Faith, Hope and Trust

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It is not uncommon in ordinary English to describe people as having faith that various things are the case. Consider,

• A student struggling in a logic class has faith that he will eventually master the material and pass the class.

• A husband has faith that what his wife says is true.

• A wife has faith that her husband will keep his marital vows.

• A person suffering from OCD comes to have faith that he locked the front door, despite being inclined to worry that he didn’t.

• A friend has faith that a confidant will keep a secret.

• A father has faith that his teenage son will not wreck the car.

• An addict has faith that this time he will refrain from giving in to the addiction.

• The addict’s friend has faith that the addict will succeed in resisting the addiction.

• A philosophy student has faith that his car has not been stolen, even after being convinced he has no adequate answer to Hume’s problem of induction.

• An employee of a non-profit organization has faith that her efforts will make the world a better place.

• An over-confident gambler has faith that he will win his bet.

• A Christian has faith that God exists.

These examples all involve a use of “faith” that takes a that-clause as its complement, and they differ from other common uses that occur when, for example, we say that someone is a person of faith, or has faith in people or ideas, or keeps or breaks faith, or perform acts of faith. The faith-that locution seems on its face to denote an important and potentially valuable propositional attitude, and
there have been several proposed accounts of propositional faith in the recent literature. One might hope that a successful account of propositional faith will make possible accounts of the phenomena denoted by other important uses of “faith,” including especially the “faith in” use that seems importantly connected to trust. Perhaps we can understand what it is to have faith in people or ideas in terms of what it is to have faith that a proposition is the case.

A common theme in recent accounts of propositional faith is that the attitude involves a positive conative or evaluative orientation toward \( p \) as well as some kind of doxastic attitude toward \( p \). Daniel Howard-Snyder, for example, builds these attitudes directly into his account:

\[ \text{[F]aith that } p \text{ is a complex propositional attitude consisting of (i) a positive evaluation of } p, \text{ (ii) a positive conative orientation toward } p, \text{ (iii) a positive cognitive stance toward } p, \text{ and (iv) resilience to new counter-evidence to } p. \]

According to Daniel Howard-Snyder, to have faith that \( p \) is to have a complex propositional attitude that is resilient in the face of counter-evidence. The propositional attitude is in part cognitive, involving some assessment of the whether \( p \) is true. (On Howard-Snyder’s view, the cognitive attitude may be belief, but cognitive attitudes that are weaker than belief—such as thinking it is likely that \( p \) is true, accepting that \( p \), or assuming that \( p \)—can also stand in for the required cognitive attitude.) But propositional faith is not just a cognitive attitude; it also involves being for the truth of \( p \). Call this the Conative/Evaluative Requirement:

\[ \text{Conative/Evaluative Requirement: } S \text{ has faith that } p \text{ only if } S \text{ is for the truth of a proposition.} \]

Theorists who accept the Conative/Evaluative Requirement might differ on what sort of conative conative and evaluative pro-attitudes faith requires. A natural thought is that faith requires a hope that \( p \), or a desire or a preference that \( p \) rather than not-\( p \) should be the case, and a belief that it would be good (or at least better than the alternative) if \( p \) is true. Howard-Snyder argues that a conative attitude that falls short of preference or desire, such as preferring to prefer that \( p \) or desiring to desire that \( p \), may in some cases be suffice for faith (albeit a faith that is in one sense weaker than faith that involves outright preference or desire). (Howard-Snyder 2013)

In the first section below, I consider arguments for and against the Conative/Evaluative Requirement. Although there is a compelling case to be made for the requirement, several kinds of counterexamples threaten it.

I aim to defend the Conative/Evaluative Requirement, but my defense will be partly concessive. The faith-that locution is not univocal, and not all uses of faith-that language obey the Requirement. Many cases fit the “optimistic
acceptance" paradigm suggested by Howard-Snyder's account and the Conative/Evaluative Requirement. However, some paradigm cases fit what I will call the "creedal paradigm," according to which beliefs with distinctively religious content thereby count as faith. Other paradigm cases involve beliefs based on testimony. One “takes on faith” a proposition that is asserted, and thus can be said to have faith that what the testifier says is true. Call this the “trusted source paradigm”. Still other cases fit what I will call the “cooperative action paradigm,” they involve faith that agents will act intentionally in cooperative ways—refraining from temptations, doing the right thing, etc. Some cases of faith—that fit more than one of these paradigms. (For example, faith that someone will keep a promise fits three of the paradigms; one trusts the promiser that they will behave in a cooperative way because one trusts their testimony, and one also hopes that they will keep the promise. A Christian's faith that God will keep His promise to bless and save the world would fit all four paradigms.)

I will argue that these paradigms are distinct, and none covers the wide range of faith-that attributions. Nevertheless, I contend that the Conative/Evaluative Requirement is true of an important sense of faith, one that may be able to play a role in explaining faith-in people. Along the way, I consider in some detail the relation between faith and trust.

1 Faith as a Optimistic Acceptance

At least three lines of argument support the Conative/Evaluative Requirement. First, the principle can be supported by appeal to cases in which the presence or absence of a conative/affective component seems make the difference between the felicity or infelicity of saying the case involves faith. For example, it seems infelicitous to say that people in California have faith that there will be an earthquake in the near future. A natural explanation of the infelicity is that Californians don’t desire that it be true.2 By contrast, there is no infelicity in supposing that Dr. Evil has faith that the big one will hit California soon, as he works to invent an earthquake ray gun.

