between the two, using "disposition" for such human traits as generosity and irritability, and "dispositional property" for properties of physical objects, such as brittleness and solubility. See A. D. Smith, "Dispositional Properties," *Mind* 86 (1977) 439, n. 2.

sophical example is the solubility of a lump of sugar. To say "this lump of sugar is soluble" is to imply the claim that "if this lump of sugar were placed in water, it would dissolve." Under these conditions, the sugar **will** dissolve. The solubility of sugar is an example of what Joshua Hoffman calls a "deterministic disposition," which is a disposition which cannot fail to be manifested when the appropriate conditions are met.⁸ By contrast, some dispositional properties are "probabilistic," such that they are only sometimes manifested when the appropriate conditions are present. An example of this is generosity. To say "Susan is generous" is to imply that "if Susan were placed in such-and-such conditions, she would be likely to perform some act of generosity." Given that Susan's disposition is probabilistic, we cannot be sure that any particular set of circumstances **will** issue in an act of generosity on Susan's part, only that it **might**; but we can be sure that she will act generously on **some** occasions--provided that appropriate conditions are met.⁹

It is not enough simply to say that a dispositional property is a tendency for an object or person to behave in certain ways. More is wanted here, in particular an explanation for these expected behaviors: **why** does sugar dissolve in water, **why** do some persons behave generously under certain conditions? Not every substance dissolves in water, and not every person behaves generously, even given the sorts of conditions under which other persons behave generously. To ascribe a disposition to something or to someone implies that there is a **real basis** for the types of behavior associated with the disposition. In the case of the lump of sugar, this is clearly a physical basis, for sugar has a known chemical structure which accounts for its solubility in water. In the case of a human being--say, Susan--the basis will be harder to specify. One possible account is that Susan's generosity has a mental basis, that her beliefs and desires dispose her to perform acts of generosity.

To ascribe a dispositional property to **x** is, then, to make a prediction about what **x** will do or will be likely to do under certain conditions, and to imply that there is some real basis in **x** and in those condi-

⁸ Joshua Hoffman, "Must Dispositions Have a Basis?", *Auslegung* 6 (1979) 115.

⁹ I suspect that the reason for distinguishing "deterministic" and "probabilistic" dispositions is an epistemic one. In the case of simple dispositional properties such as the solubility of sugar, we can easily know both what the "appropriate conditions" are and when they have--or haven't--been met. But in more complex cases, such as a person's disposition to be generous, we cannot always know what conditions are appropriate nor exactly when they have been met.

tions which accounts for the expected behavior. Understood in this way, dispositions are appropriately expressed by the use of conditional statements in which a real relation is asserted between the referents of the antecedent and the consequent--"what the consequent describes depends on, is a consequence of, what the antecedent describes."¹⁰

There is one more thing worth noting about dispositions. Using Gilbert Ryle's terminology, they can be either "single-track" or "multi-track." The solubility of sugar, like the brittleness of glass and a heavy smoker's disposition to smoke, are "simple, single-track dispositions, the actualisations of which are nearly uniform."¹¹ But there are other dispositions "the actualisations of which can take a wide and perhaps unlimited variety of shapes"--among them the kind of pride which characterized the heroine in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.¹² These latter are multi-track dispositions. Human traits such as pride, cowardice, and generosity deserve the "multi-track" designation, as does faith, as I will explain later.

A person may have many dispositional properties of both the single-track and multi-track varieties. At times these can be expected to come into conflict, in the sense that having one disposition prevents some other disposition from being acted upon. I call this "counterdisposition." A particular disposition ("a") functions as a "counter" to another disposition ("b") if all the following are true: a person, P, has two dispositions, a and b; there is a time, t, when appropriate conditions obtain for the exercise of a and appropriate conditions also obtain for the exercise of b; it is impossible at t for P to act on both a and b; and P is so constituted that, given the choice between acting on a and acting on b, he cannot fail to act on a.¹³

I have now given a general discussion of dispositional properties which should be adequate for the purposes of this paper. Before mov-

¹⁰ David H. Sanford, *If P, then Q: Conditionals and the Foundations of Reasoning* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989) 3.

¹¹ Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1949) 43.

¹² Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* 44.

¹³ It is clear that "counterdisposition" is a deterministic notion. If P has IFW with respect to the choice between acting on disposition a and acting on disposition b, then a could not serve as a "counter" to b, for P might freely choose to refrain from acting on a. But incompatibilist philosophers need not reject the notion of counterdisposition, since (again) they need not insist that all human behavior is freely chosen, but only that some of it is. P might have IFW, yet still be so constituted that, given a choice between acting on a and acting on b, he will always act on a.

ing on to discuss the status of faith as a disposition, I want to consider the possibility of a person's having a disposition--perhaps even having it for years--and yet never acting upon it. This sort of thing may happen from time to time, but my concern is not so much with whether it does happen, but rather with the conditions that would make it possible. Let me suggest three ways in which someone might have a disposition and yet never act upon it.

The first way is that the person has a disposition but never acts upon it because he never experiences the appropriate conditions for the exercise of that disposition. Suppose that I read a book about English history, and from that reading I come to believe that Edward II was murdered. This new belief of mine disposes me to behave in certain ways, such as saying "yes" to someone who asks me if I believe Edward II was murdered or saying "he was murdered" to someone who asks me what I know about Edward II's death. It is possible that I may never have the occasion to speak with anyone who is interested in medieval history; I may never experience any situation which gives me a motive for speaking about or otherwise acting upon my belief in the proposition "Edward II was murdered." I am disposed to say certain things about this unhappy king, I may have this disposition for many years, and yet never act upon it.

In the second way, a person both has a disposition and sometimes experiences the appropriate conditions for its exercise, but always in the presence of a counterdisposition.¹⁴ The result is that this person has a disposition yet never acts upon it. Suppose that Susan acquired a disposition to take physical risks, but that she did so after coming to live with her aged parents; and suppose further that whenever Susan has an opportunity to do something risky such as sky diving or auto racing--opportunities she wishes to take advantage of--conditions are such that she cannot do it without her parents knowing and, consequently, experiencing considerable worry. If Susan's thoughtful concern for her parents' feelings is a counterdisposition to her tendency to take physical risks, she may have this risk-taking disposition for years and yet never

¹⁴ If we understand the absence of counterdispositions as one of the "appropriate conditions" for the exercise of a disposition, then we must collapse my "second way" into my first, since it will be simply a special case of the failure to meet all the appropriate conditions. In Susan's case, for instance, one of the appropriate conditions for exercising her risk-taking disposition might be that she is confident her activity will cause no worry to the people she loves.

act upon it. She may die before her parents do, and so never once in her life act upon her disposition.

