

The Moral and Evidential Requirements of Faith*

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Abstract: What is the relationship between faith and evidence? It is often claimed that faith requires going beyond evidence. In this paper, I reject this claim by showing how the moral demands to have faith warrant a person in maintaining faith in the face of counter-evidence, and by showing how the moral demands to have faith, and the moral constraints of evidentialism, are in clear tension with going beyond evidence. In arguing for these views, I develop a taxonomy of different ways of irrationally going *beyond* evidence and contrast this with rational ways of going *against* evidence. I then defend instances of having a moral demand to have faith, explore how this stands in tension with going beyond and against evidence, and develop an argument for the claim that faith involves a disposition to go against, but not beyond evidence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Philosophical work in the ethics and epistemology of faith has bloomed in the last few years, with major developments concerning the relationship between faith and cognate attitudes like belief and trust, the rationality and value of faith, and the function of faith and its place in mind. Much of this work provides new opportunities for evaluating the important relationship between faith and evidence. In this paper, I explore this relationship from the novel perspective of the moral demands that there are to have faith. In brief, I argue that there are moral demands to have faith in some circumstances, and explore where these demands reveal the compatibility, and the incompatibility, between faith and various senses of *going beyond*, and of *going against*, one's evidence. Although it is a debated issue in the literature, it is still popular to hold that faith requires going beyond evidence (FBE) in some sense.¹ In considering the role of the moral demand to have faith, this paper rejects FBE, proposing a similar, but weaker relationship between faith and evidence.

In service to defending the main argument of this paper, I produce a taxonomy (§2) of the different ways by which someone might go *beyond* evidence, both in terms of belief and of action. As will be made clear, doxastic forms of going beyond the evidence are inherently unjustified. These are contrasted with going *against* the evidence. This notion recognises tensions between a person's actions or beliefs and the evidence one has for the truth of a proposition, but shows why

¹ Howard-Snyder (2013, 368-370) helpfully cites several instances of a claim similar to FBE from literature mostly targeted at a general audience. FBE is rejected by numerous authors, including Locke (1924) and Plantinga (2000). FBE also takes more moderate forms, as when someone claims that faith requires a weak epistemic position vis-à-vis evidence (Buchak 2014, 53; Alston 1996, 12).

such tensions are not inherently irrational. The distinction between the two notions, then, is a distinction of rationality.

With an account in hand of what it is to go beyond and to go against the evidence, I then explore (in §3) the moral demands to have faith, and where faith is compatible or incompatible with going beyond or against evidence. Recent work on faith has shown how faith occupies an integral role in certain ethical areas of our lives. For instance, faith is seen as essential to our social interactions (Preston-Roedder 2013), in our commitments to each other and in the pursuit of important goals (Kvanvig 2013), and in our remaining allegiant to others and to our plans when we're faced with practical and evidential challenges and set-backs (Buchak 2017).

Building on this work helps us to see where there are moral demands to have faith. As I will show, though, these moral demands stand in tension with going beyond the evidence. I argue that these demands reveal that when faith involves belief, it is incompatible with going beyond the evidence, but not with going against the evidence. Moreover, when faith is not a matter of belief but of acceptance, there are certain cases where we entirely lack any moral demand to have faith. Hence, we can use the taxonomy from §2 to demarcate where the limits are on faith's moral demands.

In the final section (§4) I develop and consider an argument for FBE. It is widely held in recent literature that faith requires a disposition to be resilient in the face of counter-evidence. I show how that claim does not establish FBE, but does lead to the view that someone with faith is disposed to go against the evidence. Moreover, that the moral reasons there often are to have faith show that faith is still rational, even when it does go against the evidence.

2. GOING BEYOND & GOING AGAINST THE EVIDENCE

'Going beyond the evidence' and 'going against the evidence' are metaphorical expressions. How should we understand them? I propose that there are two main identifiable varieties of going beyond or against evidence: first, in terms of *belief*, and second, in terms of *action*, where there are at least three clear instances of going beyond the evidence in terms of belief, and two clear varieties in terms of action. §2.1 and §2.2 offer a taxonomy of these notions of going beyond evidence. §2.3 discusses the distinct notion of going against the evidence, and its relationship to epistemic warrant.

2.1 *Going Beyond Evidence: Belief*

In terms of going beyond evidence with respect to belief, it is typical to consider someone who holds a belief that she does not properly base on evidence. This will be the case if someone lacks sufficient evidence to warrant belief, or has the evidence, but does not base the belief on the evidence.² For example, suppose that you believe your business will succeed, but you've had several years of losses, and the overall economic climate for your kind of business is bleak, warranting belief that your business will fail. In that case, we might say that you have gone beyond the evidence because you believe a proposition when the evidence for that proposition only warrants disbelief. If you were to believe that your business is likely to fail, then your belief would not go beyond the

² The distinction that is sometimes made here is between propositional and doxastic justification.

evidence, but would be consistent with the evidence. From this we can take the following to be the basic *doxastic* (d) conception of going beyond the evidence:

BEYOND(d): A person S goes beyond the evidence when S holds a doxastic attitude *D* towards a proposition *p* at time *t* despite *D* being held without being properly based on evidence for holding *D* toward *p* at *t*.

Although BEYOND(d) appears straightforward, there are at least three ways by which someone can go beyond the evidence in this sense, and we can draw these out by looking at the improper basing relation between the evidence a person has for a proposition, and her belief towards that proposition.