Other examples suggest that faith requires an evaluative as well as a conative attitude toward p.3 Consider a recovering addict with conflicting desires. On one hand, he desires not to give in to temptation. He has committed himself to the project of recovery, and resisting temptation is what he regards as clearly the best thing to do. On the other hand, though, he desires to give in to temptation. He is of two minds, torn between his better angels and the influence of his addiction. The proposition ‘I will resist temptation’ will resist temptation’ can be the object of faith for him, but it seems that the proposition that ‘I will give in to temptation’ is not even a candidate for faith, even if he strongly believes that he will give in to temptation and wants to. A plausible hypothesis as to why is that he does not regard giving in to temptation as good or worthy of desire. Faith, it would seem, requires a proper “fit” between one’s preference for p and one’s

2The example is borrowed from (Wolterstorff 1990).
more reflective values. For subjects capable of a high level of reflection, having faith that \( p \) arguably implies that they would on reflection regard \( p \)'s realization as good or worthy of preference.\(^4\) (This is a highly subjective matter; change the addict's psychology so that he doesn't regard giving in to the addiction as bad and we get a candidate for faith.)

Second, one might defend the conative/evaluative requirement as the best explanation of cases in which the propositional attitude of faith is not closed under competent deduction, even though belief is. Consider the following inference:

1. My son's toothache will be cured by the dentist.
2. A necessary condition of my son's being cured by the dentist is that he experience the pain of a Novocain shot.
3. Therefore, my son will experience the pain of a Novocain shot.

The first is a candidate for propositional faith. However, someone who has faith that 1 and uses knowledge of 2 to competently deduce the 3 will not thereby have faith that 3 is the case. The attitudes of desiring and believing that a state of affairs is good seem to behave in the same way. Desiring that 1 should be true together with the knowledge of 2 does not imply that one desires that 3 be true, and just as prefixing the first premise with “It is good that...” does not yield a valid argument that it is good that my son experiences the pain of the shot.\(^5\)

Third, the principle can be supported by noting the way that even denials of faith carry with them a presupposition that one is for the proposition's truth.\(^6\) Suppose, for example, that you are watching a Red Sox game in which they

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\(^4\)Treating this requirement as a necessary condition on all cases of faith might require too much intellectual and conceptual sophistication. “The faith of a child” is a common idiom, and some small children capable of faith might not be capable of forming beliefs about what is importantly good or beliefs about what is worthy of desire. I will not here consider what weakening might be appropriate in response to this point, but will instead simply note that it seems to be a conceptual truth that faith entails the richer attitude for subjects capable of full reflection.

\(^5\)It may be instructive also to consider what Roderick Chisholm describes as cases of “defeated evils.” These are cases in which a state of affairs is made better by the presence of a part that is intrinsically bad, as when an ugly part of a painting adds to the aesthetic beauty of the painting taken as a whole. Consider the following two inferences:

1. Smith will exercise heroic courage during the battle.
2. Being afraid is a necessary condition of heroic courage.
3. (Therefore) Smith will be afraid during the battle.
4. Jones will reflect on his past misdeeds and be very displeased.
5. (Therefore) Jones will be very displeased.

Again, in these cases, the first premise seems an appropriate candidate for faith. Is the conclusion a candidate for faith? Might I have faith that Smith will be afraid because this will make his courage all the more heroic? Might I have faith that Jones will be displeased, because though normally bad it is what is appropriate in the context? If so, perhaps this can be explained by the pro-attitude that Chisholm says we should have toward these states of affairs: although they are bad intrinsically, we can be grateful for their obtaining since they make the whole better.

\(^6\)Thanks to John Hawthorne for suggesting this argument to me.
are ahead in the bottom of the ninth, but the other team has the bases loaded with no outs. Someone asks you whether you have faith that the Red Sox will pull it out and win the game. If you are rooting for the other team, then the question demands more from you than the simple denial, “No, I don’t have faith that they will win.” The simple denial carries with it the connotation that you hope the Red Sox will win. A proper response will deny what seems to be a presupposition of the question: “No, I don’t even want them to win, much less have faith that they will.” (Compare the way “Have you stopped beating your wife” presupposes that you have beaten your wife. Answering the question without seeming to affirm the presupposition is tricky, requiring something like the following: “No, I haven’t stopped beating my wife, because I never started beating her!”)

These considerations seem to support a conative and evaluative requirement for faith. However, not all attributions of propositional faith behave in this way. I will consider three counterexamples.

First, consider cases of religious beliefs for which one does not hope. Suppose, for example, a fundamentalist Christian who believes that orthodox Christian doctrine includes the proposition that many, many people will suffer an eternity in hell. Suppose the Christian does not treat this as good or desirable (though perhaps some fundamentalists may). Such a person can properly be said to have faith that people will suffer in hell, even if they do not want or prefer that this to be so.