In the third way, a person has a disposition, but he never acts upon it because he freely chooses (IFW) not to act upon it. Even though he has occasions when all the appropriate conditions have been met, and no counterdispositions are present, on those occasions the person simply chooses to refrain from exercising his disposition. As an example, suppose that after Susan's parents die, she retains her risk-taking disposition and has a number of opportunities to exercise it in which all appropriate conditions have been met and no counterdispositions are present. Then imagine Susan freely refraining (IFW) from taking advantage of any of these opportunities.

The first two ways are plausible, but the third is questionable at best. As in the Edward II case, if a disposition is such that it is unlikely to be exercised very often, it is reasonable to suppose that in some cases a person might have this disposition and have not a single occasion when the appropriate conditions for its exercise are realized. As for the second way, it is plausible to suppose that someone might have a disposition yet always find himself in circumstances in which another of his dispositions "countered" the first one. The case of Susan's never acting on her risk-taking disposition because she was more disposed to avoid causing worry for others is something we can imagine happening. The third way requires us to believe that the person truly has a disposition--is disposed to behave in certain ways--and that this disposition has a real basis in what the person is (e.g., in Susan's desire to take risks), yet that these things have no impact at all upon this person's behavior in spite of occasions when the appropriate conditions are present and counterdispositions are absent. It seems as though having a disposition yet never acting upon it is possible, but that not every way in which this might be thought of as happening is plausible. The question now is whether faith is a disposition one might have yet never act upon, so I will begin my discussion of faith as a dispositional property.

Faith--"having faith"--is a property, and as I have suggested, most if not all properties are dispositional. Even bare belief that there is a God is a dispositional property, for we can imagine persons having this belief being disposed to say and do certain things, such as admitting this belief to an atheist friend or leafing through a Bible with the vague idea that perhaps God actually had revealed something about Himself to prophets and apostles long ago. By "faith," though, as I noted at the be-

ginning of this paper, I have in mind "faith in God" in the theistic sense, i.e., personal trust in God as one who guides and cares for the believer. This is a common religious and philosophical use of the term "faith." Faith in this sense is a more dramatically dispositional property than the faith of the nominal theist.

Although faith in my sense admits of degrees--one person might have a stronger faith than another, and the same person might have a stronger or weaker faith now than he once had--it is something which in even its smallest degree deserves to be called a "life principle," because it stands at the center of the believer's world view. Faith disposes the believer not just to this or that discrete bit of behavior, but to a way of life. The believer's "acts of faith" are not restricted to obviously religious behaviors such as prayer and worship, but extend to all sorts of behavior, including his use of money and his treatment of other people.¹⁵ In Ryle's terms, faith is a multi-track disposition with perhaps an unlimited number of ways in which it can be exercised.

As a dispositional property, faith (hereafter used in my sense only) must have a real basis in what the believer is.¹⁶ Perhaps the best way to express this basis is in mentalistic terms. The believer can be said to "have faith" because he has a certain set of beliefs and desires, e.g., "there is a God," "this God cares for me," "He wants me to love my neighbor as myself," "I want to do His will," and "giving to the poor is His will," to name a few. With the necessary exception of a few items, such as the belief that God exists, this set is not fixed. Faith is a particularly dynamic dispositional property, such that the believer may gain or lose certain beliefs and desires from his faith-set, and as I have already noted, faith admits of degrees, so that the believer may experience any or all of his faith's beliefs and desires growing stronger or weaker.

Earlier I listed three ways in which a person might have a dispositional property and yet never act upon it. I believe these three exhaust the possible conditions for this sort of thing's taking place, so that if it can be shown that for each of these three ways it is impossible for a

¹⁵ The believer may see his money as a trust from God, to be used to advance the divine purposes in the world, perhaps in part by giving to the poor. And he may suppose that the God who cares for him wants him to care for others--e.g., "love your neighbor as yourself."

¹⁶ A theological account of this would make reference to God's activity in changing what the believer is, in helping him become the sort of person God created him to be.

person to have the dispositional property of faith and yet never act upon it, it would follow that it is impossible never to act upon faith.

According to the first way, a person, P, has a disposition but never acts upon it because he never experiences the conditions which are appropriate for its exercise. This way will only work in case the appropriate conditions for a given disposition's exercise obtain so rarely that it is plausible to suppose that a particular person who has the disposition might never experience them and consequently never act upon his disposition. Since P's having faith is a multi-track disposition which disposes him to a way of life rather than to just this or that type of behavior, it cannot fit the conditions of the first way. Although there can be circumstances which restrict P's range of options for exercising his faith, it is impossible that P should go through his life without ever experiencing any conditions appropriate to his faith. If, for instance, he were the sole inhabitant of an isolated island, he would lack the conditions appropriate for certain exercises of his faith, such as attending public worship services and performing acts of charity, but there would be plenty of conditions appropriate for other acts of faith, including prayer and private worship.

According to the second way, P has a disposition but never acts upon it because a counterdisposition is always present whenever P experiences the conditions appropriate for the exercise of his disposition. This way works well enough in the case of Susan's risk-taking disposition. We can make sense of the claim that Susan is disposed both to spare her parents worry and to take physical risks, and that the former tendency served as a counterdisposition to the latter whenever Susan had to choose between the two. We can make sense of it because it is perfectly plausible for one human being to have two dispositions and to care more deeply about one of them than about the other. Caring more for one than the other does not imply the unreality of the less-cared-for one, as long as we can specify the kinds of conditions under which the person would act upon the "lesser" disposition. In the case of Susan, we can say that if certain conditions had been different, she would have acted upon her risk-taking disposition, that is, she really had this disposition. If, for instance, her parents had died years earlier, and there was no one else in Susan's life who would worry if she took physical risks, then if everything else had been the same, Susan would have acted on her risk-taking disposition.