First, in some cases, a person's belief is *disproportionately* based on the evidence. For instance, the evidence may warrant disbelief that *p* or suspension of judgment about *p*, and yet the person believes *p*. One instance of this is partiality in relationships. If someone has a special relationship with someone else – they are good friends, for example – then they may be disposed to interpret evidence disproportionately. For instance, one friend may ignore evidence that counts against the reliability of the other, or, give greater weight than is warranted to evidence counting in favour of the reliability of their friend.³ The reason for this disproportionate basing may plausibly be due to the desires or affective states that a person holds, which cause a person to view certain evidence in unwarrantedly positive or negative lights (e.g. Mele 2006, 110-11). We can state this as follows:

DISPROPORTIONATE: A person S holds a doxastic attitude *D* toward *p* at *t* disproportionately to what is warranted by the evidence for *p* at *t*.

A second way of going beyond evidence as an instance of BEYOND(d) is where a person's belief is *disconnected* from the evidence. Desire and affection may also play a significant role in these cases as well. My belief that a sports team will lose the match may be based on my dislike of that team, rather than being based on their recent poor performances. A person's belief that he won't secure a job may be based on his depression and low confidence, rather than on a fair assessment of his own capabilities. In these cases, changes in evidence will rarely make much of a difference to the person's belief because the person's belief is not based on the evidence – it is disconnected from it. Of course, it may be that the person's belief would be warranted if it were based properly on evidence. I might be warranted in believing that the sports team will lose the match if that belief were based on evidence because there is sufficient evidence to warrant belief that they will lose. However, even if there is sufficient evidence to warrant belief in that proposition, my belief is not warranted if it is not based on evidence, and in that case, I go beyond the evidence because I do not properly base my belief on the evidence. We can state this as follows:

DISCONNECTED: A person S's doxastic attitude toward *p* at *t* is disconnected from the evidence for *p* at *t*.

A third way of going beyond evidence as an instance of BEYOND(d) is where someone *inverts* the evidence for a proposition. In this sense, the person takes evidence that counts in favour of *p* as evidence against *p*, and takes evidence that counts against *p* as evidence in favour of *p*. From

³ The person may be either aware or unaware that she is treating evidence in this disproportionate way.

a psychological perspective, this notion may seem implausible, or at best, only possible for people suffering from particular cognitive defects. However, it is sometimes used in discussions concerning religious faith, occasionally associated with some of the writings of Kierkegaard. For instance, the acknowledgement that some religious doctrines, like the incarnation, are paradoxical, is sometimes taken as a reason to believe in a doctrine like the incarnation (see Evans 1998). Ordinarily though, a paradox would give us reasons against believing a particular proposition. When the basis for a person's belief in a proposition is evidence that contradicts the proposition, then clearly she does not properly base her belief on the evidence. We can state this as follows:

INVERTED: S takes evidence that counts in favour of p as evidence against p , or takes evidence that counts against p as evidence in favour of p .

Let's now consider going beyond the evidence in terms of action.

2.2 Going Beyond Evidence: Action

A straightforward way of going beyond the evidence in terms of action is by acting as though p despite the fact that the evidence does not warrant belief that p . Someone might do this by asserting p , even though the evidence warrants suspension of judgment or disbelief that p , as when I tell my friend that she will pass her exams when the evidence warrants that I believe that she will fail her exams. In this case, someone might hold a variety of doxastic attitudes towards p – belief, disbelief, varieties of epistemic possibility, etc. The point, though, is that you act as if p when the evidence does not warrant belief that p . From this we can take the following to be the basic *active* (a) conception of going beyond the evidence:

BEYOND(a): A person S goes beyond the evidence when S acts as if it is the case that p , even though S's evidence does not warrant believing p .

As with BEYOND(d), when it comes to BEYOND(a), we can identify at least two ways by which someone can go beyond the evidence in this sense.

First, there are cases where *despite* the evidence, a person acts as if it is the case that p . To illustrate this, we can develop behavioural instances of DISPROPORTIONATE, DISCONNECTED, and INVERTED. Take DISPROPORTIONATE, for instance: one could act as if p when in fact the evidence only warrants believing $\sim p$ or suspending judgment concerning p . The foregoing examples apply here, as when I tell a friend that she will pass her exams even though the evidence warrants my belief that she will not pass her exams. Now consider examples of DISCONNECTED. In these cases, I act as if p regardless of what evidence there is for the truth of p . Suppose that, regardless of the evidence, I press ahead with my business venture. I ignore negative financial reports and avoid economic assessments of my area of business. My behaviour in establishing my business is determined purely by my desire to see it established, and I don't let any evidence have any input on whether or not I continue with the venture. This gives us a behavioural case of DISCONNECTED. Finally, take cases of INVERTED. Here, I act as though p because the evidence warrants belief that $\sim p$, or act as though $\sim p$, because the evidence warrants

belief that p .⁴ This might be most clearly seen in cases where someone is spurred on by counter-evidence. So, negative financial reports come out on the status of my business that suggests that my business will fail. Because of this, I push on with the business on the supposition that it will succeed because I am so keen to see it succeed. In each of these cases, we might say that a person's behaviour is in spite of the evidence, and hence, we can categorise these instances of BEYOND(a) as follows:

DESPITE: Despite the evidence, S acts as if it is the case that p .