Second, at least many cases of testimonial trust can be correctly described in the language of faith, even in cases in which the content of the testimony is not good news to the hearer. One relevant kind of case involves news that is of neutral value. Suppose my spouse tells me that the number of floor tiles in our kitchen is 23. My spouse and I, suppose, have been facing some serious trust issues in our marriage. She testifies that the number of tiles in the kitchen is 23. I balk, and she notices. “Really?!” she says, “You can’t even trust me to count floor tiles?” Realizing that she’s exactly right (I should trust her about such things), I come to have faith that the number of floor tiles is 23. Notice that I have no desire that the number be 23, nor do I want to want it to be true, nor do I regard this as a good state of affairs. Nevertheless, in keeping with the trusted-source paradigm, I count as having faith that what she said is true.

Perhaps the defender of an evaluative/conative component to faith might reply that I do regard the proposition as good, precisely because I desire and regard it as good that my wife testify correctly.

Cases in which the testimony involves bad news suggest that this reply is inadequate. Suppose, for example, that Smith tells me that my wife has not

7“Faith” behaves similarly to “hopeful” in this respect. Denying that one is hopeful, e.g., “I’m not hopeful that the Red Sox will win,” carries with it a presupposition that one wants them to win. The claim emphasizes the doxastic rather than the conative aspect of hope, indicating that one has a very low confidence that the proposition is true.

8Here is a similar case from Anscombe:

You receive a letter from someone you know, let’s call him Jones. In it, he tells you that his wife has died. You believe him. That is, you now believe that his
been faithful. This is bad news, to say the least. How will I respond? Two
different ways of continuing this fictional story can end in different faith-that
claims:

Ending 1: I reject Smith’s testimony out of hand because I don’t trust him,
or perhaps merely because I don’t want it to be true and don’t want to believe
it. "I don’t believe you," I say to Smith, "I have faith in my wife. I have faith
that she is not cheating on me."

Ending 2: I trust Smith’s testimony, though the news is devastating. I
respond to him as follows: "I really hope that you’re wrong. It doesn’t sound
like her, and I’m inclined to doubt it. It would be terrible if what you’re saying
is true. So, it has required a lot of faith for me to believe what you’re saying.
But I’m prepared to take it on faith that what you are saying is true. I trust
you that she has been cheating on me. Because you’ve told me, I have faith
that it’s true that she’s been cheating on me."

Both endings to the story include a felicitous attribution of propositional
faith, but the second involves no positive conative or evaluative attitude toward
the proposition that my wife has been cheating on me. I regard the truth of the
proposition as terrible. I don’t want it to be true, I don’t want to want it to be
true, nor do I have any pro-evaluative attitude toward it’s truth.

A third kind of counterexample to the Conative/Evaluative Requirement
involves a kind of wishful thinking that occurs when one wants to believe a
proposition that one does not want to be true. Consider, for example, many
people who believe that childhood vaccinations cause autism, deriving their
belief from unreliable sources of information or from hasty generalizations from
anecdotal evidence. Recent studies suggest that these beliefs are remarkably
resistant to counter-evidence. (See Konnikova (2014) for discussion.) Several
conjectures might explain why this is so. Perhaps their belief is sustained by
a strong desire to be right in taking the stance on the issue they have already
taken. Conflict with others can prompt a strong desire to be vindicated as
having initially taken the correct stand on an issue. Or, perhaps the belief is
resistant to counter-evidence because they hold it out loyalty to in solidarity with
an in-group who also accepts it. It might also be that their belief is influenced
by the idea that it is very important to believe that vaccines cause autism if it
turns out to be true (for example, so as to avoid being personally responsible for
causing autism in one’s own child), but they think it is not a big deal to believe
this if it turns out to be mistaken. (Perhaps they think that they wouldn’t be
personally responsible if their unvaccinated child gets the relevant disease, or
perhaps they recognize that the risks of this are low as long as almost everyone
else gets vaccinated).

It seems appropriate to claim that such people have faith that vaccines cause
autism. However, we do not need not attribute to them the rather nasty attitude

wife has died because you believe him. Let us call this just what it used to be
called, ‘human faith’. That sense of ‘faith’ still occurs in our language. ‘Why’,
someone may be asked, ‘do you believe such-and-such?’ and he may reply ‘I just
took it on faith—so-and-so told me.’ (Anscombe 2008b, 13)
that it is good that vaccines cause autism, nor do we need to regard them as hoping or preferring that this be true. One might object that since they desire to be right about their belief, they also thereby hope that vaccines cause autism. However, given that desires and beliefs about what is good are not closed under competent deduction, there is no entailment from desiring to be right in believing that \( p \) to hoping or have any pro-feeling toward the truth of \( p \). It is consistent to describe these subjects as lamenting that vaccines cause autism, while at the same time having faith that it does.  

2 The Creedal Paradigm

The most promising approach for defending the Conative/Evaluative Requirement against these counterexamples is to distinguish different uses of the faith-that location. The first counterexample is the easiest to dismiss in this way. Every major dictionary definition of “faith” includes a meaning along the lines of the following from the *OED*: “Belief in and acceptance of the doctrines of a religion, typically involving belief in a god or gods and in the authenticity of divine revelation.” In some contexts, knowing that someone believes doctrines that they take to constitute “the faith” makes it appropriate to describe them as having faith that those tenets are true. The following conditional characterizes this common usage of faith-that language:

**Creedal Paradigm:** If \( p \) is a religious tenet (a claim that is part of “the faith”), and \( S \) believes \( p \) as part of adopting a package of such tenets, then \( S \) has faith that \( p \).