With P's faith this line of thought is not open to us. P's faith disposes him not just to one type of behavior--a behavior that might in certain circumstances be countered by another one of his dispositions--but to a way of life having applications across the range of things he might do and the range of conditions he might experience, so to say that there **always** has been something he prefers to faith is to imply that he has no faith at all. It is to leave us with no specifiable set of "different conditions" under which P would have acted upon his putative faith. In fact, to say that there is a tendency or tendencies which counters his faith on every occasion appropriate to its exercise is to suggest that it is **this** tendency (or these tendencies) which stands at the center of P's view of life rather than the faith which has been ascribed to him. It is not as though P *cares more* for the counterdisposition(s) than for his faith, but rather that he cares for it *in place of* having faith. The second way implicitly denies that there is any real basis in P for the behaviors associated with the dispositional property of faith. The upshot of all this is that if on the many occasions when P has conditions appropriate for the exercise of faith there is always a counterdisposition--something P prefers to faith--this will be sufficient to defeat the ascription of faith to P.

According to the third way, P has a disposition but never acts upon it because on all those occasions when appropriate conditions are present **and** counterdispositions are absent, he freely chooses (IFW) to refrain from acting upon it.¹⁷ In the case of P's faith, we would say that on every such occasion P has the categorical ability to refrain from acting upon his faith and that, as it turns out, P happens to choose invariably to refrain. This third way might seem initially possible because we can imagine IFW accounting for this or that particular case of a person's refraining from acting on his faith. If P sometimes chooses to act on his faith and sometimes to refrain, we might attribute the difference to his free choice (IFW), since there would be nothing about this which would

¹⁷ In the "third way" I specify IFW not because my paper is **about** IFW and faith (although it is); but because compatibilist free will (CFW) is not consistent with the conditions I am describing. Put roughly, an advocate of CFW says that a free choice is what the agent prefers to do at a particular time, given that agent's character and circumstances. The agent has no categorical ability to refrain from doing what he prefers; to put it simply, the agent cannot fail to do what he prefers. The upshot of this is that on the CFW account of freedom, an agent's having a disposition yet never acting on it because he freely chose not to could only be explained in terms of the "second way"--i.e., there is always some other disposition which the agent prefers to act upon. The third way requires an indeterminist or incompatibilist understanding of free will.

cast doubt on the ascription of faith to P. In other words, P's **sometimes** choosing to refrain would not be inconsistent with his having faith, because it would still be true that he sometimes acted in ways consistent with his having faith. But in the case supposed by the third way, P **always** chooses to refrain. He never performs even a single act of faith, and so gives us no reason to ascribe faith to him. In fact, P cannot even ascribe faith to himself, for to do so--assuming that the affirmation was honest--would itself presumably be an act of faith (e.g., to say "I have faith in God"). In short, the third way makes it impossible to ascribe faith to P. A defender of the third way might say that this is only an epistemic problem, that it is possible for the third way to be instanced, but that in any such case (say, P's) it will not be possible to **know** that it is instanced. This defense ("**only** an epistemic problem") requires us to believe that the real basis in the agent for a multi-track disposition such as faith can fail to have any impact upon that agent's behavior in spite of the agent's having many counterdisposition-free occasions when he has appropriate conditions for the exercise of his disposition. Applied to P's faith, this epistemic problem points beyond itself to a metaphysical problem: how can P really have the beliefs and desires which make up that dispositional property we call "faith," and yet freely choose (IFW) never to act upon them? I maintain that this is a pseudo-problem because the situation it describes is an impossible one. Except in the special cases described by the first and second ways--neither of which is applicable to faith--an agent will act upon his dispositions.¹⁸ It follows that if P has many counterdisposition-free opportunities for acting on faith, and yet fails ever to do so, we are not justified in ascribing faith to him precisely because we are justified in asserting that he has no faith. The allegedly epistemic problem generated by the third way arises from the metaphysical impossibility of the type of case it describes.

As none of the three ways describes a case in which it is possible for a person to have faith and yet never act upon it, and as the three exhaust the ways in which an agent might have a disposition yet never act

¹⁸ This assertion--that an agent **will** act upon his dispositions--is implied by what I have termed the "real basis" for dispositional properties. If an agent **really is** what the ascribed disposition requires that he be, then he cannot fail to behave in the ways associated with that disposition. If, for instance, P really has faith, then he has certain beliefs and desires, such as the belief that God exists, and he cannot fail to act on them at least sometimes. To deny this is to sever the connection between what an agent is and what he does. We might call this "dispositional realism."

upon it, it follows that it is impossible for a person to have faith and yet never act upon it. None of my arguments in this section are beyond criticism, and frankly I do not know how to prove that the "three ways" exhaust the possibilities--I just cannot think of any others. All the same, it might be said that I have been belaboring the obvious, that a dramatic multi-track disposition such as faith **will** be acted upon at least sometimes, and that to think otherwise makes no sense. Whether my conclusion is too obvious to require support, or whether it is a controversial claim capable of receiving better support than I have given it, I believe that my arguments show it to be (most likely) true. It is impossible for someone to have faith in the sense I have described--personal trust in a theistic God--yet never act upon it.

II. TWO OBJECTIONS TO FAITH AS A DISPOSITIONAL PROPERTY

Before presenting my argument that the dispositional aspect of faith poses a dilemma for the incompatibilist, I will consider two objections to my claim that faith is a dispositional property. The first of these objections is philosophical, the second is theological. Both are important, the first objection to professional philosophers, and the second objection to religious thinkers and people of faith for whom the concept of faith is of intensely practical interest.

If faith really is a dramatic, multi-track disposition, then it follows that it is impossible for anyone to have faith and yet never act upon it. The first objection takes issue with this dispositional account of faith, maintaining that it is an artificial or stipulative definition that is designed to be immune to criticism by empirical counter-examples.

Some work in philosophy is legitimately subject to objections of this sort, but this is not the case with the claim that faith is a dispositional property. The sense of "faith" I am addressing is the common, theistic sense of personal trust in God as one who guides and cares for the believer. This is what most people in theistic religions mean when they speak of "faith in God," and what they are speaking of is clearly and strongly dispositional. In short, there is nothing artificial or stipulative about understanding faith in this dispositional way.