There is one final branch of the taxonomy to consider – the second instance of BEYOND(a). In these cases, one acts as one would if it is the case that p , and does so *prior to* considering further evidence.⁵ Suppose I'm running late for an event that I regularly attend, and for which I usually pick up my friend on my way over to it. I don't have time to check if my friend is coming this week, so I just drive over to pick him up, and do so prior to considering further evidence on whether or not he is coming. Some religious cases work this way too. It's a central doctrine of Christianity that Christ rose from the dead. One might act as if that doctrine is true prior to considering any further evidence to validate the doctrine. In these cases, we might say that a person's behaviour goes *before* the evidence, and hence, we can categorise these instances of BEYOND(a) as follows:

BEFORE: Prior to considering further evidence, S acts as if it is the case that p .

We now have two varieties of going beyond the evidence – in terms of belief (BEYOND(d)) and in terms of action (BEYOND(a)). For the former I have proposed three instances, and for the latter, two instances. Finally, we need to consider a contrast between going beyond and going against the evidence.

2.3 Going Against Evidence

To see what it is to go against the evidence, recall the example of the business owner who believes her business will succeed, but who has made losses in a bleak economic climate. We said that this person's belief that the business will succeed would be unwarranted. Another way to put this is that this person has significant evidence counting *against* the proposition that the business will succeed, such that to believe this proposition would be to believe *beyond* what the evidence warrants. This leaves open the possibility that the business owner could have evidence that counts against believing that the business will succeed, but where to believe this proposition does not go beyond what the evidence warrants, and so is not unwarranted. There are at least two reasons for why this might be the case. First, the business owner might have sufficient evidence counting in favour of the proposition that the business will succeed, such that the evidence weighs in favour of believing that proposition overall. This is a somewhat mundane account of a belief going against the evidence. More controversially, we might suppose that certain practical features of the business owner's situation warrant her belief, even though for other, more impartial observers who lack

⁴ In these cases, it seems plausible that I must be aware of what the evidence warrants. My behaviour is intentionally recalcitrant.

⁵ c.f. Lara Buchak's second and third analyses of going beyond the evidence (2012, 229-30).

such practical features, their belief that the business will succeed would not be warranted. Let's explore how this position might be defended.

The business owner has certain interests in the success of the business: she has invested years of her life in the business and all of her life-savings. An impartial observer has no such interests in the success of the business: it doesn't matter to her whether or not the business succeeds or fails. Some philosophers have argued that the practical interests of the business owner alter the evidence required for her to believe that the business will not succeed (Fantl and McGrath 2002; Stanley 2005). A recent proposal for understanding this claim (Morton and Paul 2019) is that the business owner's 'evidential threshold' is raised concerning the proposition that her business will not succeed: she requires a higher degree of evidence for belief toward this proposition, given her practical interests in the success of the business, than the impartial observer, who has no practical interests in its success.⁶ This proposal seems plausible to me for several reasons. For one thing, it seems quite reasonable to permit the business owner to believe that her business will not fail, even though she has plenty of evidence that it will, given the high-stakes involved in her situation. She shouldn't easily give up on the business even though there is evidence indicating its possible failure. That's not to say that she will always be warranted in her belief in the businesses' success. There comes a point at which her belief is delusory and goes *beyond* the evidence. Nevertheless, up to a point it seems permissible that she continue to hold fast to her belief in the business' success.

Another reason for supposing her belief is not unwarranted is due to the plausibility of comparable cases. Recall the discussion of friendship partiality. When you're in a friendship with someone it is often argued that there are certain moral demands on you if you are to act as a good friend. One of those demands, it has been proposed (Stroud 2006), is to be partial towards evidence favouring your friend. For instance, if you hear disreputable reports concerning your friend, you ought to be less disposed toward concluding that your friend is a bad person on the basis of such reports than someone who is not this person's friend. Such partiality is thought to be an important feature in what it is to be a good friend. In these cases, the truth of propositions concerning the goodness of your friend are important to you because of your relationship and the obligations that it entails. Such partiality can be seen as shaping how strong the evidence must be to justify belief formation or revision when propositions concern our friends.

There are further examples as well. For instance, if it's critical to one person that the bank be open, then he will not simply form a belief about whether the bank is open or closed on the weakest available piece of evidence (Stanley 2005). He will require stronger evidence to justify belief formation or revision concerning the bank's status than for someone with whom it doesn't matter whether or not the bank is open or closed. Moreover, suppose that it's important to a student that she gets the best possible grade in her degree. For her, a series of poor grades in the first year of studies may not justify forming the belief that she cannot get the best possible grade. If she believes this, it may have a dispiriting and demotivating effect on her studies, and she may

⁶The position outlined here is not uncontroversial. Some epistemological theories reject the claim that two people can form rational, but differing kinds of doxastic attitudes on the basis of the same evidence. One example is the *Uniqueness* thesis, which holds that '[g]iven one's total evidence, there is a unique rational doxastic attitude that one can take to any proposition' (White 2005, 446; cf. Feldman 2007).

no longer pursue the best possible grade. Given the importance of her getting the best possible grade, and hence the high-stakes involved in her case, the student's evidential threshold for belief formation is such that greater evidence is required for her to disbelieve that she will achieve a first-class grade.