Although we should acknowledge that the Creedal Paradigm characterizes a genuine use of “faith,” it is equally clear that this is not the only use. Only one of the several examples given at the beginning of this paper has a distinctively religious content, but all are appropriate uses of the faith-that location. One need not have any interest in philosophy of religion in order to think that there is one or more important propositional attitude that is targeted by a broader usage.

The first counterexample to the Conative/Evaluative Requirement can be countered by claiming that the Creedal Paradigm explains why we claim that the Christian fundamentalist has faith that hell will be well-populated. Acknowledging this is consistent with holding that there is at least one distinct and important usage of the faith-that location that obeys the Conative/Evaluative Requirement.

Moreover, there are good reasons to think that the Creedal Paradigm is not even the most important use of the faith-that location for philosophy of reli-

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9 Though the autism case strikes me as pretty clearly a case of irrational faith, this might not be essential to the kind of case. Many people have faith that global warming is true, though they do not want this to be true and don’t regard it’s truth as a good thing. It may be that such faith is rational even if it is based in part on the practical consideration that the the stakes are high if we don’t believe it and it turns out to be true.
Consider, for example, the distinctive role that faith plays in Christian teaching and practice. A Christian may be especially concerned with how to make sense of several certain distinctive claims about faith in the Christian and Hebrew scriptures, such as the following: faith is a core spiritual virtue (together with hope and love); it is pleasing to God and essential to coming to be in a right relationship with Him; God credits faith as righteousness; the faith of children is to be admired and emulated; etc. Though the Christian tradition has often seemed to stress belief in creedal doctrines as the central notion of faith, it is difficult from within the tradition to see how to make sense of these distinctive theological claims if faith is only belief with religious content. They may be easier to make sense of in the context of a broader usage of faith.

Also, when early Christian writers wrote about faith, they used the Greek word “pistus,” which (like the Latin, “fides”) did not primarily have a religious connotation. The constructions and ranges of meaning of “pistus” and “fides” overlap remarkably with a non-religious usage of “trust” in English that is closely connected to “trust,” and related notions such as “trustworthiness.” These words connote a richer attitude than mere belief in religious doctrines.

In the next two sections, I explore the connection between faith and trust in some detail and distinguish between two different ways that faith-that claims can derive from trust. These distinctions will allow us to diagnose the last two counterexamples to the Conative/Evaluative Requirement.

3 Faith and Trust

In English, several parallel constructions for “faith” and “trust” are very close if not the same in meaning. My main focus will be on the similarity between the verb form of “trust” and “having faith”, though it will be useful to begin with a few remarks about some other commonalities.

First, the nouns “faith” and “trust” can each denote either actions or attitudes. “Acts of faith” and “acts of trust” are both common idioms, and seem interchangeable in contexts where “faith” does not have a specifically religious connotation. Telling someone a secret, for example, can be described equally well as an act of faith or an act of trust. It is natural to think that there is a close link between acts of faith or trust and the attitude of faith or trust. Acts of faith or trust are ones that are performed out of the attitude of faith/trust. We naturally say that in performing an act of faith one acts “out of”, “on” or “by” faith/trust. As an attitude, trusting or having faith (denoting an attitude) explains the performance of acts of faith/trust. (Cf. Faulkner (2012))

English also has locutions suggesting that the attitudes of faith and trust admit of degrees. We can ask both whether one has the attitude of faith/trust

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10In philosophy of religion, (Alston 1996; Audi 1991; Audi 2008; Bishop 2007; Pfohl 2001; Adams 1987; Schellenberg 2005; Howard-Snyder 2013a), all give general accounts of faith that they then apply to religious contexts.

11See McKaughan (2013); Morgan (2015) for discussions of usage of faith in ancient contexts.

12See Morgan (2015) for useful discussion. Similar points can be made about Hebrew words that are translated as “faith.” [Citations]
and how strong one's trust/faith is. We can also ask how much faith/trust is manifested by some action.

In addition to describing actions and attitudes, the language of both “faith” and “trust” can be marshalled to describe people disposed to have the attitude of faith or trust, although there are some noteworthy differences. For example, the idiom “person of faith” has a strong religious connotation, and tends to mean a person who has distinctively religious faith. The parallel construction, “person of trust,” is very uncommon in English; to describe someone as a “trusting person” is more common, but lacks any specifically religious connotation.

Both “faith” and “trust” also have companion words (“faithful” and “trustworthy”) that describe people (or things) in whom it is appropriate to have trust or faith. In having these words, English improves on the Latin and Greek, which employed a single word (fides/pistis) to denote the very different ideas of trusting and being trustworthy. (Thus, when one translates the motto “semper fidelis” one must use the context to know that this means “always faithful” (always trustworthy or loyal) rather than “always having faith” (always trusting). The idiom “acting in good faith” (bonum fidelis) remains as a vestige of this old ambiguity, which has all but disappeared in English. The idioms “keeping faith” and “breaking faith” might be other vestiges. A person who keeps faith with someone acts in a trustworthy manner, and one who breaks faith does not. However, it is possible to interpret these idioms in a way that does not trade on an ambiguity by holding that what is kept or broken is the other person’s appropriate faith in you.)

Although “faith” differs from “trust” in that it has no verb form, this grammatical difference turns out to be surprisingly superficial. “Has faith” can (with an exception to be noted below) be substituted for the verb form of “trusts” without infelicity or loss of meaning.