Given the foregoing, it would make no sense to look for counter-examples, i.e., to look for persons who have faith but who never act

upon it. Persons who never act on faith are, given this account of faith, precisely persons who lack faith, and thus they cannot count as counter-examples to the claim that faith is a dispositional property that will always be acted upon by those who have it. There is nothing intellectually suspect about this conceptual precluding of counter-examples. Faith in the sense under discussion is attributed to persons on the basis of their behavior, and this is done on the reasonable assumption that there must be a "real basis" for that behavior. That basis--"having faith"--is causally sufficient to bring it about that the believer engages in certain relevant behaviors, at least on some occasions. Any property that is not causally sufficient in this way, even if we were to call it "faith," would be some property other than the one under discussion in this paper.

Even on the supposition that the dispositional analysis of faith is incorrect, and that there can be, therefore, cases of a person's having faith (in the requisite sense) and yet never acting upon it, it would make no sense to try to identify such cases. This is because, apart from one or more occasions of a person's "acting on faith" in some recognizable way, there would be no reason to suspect that person to have faith. In sum, finding counter-examples to the claim that faith is a dispositional property is impossible *whether the claim is correct or incorrect*.

The second objection to my claim that faith is a dispositional property arises out of the concern that some persons have about the traditional theological controversy over the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith **alone**. If the Reformation doctrine is accepted, then it might seem that there could be cases of a person's being justified who had the requisite faith, but who had never acted on that faith--"faith alone" in the sense of a faith possessed but never expressed. But if faith is a dispositional property such that no one can have it without acting upon it at least sometimes, then these dramatic cases of justification by faith alone are impossible.

The dramatic cases just described represent a radical, historically unconvincing reading of justification by faith alone. The common view among the Reformers was that justification is "by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone"--i.e., not by a faith that is possessed but never expressed. Having the appropriate faith was regarded by the Reformers as the instrumental cause of a person's justification before God (faith alone), but that "appropriate faith" was believed to be a living force in the believer such that it would issue in obedience and good works. In

philosophical terms, the Reformers believed that faith is a dispositional property.

III. THE FIRST HORN OF THE DILEMMA

At the beginning of this paper I introduced an exclusive disjunction: *either it is the case or it is not the case that all acts of faith are freely chosen in the incompatibilist sense*. One of the disjuncts must be true, and one must be false. The incompatibilist philosopher must accept one or the other, and in this section I will address the consequences of his accepting the first disjunct, "all acts of faith are freely chosen in the incompatibilist sense."

If the first disjunct is true, then it will also be true that it is possible for an agent to have faith and yet never act upon it. My argument employs the definition I gave for an incompatibilist free act: *an act is freely chosen in the IFW sense just in case its agent categorically could refrain (or could have refrained) from performing it*. This is the argument:

(1) All acts of faith are freely chosen in the IFW sense.

(2) All acts freely chosen in the IFW sense are such that their agents categorically could refrain (or could have refrained) from performing them.

(3) Therefore all acts of faith are such that their agents categorically could refrain (or could have refrained) from performing them.

(4) Therefore it is possible that an agent might refrain from performing any acts of faith; that is, it is possible that an agent might have faith yet never act upon it.

Given the first disjunct there can be no occasion on which the agent has the opportunity to act on his faith and yet is not categorically able to refrain from so acting, and it is this which opens the door to the extreme case of an agent's having faith and yet never acting upon it. All we need to imagine is that each time the agent has the opportunity to act

on his faith, he chooses to refrain.¹⁹ When the IFW account of what it is to be a free act is applied to **all** acts of faith, as it is in the first disjunct, there is nothing in that account to rule out the possibility that the agent might use his free will in this extreme way.

As I have shown, then, it is possible to give a valid argument with the first disjunct as the premise and the proposition "an agent might have faith and yet never act upon it" as the conclusion. But this conclusion is false, and so the premise which implies it (the first disjunct) must itself be false. If the first disjunct is false, then the second disjunct must be true. Even though this last bit of logic is impeccable, the incompatibilist philosopher may not be prepared to embrace the second disjunct, but would rather find some way to live with the first.

There are two ways to rehabilitate the first disjunct. The first is to argue that it does not imply that an agent might have faith and yet never act upon it. Given the definition of IFW, this first approach will not work. The second is to argue that it is possible (after all) for an agent to have faith and yet never act upon it, so that what the first disjunct implies is not false, hence the first disjunct has not been shown to be false. This second approach is more promising, at least at first glance. The incompatibilist philosopher might say something like this: "the first disjunct is true, and so it **is** possible for an agent to have faith and yet never act upon it, but it is unlikely that this possibility would be instanced." In other words, it is acceptable to buy this extreme implication of the first disjunct because we need not seriously suppose that it describes anything we would really expect to encounter, since agents will continue to act in ways consistent with their having the dispositional property of faith. The second approach breaks down at this point, because the IFW account of free will gives us no basis for saying that the first disjunct's extreme implication is **unlikely** to be instanced. For all that the IFW account implies, we might need to brace ourselves for a world in which **no** person with faith **ever** acts on that faith. What the incompatibilist is doing with talk about likelihood is to smuggle into his views the deterministic implications of talk about having dispositions, so that he can still affirm that persons with dispositions will act upon them. This is normally no problem for the incompatibilist who, after all, need not require that **all** behavior be freely chosen (IFW), but only that **some** of it should

¹⁹ In other words, we need to imagine a case in which the "third way" actually takes place.

be. Among the types of behavior an incompatibilist may suppose to be determined rather than free are at least some expressions of dispositional properties, expressions for which the agent lacks the categorical ability to refrain. It is this line of thinking which permits the incompatibilist to affirm both that persons sometimes act freely and yet can be counted on to express their dispositions. The problem with the first disjunct is that it excludes this line of thinking with respect to acting on faith, and so makes it conceptually possible that faith is a disposition which might never be acted upon by **any** of the persons who have it. This last thought--that faith might never be acted upon by anyone--is ludicrous, and since affirmers of the first disjunct cannot argue that it is impossible or even unlikely, it seems that the only course for the incompatibilist philosopher is to embrace the second disjunct.