This is not the place to offer a robust defence of the role of practical interests in doxastic rationality. Whilst I find the view plausible, it serves an important role in outlining the distinctions between going beyond and going against the evidence. In doxastic terms, we can state going against the evidence as follows:

AGAINST(d): A person *S* goes against the evidence when *S* holds a doxastic attitude *D* towards a proposition *p* at time *t* despite *S* having evidence against the truth of *D* toward *p* at *t*.

There is a mundane version of AGAINST(d):

MUNDANE: A person *S* who holds *D* towards *p* has evidence both for and against holding *D* towards *p* where the evidence for holding *D* towards *p* weighs in favour of holding *D* towards *p* overall.

There is also a controversial version of AGAINST(d) that takes into account the practical interests of the agent:

PRACTICAL: A person *S* who holds *D* towards *p* has evidence against holding *D* towards *p* where, given her practical interests in the truth of *p*, she is warranted in holding *D* towards *p*, but where for agents with no practical interests in the truth of *p*, they would not be warranted in holding *D* towards *p*.

Going against the evidence also has a basic behavioural sense:

AGAINST(a): A person *S* goes against the evidence when *S* acts as if it is the case that *p* even though *S* has evidence that counts against the truth of *p*.

Again, there are mundane and practical senses:

MUNDANE: A person *S* acts as if it is the case that *p* where there is evidence both for and against believing *p* where the evidence weighs in favour of believing *p*.

PRACTICAL: A person *S* acts as if it is the case that *p* where she has evidence against believing *p*, but given her practical interests in the truth of *p*, she would be warranted in believing *p*, but where for agents with no practical interests in the truth of *p*, they would not be warranted in believing *p*.

This addresses our need for a taxonomy of different ways of going beyond and against the evidence. Let's now apply this taxonomy to faith to see whether or not faith is compatible with these notions.

3. THE MORAL DEMANDS OF FAITH

As noted in the introduction, a common view of the relationship between faith and evidence is that faith required going beyond the evidence (FBE). In order to identify whether FBE is true I

want to consider an argument from moral theorising about faith. This argument shows that there are clear tensions between our moral demands to have faith and going beyond the evidence. To see why, we need to begin with a brief discussion of the nature of faith.

3.1 *Two Varieties of Faith*

There are numerous varieties of faith proposed in recent philosophical literature,⁷ but for our purposes, I will focus on the two which have received the most attention. The first variety of faith is where faith is an intentional state directed towards a proposition, as when someone has faith that democracy is a force for good or faith that God exists. *Propositional faith*, or *faith-that*, is widely thought to require a cognitive attitude towards a proposition p . This can be characterised in terms of taking p to be true, either in doxastic or non-doxastic terms.⁸ For instance, one can take p to be true in doxastic terms by believing p , or in non-doxastic terms by accepting p (Alston 1996), assuming p (Swinburne 2001), or assenting to p (Schellenberg 2005). The nomenclature generally used for these kinds of cognitive attitudes in which one *takes p to be true* is that one has a ‘positive cognitive attitude’ towards p (Audi 2011, 82). In contrast, one can have a *neutral* cognitive attitude towards p , such as imagining or wondering whether p , or a negative cognitive attitude towards p , namely, disbelieving p . One way to distinguish doxastic from non-doxastic cognitive attitudes is that the latter but not the former are adopted voluntarily: we can choose to accept p , for instance, but not to believe p . For this reason, the taxonomy in §2 distinguished doxastic from action versions of going beyond evidence. The former will be applicable to doxastic instances of faith; the latter to non-doxastic instances.

Faith-that is also thought to require one to be in favour of the truth of p , by, for example, desiring that p , or believing p to be good or desirable (Audi 2008, 92; Howard-Snyder 2013, 367; Schellenberg 2005, 108).⁹ According to these accounts, then, someone with faith that democracy will succeed takes it to be true that democracy will succeed, and is in favour of the truth of the success of democracy

The second variety of faith is where faith is related to an object: one may have faith in something, such as a political system, or someone, such as a partner. *Relational faith*, or *faith-in*, takes an object as its value rather than a proposition. It is often proposed that relational faith requires either trust (Audi 2011, 55-56; Swinburne 2005, 142-47), or a disposition to rely on something (Howard-Snyder 2017, 56; McKaughan 2017). For instance, a relay runner with faith in her teammates will be disposed to trust or rely on them to pass the baton successfully. Moreover, relational faith appears to require believing or assenting to certain propositions. For instance, when someone has faith in a friend to do well in her exams, she either believes or accepts that her friend will do well in her exams. So, relational faith can be seen as requiring a positive cognitive attitude, whilst also requiring the dispositions of trust or reliance.

⁷ For some taxonomies, see Audi (2011, 52-65) and Sessions (1994).

⁸ Although it is now widely accepted that propositional faith does not require belief, there is some resistance to this non-doxastic view (Malcolm and Scott 2017).

⁹ For criticism of this widely held view, see Malcolm and Scott (MSa)

Some recent authors have considered whether faith-in is genuinely distinct from faith-that at all (Buchak 2014). One reason for this is because it seems that there are cases of propositional faith that involve trust or reliance. For example, if I have faith that my partner will recover from a serious illness it looks plausible that I would be disposed to rely on her to recover, perhaps by taking risks by living as though she will recover. If that's the case, then it isn't entirely clear what distinguishes propositional from relational faith, other than that which towards each attitude is directed. For the purposes of this paper, I leave the issue open, but maintain that *if* propositional faith is distinct from relational faith, FBE is a claim that applies to both varieties of faith.