Notice first that there is a trust-that location that mirrors the faith-that location of the opening examples. One can “trust that p” just as one can “have faith that p,” and substituting “trusts that” for “has faith that” in the opening

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13 A Google search of the phrase “person of trust” suggests that the only regular usage is as a translation of the French “personne de confiance,” which is a person who is trusted by someone seriously ill to help him make important medical decisions.  
14 Audi (2011) calls this “global faith.”  
15 The ambiguity makes biblical interpretation difficult. For example, when Jesus says, “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith [pistis] on earth?”, is he asking whether there will be trusting people or faithful people, or both? Niebuhr (1989) Morgan (2015) offers examples of cases in which the word was intended to have both meanings in secular Greek contexts.  
16 The word “trustworthy” seems superior to “faithful” insofar as the latter might misleadingly suggest that a faithful person is full of faith (i.e., very trusting), rather than worthy of other’s faith. (“Faithworthy” might have been a better choice, if such things could be chosen.) However, the connection with being faithful and being loyal muddies the distinction a bit, and merits further consideration. To be loyal to a person may constitutively involve being readily willing to trust them. Still, one can be loyal to a person without trusting or having faith in them, as Lancelot was loyal to King Arthur even after he no longer trusted Arthur to treat him with goodwill.  
17 In this, “trust” is closer to its Roman and Greek roots, which have both noun and verb forms.
examples results in no loss of meaning. “He has faith that she will keep a secret” means the same as “He trusts that she will keep his secret.”

“Faith” and “trust” occur interchangeably in the idiom of “taking a proposition on [faith/trust].” The language of propositional trust differs somewhat from that of faith insofar as it includes a special locution that specifies a relevant source of information that is being trusted when one takes a proposition on faith:

\[ S \text{ trusts } T \text{ that } p. \text{ (E.g., he trusted his wife that the bank was open.)} \]

There is no direct parallel to the “S trusts T that p” locution in the language of faith. (“S had faith in his wife that the bank was open,” is not felicitous.) However, this seems to mean the same as having faith that p because you took T’s word for it.

Aside from the “S trusts T that p” construction, locutions where “trust” takes a direct object (i.e., “S trusts T...”) seem equivalent in meaning to “S has faith in T...” To trust people or objects, for example, is to have faith in these things.

The most central construction where “trust” and “faith in” can occur interchangeably involves trusting or having faith in people or things to do something:

\[ S \text{ [has faith in/trusts] } T \text{ to } \phi. \text{ (E.g., “He [has faith in/trusts] her to keep his secret.”)} \]

Several related constructions can be understood in terms of “S trusts/has faith in T to φ.” One can trust or have faith in someone as an R. Thus, I might trust you as a carpenter but not as a keeper of secrets. There is also faith in someone (full stop). For example, I might express a simple faith in you, without qualification, or faith in God. Trusting someone as an R and trusting someone (full stop) can both, I think, be understood in terms of trusting someone to φ. Having trust or faith in someone as an R is (roughly) a matter of trusting the person to perform well the sorts of actions that are characteristic of the relevant role. If I trust or have faith in you as a carpenter, for example, I trust you to do well the sorts of things that carpenters do. Trusting or having faith in someone (full stop) is a matter of trusting them to do a range of things that manifest their trustworthiness.

18 Audi (2011) claims that “I trust that...” implies propositional faith but not vice-versa. When has misplaced one’s car keys, Audi claims, one might trust that one will find them but the situation does not have the gravitas required to count as a case of faith. It seems to me that there can be more or less trivial uses of both faith and trust, though there may be some stylistic reasons having to do with word choice (perhaps having to do with the religious overtones of “faith”) that favor using “trust” in these contexts.

19 As Audi 2011 points out, having faith in someone as an R resists any very precise analysis in terms of having faith in some to do φ. There are lots of distinct clusters of skills that one can think a carpenter has and in virtue of which one trusts her. Even more, there are lots of different sets of actions one might have faith in people to do in virtue of which one counts as having faith in them (full stop), and faith in is compatible with recognizing some flaws that differ in different cases of faith in someone.

20 Trusting (or having faith) in someone to do something is typically forward-looking, having
It is also common to speak of people as having faith in ideals, such as democracy or racial equality. This locution is not, I think, well thought of in terms of trusting X to φ. I suspect that having faith in ideals is better thought of as being faithful or loyal to deep values one holds rather than in terms of trusting people or things, though I will not pursue this topic here.  

Both “S trusts T that p” and “S trusts T to φ” are sufficient to ground appropriate faith-that claims. These ideas are captured in the following theses:

**Trusted-Source Paradigm:** If S trusts T that p then S has faith that p.

**Cooperative Action Paradigm:** If S [has faith in/trusts] T to φ then S has faith that T will φ.

Below I argue that each of these explains the appropriateness of some faith-that attributions, though neither captures the full range of faith-that claims (even setting aside those that derive from the Creedal Paradigm).