IV. THE SECOND HORN OF THE DILEMMA

To embrace the second disjunct is to affirm that *it is not the case that all acts of faith are freely chosen in the incompatibilist sense*. The incompatibilist philosopher cannot take this as implying "no act of faith is freely chosen in the incompatibilist sense," because that would destroy his claim that IFW is the "significant freedom" we need to make sense of the life of faith. Instead, he must take it as implying both that "some acts of faith **are** freely chosen in the IFW sense" and "some acts of faith **are not** freely chosen in the IFW sense." The particular affirmative proposition ("some acts are. . . .") is necessary to secure the application of IFW to the exercise of faith, and the particular negative proposition ("some acts are not") is necessary to preclude the extreme possibility posed by the first disjunct. There must be one or more acts of faith for which the agent lacks the categorical ability to refrain, or else the agent might never act on his faith.

The word "some" in the particular affirmative proposition "some acts of faith are freely chosen in the IFW sense" must be taken in the conventional sense of meaning "at least one." This is important for the incompatibilist, because his account of free will cannot guarantee more than one freely chosen act of faith. If we suppose that P has faith, and that on some occasions he has IFW with respect to acting on his faith, while on other occasions he cannot refrain from acting on his faith, P might freely choose to refrain on each of the IFW occasions, with the

result that **none** of his acts of faith would have been freely chosen in the IFW sense, precisely the outcome the incompatibilist wishes to avoid. It is better for the incompatibilist to suppose a case in which P has no faith, but in which he freely chooses to acquire faith. This free choice--from which P might have chosen to refrain--brings it about that P now **has** faith, and if we call this choice the "initial act of faith," then we have succeeded in applying IFW to the life of faith in a significant way, even if P never again performs a freely chosen (IFW) act of faith.²⁰

This "significant application" of IFW to the life of faith requires further explanation. When P freely chooses (IFW) to acquire faith--to make that "initial act of faith"--he thereby brings it about that he has become someone who is disposed to perform additional acts of faith.²¹ In other words, by his freely chosen initial act of faith he has created in himself a "real basis" for a life of faith. His one incompatibilist free choice becomes the causal ancestor for further acts of faith for which he will lack the categorical ability to refrain. In this way, the truth behind the proposition "some acts of faith **are** freely chosen in the IFW sense"--that there is an initial incompatibilist act of faith--secures the truth of the corresponding proposition "some acts of faith **are not** freely chosen in the IFW sense."

The foregoing sketch of the incompatibilist philosopher's embrace of the second disjunct is, I believe, a reasonable account of the sort of thing an advocate of IFW must accept in order to make sense of the claim that the life of faith is in some significant sense freely chosen. In what follows I will present a series of problems which the second disjunct poses for the incompatibilist, the first of which concerns the very possibility of there being a freely chosen initial act of faith.

The incompatibilist's claim that IFW can be applied to the dispositional property of faith in a convincing way rests heavily on the possibility of there being an initial act of faith which is nothing less than the act of choosing to acquire faith. As I have already argued, if P has faith and **only then** may exercise IFW with respect to it, he may simply re-

²⁰ The "initial act of faith" might itself be the final act in a series of free acts through which P explored the possibility of belief. Perhaps he freely chose to read religious literature or to talk to persons with faith or to attend religious services.

²¹ Once again I should say that a theological account of this point would make reference to the activity of God. It would not be P's free choice alone, but also God's intervention, which brings it about that P becomes someone disposed to live a life of faith.

frain from doing so. The incompatibilist must inject IFW at the beginning in such a way that it explains P's coming to have faith in the first place, and this requires it to be possible that P freely choose to acquire the real basis for faith, i.e., a certain set of beliefs and desires. In other words, the plausibility of the incompatibilist's position with regard to faith depends on the plausibility of a volitional account of belief. P must freely choose to believe certain propositions, such as "There is a God" and "This God is worthy of my trust."²²

A good case can be made against volitional accounts of belief. If I believe that the road before me leads to Cleveland, I may (perhaps) freely choose to take the road or to refrain from taking it, but it would seem odd to suppose that I might also freely choose whether or not to believe the road really does lead to Cleveland. My belief about where the road leads presumably came to me as a result of looking at a map or asking someone for directions. I did not **choose** to believe it, but rather **found myself believing it** after I made my inquiries. It is true that my free choices had something to do with my coming to believe what I did--I chose to look at the map, to ask for directions, to try to find a way to Cleveland; but (again) it seems odd to say that it is also true that I freely chose the belief (in the IFW sense of "choose"), for that would mean it was possible for me to have refrained from believing it. I might, for instance, have looked at the map and said "I refuse to believe what this map says."²³

The same line of thought can be applied to the case of coming to believe in God. I may freely choose (IFW) to investigate the possibility that there is a God, and in the course of this investigation I may come to believe that there might be, probably is, or certainly is, a God, but this coming-to-believe will not itself be volitional. The evidence will appear strong to me, or weak, or fair-to-middling; I will either have or not have certain experiences which will seem to me to confirm the possibility that there is a God. In other words, I may freely choose to investigate, but I cannot freely choose whether what I encounter in the course of my investigation will convince me that there is a God. I might even want

²² The incompatibilist must also accept a volitional account of desire, such that P can freely choose to acquire the desires which are part of the real basis of faith.

²³ Someone might refuse to believe what a map said, but presumably only because of some background knowledge which suggested that the map was in error. In such a case we would say that the person could not have refrained from refusing to believe the map, so IFW will not fit this sort of case either.

very much to believe in God, yet find that I cannot, or--the opposite case--I might prefer not to believe in God, yet find myself coming to believe. If the evidence seems convincing to me, then I **cannot refrain** from believing it.

It is even possible to argue that evidence as such has nothing to do with coming to believe in God. R. T. Herbert makes a case for the "ailment view," according to which coming to have faith is a nonvolitional event rather like coming down with an illness.²⁴ I believe there is much to be said for Herbert's view, but whether we accept it or prefer to think of coming-to-believe as being tied in some way to epistemic factors such as "considering the evidence," it will still make sense to think about the acquisition of faith in nonvolitional terms.²⁵

The incompatibilist may respond to all this with the pertinent observation that there is a long history of volitional accounts of belief which includes the work of distinguished thinkers such as Pascal and William James, to name just two.²⁶ This is true, and I have no "knock down" arguments for the impossibility of there being an initial act of faith which is freely chosen in the incompatibilist sense. Still, a nonvolitional account of coming-to-believe-in-God seems to comport well with our intuitions about the general notion of coming-to-believe something, and even the best volitionalist accounts of faith tend to be strained exercises in psychological gymnastics applicable to very special cases, e.g., to cases in which the potential believer sees the evidence for and against God's existence as evenly balanced. One thing is certain: to sustain the applicability of IFW to the life of faith, the incompatibilist must develop a plausible volitionalist account of coming-to-have-faith. This is the first problem posed for the incompatibilist by his embrace of the second disjunct.