To evaluate the relationship between faith and going beyond the evidence, I now want to consider issues arising in the context of moral theorising about faith, starting with an argument for the claim that there are moral demands to have faith in some instances.

3.2 *When Morality Demands Faith*

Supposing that we take a moral *demand* to be an ethical reason for or against an action φ or attitude ψ that, given the balance of reasons, we ought to φ or hold ψ all things considered.¹⁰ For instance, if I have a moral reason for sticking to a promise, and the balance of reasons is, all things considered, in favour of me sticking to the promise, then I have a moral demand to stick to the promise. Moreover, if I have a moral reason to believe that my colleague is telling the truth, and the balance of reasons is, all things considered, in favour of me believing that my colleague is telling the truth, then I have a moral demand to believe my colleague is telling the truth.

Now, there seem to be cases where we have a moral demand to have faith. Sometimes these pertain to certain actions or attitudes at a particular time. Alternatively, it may be that they pertain to a certain action or attitude at all times.

A useful place to begin is with demands to have faith with respect to our special relationships. Suppose that we have a long-term friendship with someone who has been accused of plagiarism. You're unaware of the exact evidence being used against her, but they must have something that warrants the accusation. Nevertheless, she insists to you that she's innocent – that she hasn't plagiarised. Moreover, to your knowledge she's an honest person with no history of plagiarism. Plausibly, there is a moral demand on you to have faith in her – to have faith that she's innocent. Your faith involves an attitude whereby you take her testimony to be true, and where you are disposed to trust your friend's testimony. If you have faith in her, you thereby show her the kind of support that a friend should show when her friends are in difficult times. This is part of what it is to be a good friend. Were you to lack faith in her, and she discovers this, it could have significant negative consequences for her given that even her closest friends lack faith towards her. Moreover, this will likely have negative implications for the friendship, and could even lead to its end.

¹⁰ I can have a moral *reason* to φ or ψ , but, given the balance of reasons for or against φ -ing or ψ -ing, I ought not to φ or ψ . So, such moral reasons can be outweighed by other reasons, including non-moral reasons. However, when the moral reason I have to φ or ψ outweighs other reasons, then I have a moral *requirement* or moral *demand*.

Other cases also appear to give moral demands to have faith. Imagine we have a special relationship with someone who wants to become a doctor. Whether this person is a friend, family member, or another person with whom we have a special relationship, we seem morally obliged to have faith that she can achieve this goal. This is because this person is attempting to achieve a long-term project, and she will be motivated to pursue it if she knows that others have faith that she can achieve it. It's part of what it is to be a good friend, or sibling, say, to have certain positive attitudes towards the goals and ambitions of your friends or siblings. Of course, there may come a time when circumstances demand a lack of faith, say, when this person is under massive financial pressure, but appears to have no chance of arriving at her goal, and could easily take alternative, well-paid work. In that case, morality might demand that we lack faith. Nevertheless, there are some cases in which we have a moral demand to have faith.

Why do special relationships appear to make moral demands on us to have faith? Suppose we think that to value our special relationships means that we see the needs, interests, and desires of the people in whom we have these relationships as giving us reasons to support and help these people.¹¹ For instance, the fact of my filial relationship with my father means that I see his needs, interests, and desires as reasons to support and help him with them. Having faith in those with whom we have special relationships can play a particularly central role in supporting and helping them with their needs, interests and desires.

There are other cases, too, where faith seems morally required. One particular instance is what Ryan Preston-Roedder (2013; forthcoming) calls 'faith in humanity', which he defines as 'faith in other people's moral decency'. Faith in humanity has played a critical role in the social reforms led by the likes of James Baldwin, who exhibited great faith in the moral decency of others – of black Americans' capacity to love those around them, and for the capacity for moral reform that would be exhibited by white Americans in support of the same cause. In the case of those seeking social reform, there is surely a moral demand to have faith in humanity. Someone seeking to redress gender imbalance in society must have faith that, at their core, humans are capable of the moral decency required to overcome imbedded power-structures, and to implement the changes needed to bring about justice and equality. Indeed, we might go further and wonder whether this is a moral demand on all people, since the betterment of society is a responsibility on all, and a lack of faith in humanity will undoubtedly dampen our motivations in pursuit of that goal.

Of course, in what is likely to be all cases, this will require people to put aside conflicting evidence to the contrary, and to stand firm in one's faith in humanity. Anyone who has witnessed the problems and evils that humans have caused have reasons to doubt the moral decency of humans. So, to have faith in humanity will require one to persevere in the face of contrary evidence. However, this fact – the need to be resilient in the face of conflicting evidence – is perhaps one of the reasons that the moral decency of others makes for such an ideal candidate object for faith (an issue we'll come to in §4).

We now have several plausible cases whereby morality makes demands on us to have faith. How can this claim be used to determine which senses of going beyond the evidence are potentially

¹¹ This view is often attributed to the work of Scheffler (see 2010, 46-49 and n.7 for citations to earlier work).

incompatible with faith? We can address this question, first, in terms of doxastic forms of going beyond evidence, and second, in terms of behavioural forms of going beyond evidence.