### 4 The Trusted-Source and Cooperative Action Paradigms

Elizabeth Anscombe emphasizes a meaning of “faith” that is closely connected to the trusted-source paradigm. Here is a somewhat lengthy passage from her article, “What Is It To Believe Someone?”:

> If words always kept their old values, I might have called my subject `faith'. That short term has in the past been used in just this meaning, of believing someone. (Of course that term had also other meanings like loyalty, etc.) This old meaning has a vestige in such an expression as ‘You merely took it on faith’—i.e., you believed someone without further enquiry or consideration. This is only actually said as a reproach—but it is often true when it is not blameworthy.

At one time there was the following way of speaking: faith was distinguished as human and divine. Human faith was believing in a mere human being; divine faith was believing God. Occurring in discussion without any qualifying adjective, the word ‘faith’ tended to mean only mostly ‘divine faith’. But its value in this line of descent has quite altered. Nowadays it is used to mean much the same thing as ‘religion’ or possibly ‘religious belief’. Thus belief to do with an action that has not yet occurred, but I will take for granted that it can also involve past events. Suppose S doesn’t know for sure if T has kept his secret, but the time of trial for keeping the secret has passed. It is awkward to say, “S has faith in T to have kept his secret,” but I will take this awkwardness to be grammatical rather than something that expresses a deep fact about faith-in. (The that-clause construction, “S has faith that T kept the secret,” seems more natural in this case and other backward-looking ones.)

21See Kvavig (2013) for an account of what he calls “affective faith,” which involves being disposed to act in service of an ideal.
in God would now generally be called ‘faith’—belief in God at all, not belief that God will help one, for example. This is a great pity. It has had a disgusting effect on thought about religion. The astounding idea that there should be such a thing as believing God has been lost sight of. ‘Abraham believed God, and that counted as his justification.’ Hence he was called the ‘father of faith’. Even in this rather well-known context where the words appear plainly, they are not attended to. Anscombe (2008b, 1-2) (Cf. Anscombe (2008a))

Anscombe’s account of Divine Faith is consonant with the Lockean view of religious faith: According to Locke, “Faith...is the assent to a proposition that is not made out by the inferences of reason, but upon the credit of the proposer, as coming from God in some extraordinary way of communication.” Notice that for Locke the content of one’s faith is the content of what one takes to be God’s testimony.

Anscombe’s account fits normal use. When a person takes a proposition on faith or trust it is natural to say that the subject has faith (or trust) that the proposition is the case. My spouse tells me that the bank is open. I take it on faith. So I now have faith that the bank is open. Generalizing this pattern, the following conditional seems to characterize a sufficient condition for attributing propositional faith:

If $S$ takes $p$ on faith then $S$ has faith that $p$.

Anscombe later says that to take $p$ on faith is to believe someone that $p$. I will prefer to say that it is to trust someone that $p$, though I don’t take there to be a significant difference between these. Thus, Anscombe endorses the trusted-source paradigm:

\[ \text{Trusted-Source Paradigm: If } S \text{ trusts } T \text{ that } p \text{ then } S \text{ has faith that } p. \]

However, it is relatively easy to see that an account of propositional faith as trusting $S$ that $p$ cannot account for all English uses of faith-that. Not all cases of faith involve trusting the testimony of persons, human or divine. Indeed, Anscombe does not take her account to cover all of the uses of faith-that, which is why she complains that what we’ve called the Creedal Paradigm has become the dominant use.

Other examples of faith that $p$ that do not result from testimony fit the cooperative action paradigm, which is related to the “$S$ has faith in $T$ to φ” locution. Consider, for example, “trust games” that have been studied by experimental economists in the empirical literature on trust. Berg et al. (1995) In one such game, Player 1 is given $10, all or part of which he or she

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22Locke (2004). Some accounts of religious faith make it a matter of trusting a limited domain of God’s testimony. For example, Wolterstorff (1990) argues that Christian faith involves “trusting God’s promises to bless and save.” He attributes this view of religious faith to John Calvin and the author of Hebrews.
may “invest” by giving it to the second participant. The investment is then tripled by the experimenters and given to Player 2, who then has the option of giving all or part of his earnings back to the first participant. The players know these rules in advance, but they are not allowed to communicate with each other during the game (nor do they have any prior relationship with each other). The situation in the trust game does not involve either participant’s believing the other person. They are not allowed to make promises or assertions that might be believed. Nevertheless, if Player 1 gives a significant amount of his money to player two based on an expectation that Player 2 will cooperate, it is appropriate to describe him as manifesting or being motivated by faith in Player 2 to reciprocate by giving back a fair return on the investment. It is equally appropriate to say that Player 1 had faith that player 2 would do so. A similar point can be made about prisoner’s dilemmas and other games where there is a cooperative strategy. A player who chooses the cooperative strategy can aptly be described as having faith that the other will behave cooperatively, even if the faith is not based on promises or testimony.

Someone who wanted to defend Anscombe’s theory as a general theory of propositional faith might point out that there is an extended use of “S trusts T that φ,” where we allow T to range over potential sources of information that are impersonal as well as personal, as when I trust Google Maps for directions, or I trust my eyes that something surprising is happening.

