

# Faith as a basis for knowledge in religion philosophy essay



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Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of using faith as a basis for knowledge in religion and in one area of knowledge from the ToK diagram. Faith is a word with a lot of different definitions. It is a vague term, therefore it is essential to say what meaning we give to it. In my culture faith usually refers to what people believe in without having evidence or proof for (e. g. God). However, there is more mundane usage of the word, as to have confidence and trust in people. Lastly, by faith we can indicate a religious faith system (the Christian faith, the Muslim faith). I prefer to attach the second of the meanings mentioned above to the word 'belief'. I will speak of it as something we take as true, e. g. a proposition. I will assume that in order to have faith, you need to believe in something, so belief is what faith is based on.

The religious belief is the way to gain knowledge in religion through faith. It is the belief that God exists. I define God as a projection of what people would like to be if believing in it – the desire to be better, stronger, more loving and compassionate. Thus I believe that everyone should create his own God and believe in Him, therefore as individuals it will make us stronger and better people because we would believe in ourselves. "Salvation lies within" is what the bible says, in my eyes it means that we people need to realize that God is not an individual whom we must have faith in, but that God is a part of everyone and each person needs to find him by himself and for himself. We don't need to believe in something that there is no proof for, but it is definitely right to believe in ourselves by being better and stronger people, which is what basically the belief in God is all about. If there wouldn't be a church that has set certain, let's say rules that religious people have to

follow in order to get enlightened, I would say that every person with a soul and conscience would figure out that the world we live in is how we make it. If we want to live in a better world we need to be better people and gain morality through being compassionate and more loving. Personally I don't believe in the existence of God because I have a realistic view on the world and I can't believe in something or someone that there is no proof for. But I definitely believe in a higher state of consciousness, which if reached by every person would make our world a better place to live in. In order to reach this point, we need to believe, which again proves that faith is only based on our beliefs. To have faith in God means to believe in something with no proof for, which we have to take as right even against the odds. Well, for me it seems impossible to believe in such a thing that there is no proof for. I am a religious person until the point where I am obliged to believe in something I don't want to because of not having proof for it. As history proves, I am not the only one who does so. In the 16th century Galileo opposed the church by stating that the world isn't flat with hell on one end and heaven on the other, but that it is round. The church by that time had total control over people and its saying was the highest rule and accepted as the absolute truth. This is how naïve people were by that time, but fortunately in the 21st century people want answers based on facts, experiments and observations. Galileo through his belief and faith was strong enough to risk his life in order to prove that he is right. But the knowledge he gained was not through having faith in religion, but through the scientific belief which is based on observations and facts. The difference between religious faith and the scientific belief is, that religion claims that it possesses the absolute truth, while science holds that no absolute truth

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exists. The example of Galileo's theory shows that absolute truth is a matter of faith while a truth accepted by a particular person or culture can be based on facts, experiments and analyses, thus being non-absolute but still reliable.

Using faith to gain knowledge is justified because we get confidence in ourselves through it. It is essential for the well-being of humans. If we wouldn't have faith we would not succeed in hard times. If a person gets sick of cancer for example and loses confidence and strength by the fact that his time is short, without a strong will he would be desperate and lose the will to live. My grandmother had cancer five years ago. She still has terrible pains and gets medical treatment every day, but she survived it. There are unexplained miracles where people heal themselves of deadly diseases without medication. They are rare, but the part where they have faith in them is essential for everyone who has them. It keeps them strong in those hard times. I believe that because of the strong will to live and faith that she will get cured my grandmother survived, not only because of our modern technologies and highly developed medicines. However, not only in such drastic moments people should have faith. Having faith that the things we do are the right ones makes us more resilient and confident. It is so essential that I would say that without it we would be desperate about every single thing we go for in life: having faith in a happy marriage, a business project, a scientific experiment makes us stronger which leads to putting more efforts in them. Having faith in people is what bonds them. Without having faith in the people we love and trust we couldn't be confident about them.

Friendship is based on trust, which is based on people fulfilling their

promises. If you don't have faith in them, you couldn't rely on them and friendship would be impossible to exist from the beginning. To have faith doesn't necessarily have to be connected to religion. In the 15th century Giordano Bruno, an extraordinary person, who before Galileo but quite like him had views about the world that differed from those established by religion. At his time, the methods of Aristotle were those that were accepted as the "absolute truth". "He [Bruno] points out that Christianity is entirely irrational, that it is contrary to philosophy and that it disagrees with other religions. He points out that we accept it through faith, that revelation, so called, has no scientific basis." Without having faith in his beliefs he wouldn't carry on from a country to another to find the right audience with a wider range of visions, which at that time was rare as people were scared of the "absolute truth" that was accepted by every social group.

To what extent is faith a reliable source of knowledge? It is not reliable at all, as there are no proofs for it. Without proof it is impossible to have any degree of certainty. In our modern world people require proofs for almost any claim. The best proof is usually provided by science, scientific observation and experiment. Unjustified faith leads to mistakes. If we have faith in a person just because he shares the same religion for example, we may end up being wrong about them as there wouldn't be any justification for our beliefs. If medieval or Renaissance people would live forever, today, due to our modern technology, they would be able to see on satellite photographs of the earth, that it is round and not flat. At those times, however, they were blinded by religion, which in a way misused their faith in it.

In conclusion, there are both strengths and weaknesses in using faith as a basis for knowledge. Religion and science are the best examples for gaining knowledge through faith, although they strongly clash with each other. “

Faith has long been a puzzle for science, and it’s no surprise why. By definition, faith demands belief without a need for supporting evidence, a concept that could not be more opposed to the principles of scientific inquiry.” On the one hand, faith is connecting people thus being the source of morality and, respectively, of religion as a moral guide. On the other hand, scientific beliefs are stronger than the religious faith because they are not absolute and always search for the right answer which comes from facts, observations and experiments.