3.3 Going Beyond the Evidence Doxastically

It was claimed in §2 that going beyond the evidence in terms of beliefs is a matter of one's beliefs not being properly based on evidence. We might wonder, though, whether morality would ever demand that we go beyond the evidence in the sense of any of the variants of BEYOND(d). That is, can morality actually demand that we don't properly base our beliefs on evidence? One reason that we may be sceptical is if we adopt the widely held view that beliefs are not under our voluntary control. If that's the case, then surely we cannot voluntarily choose to believe a proposition in any way, let alone by not properly basing it on evidence. And yet, for morality to make demands of us, presumably we must be able to perform the action that morality demands.¹² Morality cannot demand that I serve my country in the Second World War because this is not something that I can choose, or volunteer, to do. Similarly, we might argue, morality cannot demand that I have faith in the sense which requires me to go beyond evidence by holding a belief in a way that is not properly based on evidence.

This argument is essentially an application of 'ought implies can' – I only ought to φ or ψ if I can φ or ψ . It endorses the premise that morality sometimes demands that we have faith, but claims that morality would never require that we go beyond evidence in the sense of BEYOND(d), since doing so is beyond our voluntary control and is therefore not a possibility for us. Hence, we appear to be able to conclude that faith is sometimes incompatible with BEYOND(d): if faith does require going beyond evidence, then this must be compatible with the moral demands of faith, where BEYOND(d) is not always so compatible, and hence is not always compatible with faith. Since faith is not compatible with going beyond evidence in some cases, then, faith cannot *require* going beyond evidence.

Despite some appealing features of this argument, there are several problems with it. The main problem is with the application of the ought implies can principle. Even if the principle is correct, the 'can' in the principle does not mean 'intentionally can'. The clearest example that highlights this point are with beliefs. Suppose we accept doxastic involuntarism – that I cannot intentionally form beliefs. Even if this holds, it does not mean that there are no norms of belief. An evidentialist, for instance, would argue that I still *ought* to believe only to the degree warranted by the evidence. And moreover, norms don't have to be followed intentionally. An evidentialist who accepts doxastic involuntarism can still agree to the ought implies can principle because I *can* believe only to the degree warranted by the evidence, even though I cannot do so intentionally. So, morality might require me to have faith in my friends, and as part of this, I can believe something that the evidence does not warrant, even though I can't do so intentionally.

However, the issue being raised is not only about intentions, but about demands as well, and morality would surely never *demand* that someone believe what the evidence does not warrant. That is, morality would never demand that we contravene evidentialist norms, and so where

¹² In a similar way, Lara Buchak (2012, 229) argues against the compatibility of faith and kinds of going beyond evidence such as BEYOND(d).

morality demands that we have faith, it would never demand that we have faith in the sense of BEYOND(d). This might be true for going *beyond* the evidence, but it needn't be true for going *against* the evidence. According to the PRACTICAL version of AGAINST(d), we acknowledge that there are cases where one is *permitted* to believe p due to practical features of her situation, where someone else would not be permitted, on evidentialist grounds. It seems that the very same practical features of the situation that provide one with a moral demand to have faith, as discussed in the foregoing, are those that would change what evidence is required by someone in order that she rationally revise her beliefs or come to believe something.

Now, it may follow from this that morality would never *demand* that we go against the evidence, in the PRACTICAL sense of AGAINST(d), even though it may *permit* that we do. This is due to reasons arising from your practical situation: morality may permit me to believe that my friend is innocent even when the evidence counts against this belief, because of the moral advantages of doing so. And if this claim about permissions is true, then it will not follow that faith is incompatible with AGAINST(d). This is because when morality demands that I have faith, it will permit my faith to go against the evidence in the sense of AGAINST(d).

The same cannot be said for the compatibility of faith and BEYOND(d). It still holds that morality would never demand that we contravene evidentialist norms, and so where morality demands that we have faith, it would never demand that we have faith in the sense of BEYOND(d). That is, where morality demands that we have faith, faith is incompatible with going *beyond* the evidence in terms of our beliefs. The same is not true, though, of going *against* the evidence in terms of our beliefs, since in doing so, we do not contravene evidentialist norms.

It seems, then, that there is sometimes an incompatibility between the moral demand to have faith and doxastic forms of going beyond the evidence. The situation is slightly different, in interesting ways, in the context of action.

3.4 Going Beyond the Evidence Behaviourally

It was claimed in §2 that going beyond the evidence in terms of actions is a matter of acting as if it is the case that p , even though one's evidence does not warrant belief that p . It seems, though, that morality would sometimes, in fact, demand that we do not behave in this way. There appears to be several problematic ethical cases to consider. For instance, note that a person satisfies this description by acting as if it is the case that p whilst the evidence warrants *disbelieving* p . One problem here is that one way that someone could act as though one believes p is for one to command someone to perform some action φ , or for someone to assert p . However, in some cases, these actions don't look like something that morality would demand when the evidence warrants disbelief. Let's consider these issues one at a time.

Commanding someone to φ whilst the evidence warrants disbelieving p can lead to some morally troubling cases. Imagine an army general who has faith that his troops can survive enemy fire, but whose evidence warrants disbelieving that his troops can survive enemy fire. In this case, morality would not demand that he go beyond evidence by acting as though his troops can survive enemy fire by commanding them to charge at the enemy (unless, perhaps, he was forced to do so by circumstance). Nevertheless, it could be argued, that whilst morality would never demand that

he command his troops to face enemy fire when the evidence does not warrant belief that they will survive enemy fire, it does demand that he have *faith* that his troops will survive enemy fire.