However, extending the trusted-source paradigm to include trust in every putative source of information, not just testimonial sources, would make faith almost ubiquitous. Almost, if not every case of belief is a case in which we trust some source or other, so every or almost every belief is a case of faith according to the model. This trivializes the notion of faith in a way that should lead us to reject the extended model as a general account of the core of faith (though it may be helpful to treat the view as a metaphorical extension of faith that is useful for thinking about some epistemic problems). Even more problematic, the extended version of the trusted-source paradigm does not offer a satisfying explanation of why some examples are paradigm cases of faith. For example, if we consider why it is appropriate to describe a player in the trust game who invests all of his money as having faith that Player 2 will reciprocate and give a good return on the investment, the answer does not seem to have anything to do with his trusting some source of information about Player 2. The most salient feature seems to be, rather, that Player 1 trusts or has faith in Player 2 to behave cooperatively. It is best explained by the cooperative action paradigm.

**Cooperative Action Paradigm:** If S [has faith in/trusts] T to φ then S has faith that T will φ.

Given the cooperative action paradigm, it is possible to show that the trusted source paradigm does not even explain some attributions of propositional faith that are natural when someone trusts another person’s testimony. When I trust my spouse that the bank is open, for example, I also trust her to have done something, namely to have asserted sincerely, knowledgeably, or reliably that the bank is open. (We need not sort out here exactly which of these features is
required. To simplify discussion, I’ll assume it is sincerely and reliably.) More generally,

If $S$ trusts $T$ that $p$ then $S$ has faith in $T$ to have asserted $p$ sincerely and reliably.

The consequent here is an instance of trusting someone to $\phi$, and given the Cooperative Action Paradigm, $S$ will also count as having faith that $T$ has asserted $p$ sincerely and reliably. Thus, if I trust my wife that the bank is open, I will also have faith that my wife has sincerely and reliably asserted that the bank is open. But notice that this faith-that attribution will not itself be a matter of “believing $S$ that $p$,” except in the atypical (and irrationally circular) case of a hearer’s believing that what the speaker said is true because the speaker says that she is speaking sincerely and reliably. The explanation of why one counts as having faith that this new, higher-order proposition (e.g., “my wife sincerely and reliably asserted that the bank is open”) is the case is best explained by the cooperative action paradigm rather than the idea that there is some yet further source that one is trusting when one has faith in it.

Note that the other direction of the conditional above does not hold. Having faith that someone has asserted $p$ sincerely and reliably does not imply trusting them that $p$. To see this, consider a case in which I have faith that $p$ and told Jones that $p$ is true. When Jones later asserts that $p$ I will have faith that he has asserted $p$ reliably, but I clearly won’t trust Jones that $p$. After all, he only believes it because I told him. In order for it to be a case of trusting $S$ that $p$ my trust in $S$ to assert $p$ sincerely and reliably has to be a reason why I believe $p$. This also suggests that we can give an account of $S$’s trusting $T$ that $p$ in terms of $S$’s trusting $T$ to $\phi$:

$$S \text{ trusts } T \text{ that } p \text{ if and only if } S \text{ believes that } p \text{ at least in part because } S \text{ trusts } T \text{ to have testified sincerely and reliably that } p.$$ 

Above I argued that the Trusted-Source Paradigm does not adequately account for cases of propositional faith that fit the Cooperative Action Paradigm. It is relatively easy to see that if the Trusted-Source Paradigm is true then the Cooperative Action Paradigm, equally, will not account for all cases of propositional faith. Not every propositional object of faith is of the form ‘$T$ will $\phi$’. Consider again the case of my having faith that the number of floor tiles in my kitchen is 23 because I trust my wife. The content of my faith does not fit the form of trusting someone to do something. We might extend the paradigm to include non-personal objects and say that I am trusting the floor tiles to number 23. But this seems too strained; at any rate, it obscures the fact that it is my faith in my wife as a source of information, not faith in floor tiles, that explains why I have faith that there are 23 floor tiles.

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23One interesting consequence of both Anscombe’s views (and one they each acknowledge) is that belief that God exists is not an object of Christian faith. Believing that God exists, Anscombe says, a “presupposition” of faith, just as one doesn’t believe the writer of a letter that he exists, one doesn’t believe God that God exists.
Furthermore, the Cooperative Action Paradigm cannot account for all cases of propositional faith, even once we set aside those that derive from the Trusted-Source and Creedal Paradigms. To see this, suppose we adopt the following minimal characterization of having faith in someone to do something:

\[
\text{Minimal-Notion of Trust: } S \text{ has faith in/trusts } T \text{ to } \phi \text{ if and only if } T\text{'s } \phi \text{-ing is a cooperative action and } S \text{ relies on } T \text{ to } \phi. \quad 24
\]

A cooperative action is one that will be mutually beneficial but might conflict with self-interest. We might helpfully think of a cooperative action in game-theoretic terms, as a \textit{pareto optimal} outcome of a game. In stag hunt and prisoner’s dilemma games, for instance, there is an outcome that has the most summed value, even though these games also involve a temptation not to achieve that value.

[I omit here discussion of how the minimal notion of trust can be developed into richer notions of trust, such as Baier’s “affective trust”]

Appropriate faith-that ascriptions can occur in competitive contexts in which there is no cooperative strategy. In one episode of the TV show, \textit{The Simpsons}, Lisa and Bart are about to play a game of “Rock-Paper-Scissors.” Lisa thinks to herself, “Poor, predictable Bart...always chooses Rock.” Meanwhile, Bart thinks, “Good ole Rock. Nuthin’ beats that!” As she predicted, Lisa wins by playing Paper. Lisa hopes that Bart will play Rock and relies in her choice of moves on his doing so. She has faith that Bart will foolishly play Rock. If this seems too trivial to count as a case of faith, one might consider other examples in which the motivation for such faith is more laudable than a mere self-interested desire to win a game. Consider: Gandalf and Aragorn had faith that, if they attacked the gates of Morgul, Sauron would move all his forces out to face them, giving Frodo a chance to destroy the ring. Though it is not felicitous to say that they trusted or had faith in their opponent to make the bad move, it is felicitous to say that they had faith that the opponent would make the bad move.

