

in such a manner? Because I will. And why do I will to will in this manner? Because I will. And why do I will to will to will in this manner? Because I will. And so on we go, down the bottomless inclined plane of an infinite series of volitions, as the condition of any volition whatever taking place. If this be what is meant by the self-determining power of the Will, Self-determination is manifestly impossible.

But the advocates of the self-determining power would certainly not admit that their position is correctly stated, when they are represented as conditioning each volition on a previous volition. No doubt, they are accustomed to use such expressions, as, that we will in this or that manner because we choose. But it would be unjust to press their language too closely, and to compel it to yield the signification, that every volition must be preceded by another. From their own expositions, of their views, it may be gathered that the power of self-determination, which they claim for the Will, is neither more nor less than that Liberty of Indifference which (as we have seen) they ascribe to the Will. A man is solicited by two opposing motives; neither of these, prior to the man's choice, can be considered as essentially stronger than its competitor, so as necessarily to determine the choice that shall be made; but the man, while drawn to the right hand by the one motive, and to the left by the other, can choose either direction. In popular phrase, he can choose as he pleases; by which, however, is not meant that his choice is determined by a previous act of choice, but simply that he can choose either this or that. The question, therefore, whether the Will has a self-determining power, is the same as the question whether the Will has a liberty of Indifference. Such liberty I have already shown to be inconceivable. It is an unmeaning expression, unless it denote something of which we are conscious; but conscious of it we cannot possibly be, for consciousness does not tell us what we may or may not do, but only what we do. Other reasons for rejecting the doctrine of Liberty of Indifference might easily be urged. The readers of Edwards will remember with what afflictive minuteness he treats the subject; but the single brief argument that has been advanced, is, in my judgment, so unanswerable, that to add anything to it would (to borrow a simile of a late President of the United States) be wasting powder on dead ducks.