This argument endorses the premise that morality sometimes demands that we have faith, but claims that morality sometimes would not require that we go beyond evidence in the sense of BEYOND(a), since this is in conflict with other moral demands that we have. Hence, we appear to be able to conclude that faith is incompatible with BEYOND(a), in some cases at least. If there are moral demands to have faith, and faith requires going beyond evidence, then it cannot require going beyond evidence in the sense of BEYOND(a) for some cases. That is, faith is not always compatible with BEYOND(a).

A similar issue concerns assertion. Note that one way of acting as though one believes p is to assert p . However, it is generally agreed that assertion is subject to norms that govern when one is warranted in asserting p . These norms are often stated in such a way as to reject the claim that one may assert p when the evidence warrants disbelieving p .¹³ Since these are moral norms, it looks like, if they are correct, then it can never be the case that morality would demand, or even permit, one to assert p when one's evidence does not warrant belief that p . For example, suppose one has faith that a friend will make it in her chosen career path. To act as though you believe this proposition would involve telling your friend that she will make it in her chosen career path. However, the evidence does not warrant believing this proposition. So, it looks as though morality demands that you do not tell this to her since to do so breaks the moral norms of assertion.

One issue with this line of argument is that, rather than highlighting tensions between where there are moral demands to have faith, and moral demands to not go beyond evidence in certain senses, what the argument actually provides us with is a way of demarcating where morality would not demand that we have faith. Rather than concluding that moral demands show where one cannot go beyond evidence in terms of BEYOND(a), we actually get to the conclusion that morality would never demand faith in certain cases. Namely, where faith would be a matter of asserting p without sufficient evidence for believing p . In the example of the friend, it's just not the case that morality would demand that she asserts that her friend will achieve her chosen career path, and this is the case because morality would not demand that we break the norms of assertion.

This concern can be extended to the army general case as well. Whilst it is plausible that the general often has a moral demand to have faith in his troops, when faced with morally problematic situations, this simply removes the moral demand to have faith in his troops in those cases. So, rather than revealing a tension between what it is to go beyond evidence and the moral demand to have faith, these cases simply demarcate where one lacks a moral demand to have faith.

Whilst this does not provide us with an account of where faith is incompatible with certain active senses of going beyond evidence, the conclusion is not entirely negative. What we do get is a picture of where one has and where one lacks moral requirements to have faith. As a topic for ethicists, therefore, the discussion in this section reaches important conclusions concerning the moral demands of faith.

¹³ For instance, Jennifer Lackey's 'reasonable to believe norm' of assertion (2007). Note, though, that this does not hold for belief norms of assertion.

4. DOES FAITH DISPOSE GOING BEYOND EVIDENCE?

We have seen where faith is incompatible with going beyond the evidence, and hence faith cannot *require* going beyond evidence. However, there might be a weaker claim available: faith *disposes* one to go beyond the evidence. This section explores a possible argument for this claim and shows how it fails by drawing on the moral demands that there are to have faith.

How might we argue that faith disposes one to go beyond the evidence? One possible argument comes out of recent discussion on an intuitively plausible necessary condition for faith. In recent literature on the nature of faith, there has been considerable agreement that faith requires a disposition to persist in the face of set-backs and challenges. In particular, this persistence is often explicitly given as retaining one's faith when faced with contrary evidence. For instance, Jonathan Kvanvig claims that faith

...is an orientation of a person toward a longer-term goal, an orientation or disposition toward the *retaining* of the goal or plan or project *in the face of difficulties in achieving it*. (Kvanvig 2013, 111, my emphasis)

This account, then, claims that faith involves a disposition to retain one's long-term commitments to plans and projects, and involves a disposition to persist with these commitments in the face of difficulties in achieving them. Similarly to this, Daniel Howard-Snyder has argued that faith requires 'resilience' (2013; 2017), and claims that this is a matter of having 'resilience in the face of new contrary evidence' (2013, 368).¹⁴ On a similar score, Lara Buchak fills out her account of 'steadfastness in the face of counter-evidence' by the condition that 'faith requires that one maintain the commitment to act on the claim one has faith in, even in the face of counter-evidence' (2017, 113-14). Again, we have some disposition towards persisting with one's faith – steadfastness – and specifically, a disposition to persist when facing counter-evidence.¹⁵

The disposition articulated by these accounts of faith naturally connects to the value of faith, as Daniel McKaughan states as part of his account of relational faith:

what is most distinctively valuable about *relational faith* in (sic) a characteristic *perseverance* which plays a role in sustaining relationships through various kinds of challenges, *including through intellectually unfavorable circumstances and significant periods of doubt*. (McKaughan 2017, 28, emphasis added)

The idea that faith is valuable because it is perseverant can be seen clearly in cases of friendship. If I have faith in a friend to have success in her new business venture, then this faith will be valuable if it perseveres at times when the business appears to be struggling. This is because I can then give my friend the support and encouragement she needs to get through this difficult period.

To summarise, these accounts of faith appear committed to three claims: (a) faith requires a disposition to persist with one's faith, variously described as retention (Kvanvig), resilience (Howard-Snyder), steadfastness (Buchak), and perseverance (McKaughan); (b) this is a disposition

¹⁴ This is true of his accounts of propositional (faith that *p*) and relational (faith in *X*) faith, as well as 'global faith' (a person of some particular faith *F*) (2017, 56-57).