The incompatibilist's second problem is that he may have difficulty in showing that his account of faith is significantly different from the compatibilist's account. Compatibilist free will (CFW) understands a freely chosen act as one which is the causally necessary consequence of

²⁴ R. T. Herbert, "Is Coming to Believe in God Reasonable or Unreasonable?," *Faith and Philosophy* 8 (January 1991) 36-50.

²⁵ For an excellent recent treatment of this subject by a philosopher who has a nonvolitional understanding of coming-to-have-faith, see Louis P. Pojman, *Religious Belief and the Will* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986).

²⁶ Pascal's volitionalism can be found in his famous "wager" argument in the *Pensees*; for William James, see especially his essay "The Will to Believe."

its agent's character and circumstances at the time of choice. As I have already noted, given the second disjunct it is possible for P to freely choose (IFW) to acquire faith and then never thereafter freely choose to act on faith, so that after the initial act **every one** of P's acts of faith will be the causally necessary consequences of the person P became as a result of that initial act. In other words, all of P's acts of faith except the first one would fit the CFW rather than the IFW account of what it is to be a freely chosen act. Given IFW, there is no reason why the sort of case instanced in P's life of faith might not be instanced in the life of everyone who has faith, which shows us that the only necessary difference between the IFW and the CFW accounts of faith is that the former affirms, but the latter denies, that there must be an initial act of faith which is freely chosen in the IFW sense.

The incompatibilist's initial act of faith appears to play a role in the IFW account of faith which is analogous to the role played by God in the deists' account of reality. The deistic God creates the world and "gets things going," leaving the world to function on its own. The incompatibilist's initial act of faith furnishes an IFW baptism which gets the life of faith going, and, given the second disjunct, this is all the incompatibilist can guarantee that his view of free will has to do with faith. After that initial act of faith, a believer in God may very well live in a way which is perfectly consistent with there being no IFW at all. The deistic view of God suggested to some that God was eliminable from a rational account of the universe, and the incompatibilist view of faith may suggest to us that IFW is similarly eliminable from a rational account of the life of faith. By embracing the second disjunct, the incompatibilist philosopher puts himself in the position of having to admit that the life of faith may be carried on in terms of the compatibilist's account of faith, suggesting that perhaps the compatibilist is correct after all. Given the second disjunct, compatibilism is to incompatibilism what atheism was to deism: a serious challenge.

An incompatibilist might reasonably respond to this second problem by underlining the fact that the extreme case of P's freely choosing to acquire faith and thereafter never again freely choosing to act on that faith is not the only theoretical possibility for the IFW account. If, given the second disjunct, there is no reason why P might not behave in this extreme way, there is equally no reason why P **would** behave this way. The second disjunct also permits the possibility that after his initial act of faith P might sometimes freely choose (IFW) to act on

his faith, although at other times his acts of faith would be the necessary consequences of an earlier, freely chosen act.

This response to the second problem has the consequence of generating a third problem for the incompatibilist: If some of P's acts of faith are freely chosen (IFW) and some are not, then P's faith activity exhibits two paradigms, the first being acts of faith which are noteworthy for being such that P categorically could have refrained from performing them, and the second being acts of faith which are noteworthy for exactly the opposite reason, i.e., P lacks the categorical ability to refrain from them. The incompatibilist's third problem is having to provide a plausible account of this unparsimonious possibility.

The incompatibilist might attempt to brush aside any appeal to simplicity or parsimony on the grounds that such appeals may express no more than the intellectual prejudices of the philosophers who make them. But this move will not be enough to solve the incompatibilist's third problem. The reason for this is that we normally think of at least some types of faith activity as being paradigmatically free, so that **all** acts of these types must be freely chosen. A notable example of a paradigmatically free act of faith is resisting temptation, an act which figures prominently in theistic accounts of faith in God. An act of this type, whether set in the context of theistic faith or not, is one most people think of as particularly "free" in the sense of being strongly deliberate. Resisting temptation involves considerable effort, and one must decide whether to make that effort or not. In other words, resisting temptation is not something we just find ourselves doing, but is rather something we choose to do, usually at some emotional cost.²⁷ If the incompatibilist account of free will is correct, then the act of resisting temptation involves making a choice that one categorically could refrain from making, but given the second disjunct, some acts of faith are free in this sense and some are not. This in turn allows the possibility that some of P's acts of resisting temptation might **not** be free in the requisite sense, but rather would be the necessary consequences of an earlier, freely chosen

²⁷ One incompatibilist philosopher, C. A. Campbell, went so far as to argue that not only is free will operative in cases of the agent's responding to temptation, but also that it is **only** in such cases that free will operates at all. Campbell believed that character and circumstances determine the rest of the agent's actions. See *In Defence of Free Will*, 46-47.

act.²⁸ The upshot of this is that the incompatibilist's second disjunct permits both freely chosen and causally necessary acts of resisting temptation, something contrary to what is, I maintain, our normal, parsimonious way of thinking about this type of act, namely that all acts of resisting temptation are freely chosen. In rejecting the first disjunct, the incompatibilist has abandoned parsimony, and has made himself accountable for conceptual oddities such as "temptations one cannot refrain from resisting."²⁹ Ideas of this sort have the feel of Ptolemaic epicycles, that is, something required by a theory but regretted by the theory's proponents.