Other cases of faith-that are cases of optimistic acceptance that don’t seem well explained by relying on someone to \( \phi \). When the non-profit employee has faith that her efforts will make the world a better place, it is not obvious that she has faith in anyone in particular to do anything. Such a faith might be embedded in a religious framework, so that one is trusting God to bring this about, but it needn’t be in order to count as faith. It is better captured as a simple optimistic belief in the truth of a proposition that may be crucial for her to retain motivated to do her work. In the same way, a person who has a general faith that “things will work out for the best” isn’t placing trust in “things.” Similarly for the wishful-thinking gambler’s faith that he will win the lottery. A scientist who has just published the results of an experiment on which her career hangs might have faith that the results will be replicated. Neither of

\[24\text{This definition is very close to what Thompson Simpson calls the Ur-Notion of Trust. A key difference is that he thinks of the basic notion of trust as an action rather than an attitude. As I’m thinking of it, to rely on someone to do something is to have an attitude toward their doing the thing.}\]
these cases necessarily involves trust in any person (human or divine) or thing to do something.

This discussion has brought us back full-circle to an optimistic acceptance account with which we began. Given that this use seems to be broader than the cooperative action paradigm, one might hope that it might be a necessary condition for trusting someone to \( \phi \). Indeed, some prominent accounts of trust explicitly appeal to an optimistic doxastic attitude with a particular content to explain what trust is. Thus, Karen Jones says that trust is “[A]n attitude of optimism that the good will and competence of another will extend to cover the domain of our interactions with her, together with the expectation that the one trusted will be directly and favorably moved by the thought that we are counting on her.” (p. 4)

5 The Conative/Evaluative Requirement Revisited

It is time to revisit the objections to the Conative/Evaluative Requirement. Notice that the testimonial counterexample involving bad news is a case of faith-that deriving from the Trusted-Source Paradigm. One might contend that the Trusted-Source Paradigm involves a confusion in our language that ought to be corrected. After all, we got the Trusted-Source Paradigm in part from thinking about the idiom “taking on faith/trust” (which might also be connected with another common idiom: “believing by faith”). The idiom suggests that the \textit{taking} is distinct from the \textit{faith} on which it is based. On this way of thinking, believing that there are 23 tiles is not itself faith, it is the result of the faith in my wife that is the basis for the belief. The Trusted-Source Paradigm, one might argue, confusingly treats as cases of faith attitudes that are best thought of as consequences of faith.

Might this idea also serve as a response to the testimonial counterexamples to the Conative/Evaluative Requirement? In the case in which I trust Smith that my wife has been cheating on me, perhaps we should deny that I thereby have faith that my wife has been cheating. What is true is that I had faith in Smith to have spoken sincerely and reliably, and (by the cooperative action paradigm) faith that Smith spoke sincerely and reliably when he told me that my wife has been cheating. Of course, given the context, this implies that my wife has been cheating, but we might argue that the belief that she has been cheating is a consequence of my faith in Smith and shouldn’t be thought of as a case of faith. I will hope and regard it as good (in some sense) that Smith be speaking truthfully, even though I of course don’t hope or regard it as good that my wife has been cheating.

The same strategy might be tried with the autism case. Perhaps this case, too, derives from the trusted-source paradigm. Those who believe that vaccinations cause autism do so because they trust various sources of evidence. On this approach, it is not the belief that vaccines cause autism but the belief that
these sources are reliable that should properly be called faith. And, perhaps, the subjects do desire and regard it as good that these sources should be reliable in saying that vaccines cause autism.

Though this strategy for dealing with the counterexamples seems promising, there is a further puzzle. It is not clear that the cooperative action paradigm obeys the Conative/Evaluative Requirement in these cases. This seems especially true in the case of my trusting Smith that my wife has been unfaithful. Though I trust Smith to have spoken sincerely and reliably, it strains credibility to think that I would desire Smith to be testifying sincerely and reliably in that context. I would greatly prefer that he be mistaken or lying. Moreover, even if we switch to a more general proposition, such as “Smith is generally reliable,” I might not want this to be true. Suppose Smith is an enemy who bears me ill-will, but whom I also know never lies. It might be a begrudging acknowledgement of Smith’s honesty and reliability that causes me to trust his testimony. But I might not regard it as good that he be honest and reliable. I might even regard this as a vice in Smith. Better he should lie outright than pick and choose truths to share that will further his own evil ends.

Perhaps there is a positive conative/evaluative attitude that I must bear toward Smith in the case in order to count as having faith that he is speaking truthfully, though I cannot see what it is. If there is not, though, the defender of the Conative/Evaluative Requirement might still claim that the optimistic acceptance paradigm captures an important use of the faith-that locution, though it would have to be one that is distinct from the creedal, trusted-source, and cooperative action paradigms.

References