¹⁵ In our work on the resilience of faith, Michael Scott and I refer to this property as 'true grit' (MSa and MSb).

to persist with one's faith when faced with challenges, difficulties and counter-evidence against one's faith; (c) this disposition makes faith valuable.¹⁶

Note how (a) is sometimes given only as a disposition to retain faith in the face of counter-evidence (e.g. Howard-Snyder and Buchak). However, such a construal of this disposition is too narrow. Opposition to one's faith does not *always* come in the form of conflicting evidence. It can come in various forms: sometimes this is evidential, but sometimes it is not. Imagine someone who lives in a country that persecutes people for having her faith. Her faith may persevere in the face of these practical challenges, but they aren't evidential. Practical challenges come in other forms too. Someone who has faith that he will become an excellent doctor will face the challenge of needing to write a persuasive application that will secure him a place to study medicine at university. This is a practical obstacle to his faith, rather than one in the form of conflicting evidence. Even if it will often be the case that one's faith faces challenges and opposition, these challenges and opposition will not always come in the form of counter-evidence. For this reason, faith is not disposed *only* to go beyond or against the evidence.

Despite this, the persistence disposition does include the disposition to maintain faith in the face of counter-evidence. Prima facie, then, (a) and (b) appear to provide us with an argument for the view that faith disposes one to go beyond evidence. Despite this appearance, however, this conclusion is wrong for an important reason. For, even when someone's faith persists in the face of counter-evidence, this persistence can be justified for that person, even if it would not be justified for someone else. Hence, this person goes *against*, rather than *beyond* the evidence. It would only follow, from (a) and (b), that faith disposes one to go against the evidence. Let's dwell on this claim for a moment.

To see why (a) and (b) do not entail that faith is disposed to go beyond evidence, we simply need to draw on the arguments from §3. There we found that it seems that there will be many cases of faith in which one has practical reasons that shift a person's evidential threshold for belief revision. Consider the case in which someone has faith in her friend to achieve her career goal, but the evidence suggests that she won't be able to achieve it. Suppose her goal is to become a judge, but only a very small proportion of the people with the requisite qualifications manage to become judges. Moreover, add that there is no significant reason to believe that this person will become a judge. Nevertheless, her friend still has faith that she will achieve her goal of becoming a judge and part of this faith is that she believes her friend will achieve her career goal. In this case, we might suppose that her faith in her friend is persistent in the senses given in (a), and that it persists despite conflicting evidence, as given in (b). She is resilient in the face of conflicting evidence, and it is her resilience that causes her to still believe that her friend will become a judge, even though the evidence warrants believing that she won't become a judge.

Now, should this case be interpreted as an instance of BEYOND(d) or of a PRACTICAL instance of AGAINST(d)? There are plausible reasons for thinking that the friend is permitted to hold her faith-beliefs due to the moral features of her situation, namely, arising from the moral demands of friendship (Stroud 2006). Hence, even though faith disposes one to persist with one's faith-beliefs in the face of counter-evidence, it doesn't follow that if this happens, that the person's

¹⁶ This can be defended empirically by drawing on recent work concerning the value of 'grit' (Duckworth 2007). See also Jeffrey (2017).

faith is irrational – that it goes *beyond* the evidence. The moral demands of faith play a role in altering the evidence required of that person for belief-revision. Hence, although she has a disposition to persist with her faith in the face of counter-evidence, this is a disposition to go against the evidence, not beyond it.

We can make the same case for non-doxastic varieties of faith. Take an alternative treatment of the prior case for example. So, the evidence does not warrant that her friend will become a judge, but she performs the actions that she would perform if the evidence did warrant that her friend will become a judge. We could imagine that this might involve encouraging her friend to earnestly pursue this career goal, and to advise her of the best routes she should take in order to realise it. Moreover, acting this way might naturally be caused by perseverance in the face of counter-evidence: one's resilience to counter-evidence may be manifest in her unwillingness to alter her actions to reflect what the evidence actually warrants. She is doggedly determined to act as though her friend will achieve her goal, perhaps for the admirable reason that she takes this to be the best way of supporting her friend. This case could also be interpreted as an instance of AGAINST(a) rather than BEYOND(a) since the practical features of her situation may well justify her in believing that her friend will achieve her career goal.

In any of these cases, even though the moral features of the situation alter the evidence required for belief, there comes a point in which belief would be unwarranted if enough evidence is accrued despite the relevant moral features. Where this line is, though, depends on the context of each case. When one does cross this line, the person's faith goes *beyond* the evidence, not merely against it.

5. CONCLUSION

We have arrived at several conclusions regarding the relationship between faith and evidence. First, faith does not require going *beyond* evidence since that is in conflict with a combination of evidentialist standards and the moral demands of faith. Second, faith is often permitted to stay in place in the face of counter-evidence, despite the demands of evidentialism, because of the practical features of a person's situation giving rise to moral demands to have faith. In these cases, I propose we say that the person's faith goes *against*, rather than *beyond* the evidence. Third, faith involves a disposition to go against but not beyond the evidence. Fourth, there are restrictions concerning where morality demands that we act in faith, and where it is impermissible to have faith, which demarcate the limits of the demands to act in faith. Each of these conclusions mark important progress for an account of the nature of faith and are significant for epistemologists and ethicists alike.¹⁷

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