The incompatibilist also has a fourth problem, this one arising from the moral assessment of acts of faith. We do commonly make such assessments, and a workable account of faith must be able to explain them. Suppose, for instance, we wish to say that P is worthy of praise for a particular act of faith, a. What terms shall we use to explain this? That depends on what view of free will we suppose to be correct, since free will is usually thought to be a necessary condition for moral responsibility and thus for the ascription of moral predicates. On the IFW view, P is worthy of praise for a because he categorically could have refrained from performing it; on the CFW view, P is worthy of praise for a because it was a necessary expression of his character at the time of choice. These two standards for moral assessment are inconsistent with each other, the first finding praiseworthiness in the "refrainability" of an act, and the second in its "unrefrainability." Having embraced the second disjunct, the incompatibilist must admit that not only are some--at least one--acts of faith refrainable (IFW), but also that some will be unrestrainable like CFW free acts. When applied to moral assessment, this di-

²⁸ If the incompatibilist responds by suggesting that IFW applies to all cases of resisting temptation, then it would be possible for P during his "life of faith" to freely choose to give in to temptation on each and every opportunity. Given the importance to theistic faith of the notion of resisting temptation, this possibility comes very close to--may even be equivalent to--the extreme possibility of the first disjunct, that P have faith and yet never act upon it. See David M. Ciocchi, "Understanding Our Ability to Endure Temptation: A Theological Watershed," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35 (Dec 1992) 463-479.

²⁹ "Temptations one cannot refrain from resisting" is an oddity, provided one is thinking of the IFW account of free will. On the CFW account, P cannot refrain from resisting the temptations he resists, but this is only because P, being P, prefers to resist them. His acts of resistance are causally necessary given his character, but in CFW terms this amounts to freedom.

vision of faith-acts into two categories generates the incompatibilist's fourth problem.

Although advocates of IFW admit that some acts are unrestrainable or causally necessary, they believe that their view of freedom permits the moral assessment of such acts. They say that a person may be held responsible for an act which is a causally necessary consequence of his character, but only on the assumption that he categorically could have refrained from coming to have the character he has. In such cases, ascriptions of praise or blame for the act cannot be direct; rather, they must have ultimate reference to earlier acts which were freely chosen in the incompatibilist sense. Incompatibilist C. A. Campbell puts it this way:

It is perfectly true that we do sometimes hold a person morally responsible for an act, even when we believe that he, being what he now is, virtually could not do otherwise. But underlying that judgment is always the assumption that the person has *come* to be what he now is in virtue of past acts of will in which he *was* confronted by real alternatives, by genuinely open possibilities: and, strictly speaking, it is in respect of these *past* acts of his that we praise or blame the agent *now*. For ultimate analysis, the agent's power of alternative action would seem to be an inexpugnable condition of his liability to moral praise or blame, i.e., of his moral responsibility.³⁰

Given Campbell's remarks, it appears that the advocate of IFW has a plausible way of providing moral assessments for both freely chosen ("restrainable") acts **and** causally necessary ("unrestrainable") acts, according to which the "restrainability" standard is made to apply to both categories of acts, to the first category directly and to the second indirectly. I say this only appears to be the case because I have some doubts about how effective this line of IFW thinking can be in explaining the moral assessment of acts of faith. I believe that the incompatibilist who embraces the second disjunct will have what I have called the "fourth problem," i.e., the problem of giving a clear, consistent, and convincing account of the moral status of faith activity. I will consider this problem in two parts, the first covering the case in which P's initial act of faith is his only freely chosen act of faith, and the second covering the case in

³⁰ C. A. Campbell, *In Defence of Free Will*, 37.

which P performs additional free acts of faith subsequent to his initial act. These two cases exhaust the theoretical possibilities of the second disjunct.

The second disjunct permits the possibility that P's initial act of faith--the act of choosing to acquire faith--will be his only freely chosen act of faith. In this case, all of P's subsequent acts of faith will be in a significant sense the causal descendants of his initial act, such that given that initial act, his character, and the circumstances of his life, it will be causally necessary that he perform them. Although this is a theoretical possibility given the second disjunct, I cannot imagine that an incompatibilist would be too happy with it. It places an enormous amount of weight on one act, such that the moral assessment of all other acts of faith depends on its status as a free act. As Campbell would have it, it is in respect of this one **past** act that we praise or blame P **now** for this or that act of faith. In other words, P is not worthy of praise for any particular act of faith considered in itself. If we praise P for an act of faith, this must be understood "strictly speaking" as an oblique testimony to P's earlier, refrainable act of freely choosing to acquire belief in God. In incompatibilist terms, it is because of that earlier act that P is a proper subject of praise. Suppose, for instance, that P acts on his faith by engaging in an heroic act of self-sacrifice. Given the second disjunct, we must be prepared to believe that there is nothing praiseworthy about this act in itself--P could not have refrained from it--but that P nonetheless deserves praise **now** because his act is a causal consequence of what he freely chose **then**, i.e., because of his having freely chosen to acquire belief in God.

This explanation of the moral status of acts of faith is far from convincing. We normally offer praise for certain acts of faith, including acts of self-sacrifice, and we think of ourselves as offering praise for these acts **as such**, rather than for a putative initial act of faith as their causal great-grandparent. I suspect that the reason we think this way is that we are implicitly regarding these acts of faith as freely chosen acts; in fact, I believe that we do not just regard **some** types of faith activity as free (as I have already suggested), but that we regard **all** types as free, even paradigmatically free. The incompatibilist who embraces the first disjunct might agree with this, but not the one who opts for the second disjunct, and it is the latter thinker's position we are examining.

The incompatibilist might respond by saying that there is a sense in which causally necessary acts of faith may be regarded as free. When

P makes his free choice to acquire faith in God (the "initial act of faith"), he gives implicit assent to acts of the sorts implied by trust in God, including, let us say, acts like P's heroic case of self-sacrifice. Although P cannot refrain from performing certain acts of faith, they are still "free" in the sense of being sanctioned by his earlier, freely given assent to acts of these sorts. This, I think, is the best line available to the incompatibilist, but I doubt that it will do all the work he might wish it to do. There are two problems with it. First, it is not clear in what sense P's initial act of faith implies assent to particular kinds of acts. Second, even if P's initial act of faith actually did imply assent to all the types of faith-acts he will later perform, it is not clear what relevance this would have to the moral assessment of any of P's particular acts of faith. This is so because assent to a **type** of act does not imply assent to all the **tokens** of that type (e.g., "I agree that giving money to the needy is a good thing, but I decline to make a contribution to your charity today."). In other words, P's supposed implicit assent to acts of a given type is not what is at issue, but rather his explicit assent to a particular act of this type. The former does not require the latter, and it is the latter we single out when we make our ascription of praise to P.

An incompatibilist might object along this line: when we praise P for a particular act of faith, we are implicitly ascribing a character trait to P, praising him for being a person who can be counted on to perform more acts of the kind in question. We are praising P for having given his assent (in his initial act of faith) to the goodness of actions of this type, and for thereby freely choosing to become the sort of person who would perform such acts. Since P freely chose to become this sort of person, our ascription of praise to him for a given act of faith is actually grounded in his (earlier) exercise of incompatibilist free will. In offering this objection, the incompatibilist will paint himself into a corner. To praise P for a particular act because that act is a causally necessary consequence of his character is to apply the **compatibilist's** standard of moral assessment rather than the incompatibilist's. Given the second disjunct, the incompatibilist is once again faced with the problem of showing that his view is significantly different from the compatibilist's view. Any appeal, as here, to an alleged freely chosen (IFW) "initial act of faith" is an *ad hoc* move designed to provide a reason for believing that incompatibilism has some bearing on the moral assessment of a life of faith which otherwise looks for all the world like the picture of faith and freedom painted by the compatibilist.

The second disjunct also permits the possibility that P will perform other freely chosen acts of faith subsequent to his initial act, so that P's life of faith will consist of both freely chosen acts and causally necessary acts. At first glance this possibility seems more appealing because it allows the incompatibilist to say that freely chosen acts--refrainable acts--may be a regular part of what it is to have faith in God. If we think of acts of faith as paradigmatically free, then we may breathe a sigh of relief for the incompatibilist, for in this case he escapes the necessity of resting the entire weight of faith's freedom on a single, hypothetical initial act of faith.

A closer look reveals that this possibility poses its own difficulties in accounting for the moral assessment of acts of faith. The first of these is that in this case there are two paradigms for faith activity, with some acts of faith fitting the incompatibilist pattern of refrainability and others fitting the compatibilist pattern of unrefrainability. In order to make sense of this, the incompatibilist must treat the moral assessment of these two patterns differently, along the lines suggested by Campbell. The free, refrainable acts of faith are such that P is worthy of praise for them, considered in themselves. Since in each of these cases P could have refrained, he is responsible for the acts and worthy of praise for them. The causally necessary, unrefrainable acts of faith are not such that P is worthy of praise for them, considered in themselves. In none of these cases did P have the ability to refrain, so any ascription of praise to P *on the occasion* of such acts must be grounded in some earlier, refrainable act of faith. One difficulty here is the lack of simplicity or parsimony that creates troubles for the incompatibilist which I have already discussed.

Another difficulty is an epistemic one. If P performs 'both refrainable and unrefrainable acts of faith, and if we must distinguish between these two when we make our moral assessments, it follows that we will need to know which particular acts of faith are refrainable and which are not. This is a real difficulty for the incompatibilist since there seems no way to know which acts belong to which category. How could we know, for instance, which act of prayer, or self-sacrifice, or worship was freely chosen and which was not? It seems unlikely that an appeal to introspection would be of any use, because (a) it is not clear that refrainable and unrefrainable acts would *feel* any differently--consider, for instance, two cases of successfully resisting temptation, one from each category--and (b) even if introspection could tell the two apart, only the

individual believer would be able to introspect since he alone has direct access to his own states of consciousness. As a consequence of this, everyone else would be epistemically dependent upon the individual's own account of the moral status of his acts. Nor is it likely that an appeal to acts of faith as publicly observable phenomena would be of any use, either. How would, say, a refrainable public act of charity **look** different from one which is unrefrainable? In addition to that, many acts of faith, such as private prayers, are not observable acts at all. It appears once again that parsimony is not such a bad thing, and the only way the incompatibilist can secure it is by embracing the first disjunct, according to which **all** acts of faith are freely chosen in the incompatibilist sense.

The second disjunct generates the four problems I have discussed in this section. It is possible that these are not the only, nor even the most important, problems faced by those who affirm the second disjunct. Whatever other problems there may be, they undoubtedly would all rest in one way or another on the two logically opposed theoretical possibilities permitted by this disjunct, viz., (1) that the hypothetical initial act of faith is the agent's **only** freely chosen act of faith, and (2) that there are **other** freely chosen acts of faith besides the initial act. This is something of a dilemma in itself, because both these possibilities pose problems for proponents of the second disjunct, and given that disjunct, one of these possibilities must represent what actually is the case in an agent's life of faith.

V. THE DILEMMA REVISITED

In this paper I have posed a dilemma for philosophers of religion who affirm both that the life of faith is in some significant sense freely chosen and that the incompatibilist account of free will is correct. These philosophers must accept one of the disjuncts of this exclusive disjunction: *either it is the case or it is not the case that all acts of faith are freely chosen in the incompatibilist sense*. Given the first disjunct and the standard understanding that an act free in the incompatibilist sense is one from which its agent has the categorical ability to refrain, it follows that someone might have faith and yet never act upon it. This conclusion, however, is (most likely) false, since faith is a dramatic, multi-track disposition such that it seems impossible that someone should have it and yet never once act upon it. If the first disjunct implies a false

proposition, then it must itself be false, which requires the incompatibilist to try the second disjunct. Given the second disjunct, the incompatibilist faces a set of intellectual problems which I reviewed in the fourth section of this paper. The dilemma, then, is found in the forced choice between the first disjunct, which is almost certainly false, and the second disjunct, which generates intellectual problems for which there may be no adequate solutions.

I have suggested that we normally think of acts of faith as acts that are paradigmatically free. If I am right about this, the incompatibilist will likely prefer if possible to embrace the first disjunct, but to do this requires showing that it is possible, after all, for someone to have the dispositional property of faith and yet never act upon it. I doubt that this is possible, but the incompatibilist's only alternative is to embrace the second disjunct, and this means accepting the proposition that some acts of faith, perhaps all of them except the hypothetical initial act, are **not** free in the incompatibilist sense.

A philosopher of religion could avoid this dilemma altogether by choosing to give up the commitment to incompatibilism. Of course, to talk in these terms once again raises all the problems about the plausibility of volitional accounts of belief acquisition. Whether or not anyone can **choose** to believe in incompatibilism or compatibilism (or any other view), I think it likely that philosophers who are incompatibilists maintain their position on free will largely because of their moral intuitions. For them, the compatibilist account of what it is to be a free, responsible agent is an unconvincing "soft determinism" which fails to do justice to human moral agency. Given that conviction, they will find ways to live with the dilemma I have outlined in this paper.

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