

TOK WOK CHEAT SHEET: Faith

TOK Definition/Explanation:

Faith is difficult to define, but it is commonly thought to include cognitive (deeply held convictions), emotional (implying an emotional commitment) and ethical (things will work out for the best) elements and is closely connected with a person's worldview.

Key Related Vocabulary:

- Atheism - the belief that God does not exist
- Agnosticism - the belief that we cannot know whether or not God exists
- Theism - the belief that God exists
- Worldview - an overarching theory about the nature of the universe and human beings' place in it
- Burden of proof - the question of whether a knowledge claim should be rejected unless there is evidence for it, or accepted unless there is evidence against it, and who should provide that evidence.
- Fideism - the belief that faith is opposed and superior to reason
- Metaphysical questions - questions about the nature of ultimate reality which cannot be solved by matters relating to observation and experience.
- Infinite regress - a chain of reasoning in which statement A depends on statement B, statement B depends on statement C, and so on without end.
- Humanism - a worldview which rejects the supernatural and believes in human reason, scientific progress and moral improvement

Key Concepts/set of beliefs Explained:

Evidentialism - 'According to this view, if a belief is to count as rational, then it must be supported by adequate evidence. Moreover, the strength of a belief should be proportional to the strength of the evidence for it. [As such], it is not surprising that most evidentialists reject faith as a possible source of knowledge' (Van de Lagemaat, 2015: 279).

Compatibilism (faith is rational) - 'According to Compatibilism, faith and reason are both God-given faculties and are compatible with one another. There are two versions of Compatibilism: Divine Sense Theory and Rational Faith Theory. According to the Divine Sense Theory, faith is an independent faculty which gives us knowledge in much the same way as sense perception gives us knowledge [through our senses]. According to the Rational Faith Theory, what is grasped by faith can be supported by evidence and argument based on ordinary experience' (Van de Lagemaat, 2015: 281-282).

Fideism - 'According to Fideism, faith is opposed to, and superior to, reason and we rely on the former rather than the latter in seeking religious truth. Faith does not give us objective certainty but involves risk and requires us to make a 'leap of faith' ((Van de Lagemaat, 2015: 283).

Separate domains (faith is arational) - 'One popular way of resolving the alleged conflict between faith and reason is to claim that each is appropriate to a different domain of enquiry and that both play a role of in our attempt to understand reality. While reason is relevant to facts and theories about the natural world, faith deals with questions of ultimate meaning and moral values which lie beyond the reach of empirical enquiry' (Van de Lagemaat, 2015: 284).

Related Real Life Situations¹:

¹ Dunn, Michael. Real life situations and knowledge questions for faith (10th June 2013). theoryofknowledge.net. <http://www.theoryofknowledge.net/ways-of-knowing/faith/real-life-situations-and-knowledge-questions-for-faith/> Last accessed: 13th August 2015

TOK WOK Cheat Sheet

- ‘Does prayer alleviate or intensify our stress? - Several new studies show that praying might help alleviate worries—but only if the person has a secure relationship with God [<http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/08/when-prayer-makes-anxiety-worse/376002/>].
- Do people place the same kind of faith in science as they do religion? - Religion provides a sense of meaning and comfort for believers, and studies show that such beliefs intensify during threatening situations. Now research suggests that some people's faith in science may serve the same role [<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-science-mimics-faith/>].
- Can a scientist believe in miracles? - When haematologist Jacalyn Duffin was asked to analyse some bone marrow samples, she could not imagine her scientific opinion would be used by the Catholic Church to assess a miracle [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/0/24660240>].’

Related Knowledge Questions:

- Does faith require certainty or is it consistent with doubt?
- Is it wrong to believe things on insufficient evidence?
- Is one person’s faith another person’s superstition?
- To what extent should non-religious beliefs (such as atheism and humanism) be termed ‘faiths’?
- Does faith provide us with true knowledge?
- Can you understand religious belief systems without faith?
- Is doubt a part of faith?

Brief overview of how this WOK is used in Areas of Knowledge:

Faith would find its traditional home in Religious Knowledge Systems. The relationship between faith and reason is a perennial source of discussion amongst theologians as seen in the work of St. Thomas Aquinas and Soren Kierkegaard. However, that is not to say that one cannot find allusions to this WOK in other AOKs. This is particularly evident in the Arts (Metaphysical Poetry), the Natural Sciences (astronomy) and History (faith in the way in which history is written).

HOW/WHEN DOES IT HELP CREATE KNOWLEDGE?	WHY/WHEN SHOULD WE BE WARY OF USING IT TO CREATE KNOWLEDGE?
Faith in foundations - belief in philosophical, scientific and/or moral foundations can lend structure and stability to a person’s life. It can also provide individuals with the tools in which to interpret reality.	Dogmatic faith - this is the conviction that one is right irrespective of the evidence as the person assumes there is only one way of looking at things.
Faith in ends - ‘everyone has faith in something’ - derives from the work of Paul Tillich and promotes the idea that we all have faith in some ultimate end which gives meaning and purpose to our lives.	Superstitious faith - while superstitions (strong and irrational belief in supernatural connections between things) can help us feel more confident and secure, most people would say that we are not intellectually justified in believing in them
Faith in others - we could not survive if we did not have faith in other people. When we are ill, we have faith in the expertise of the doctors while when we are in trouble we have faith in the support network provided by friends.	Delusional faith - is concerned with the why of belief and is closely connected with wish fulfilment - believing that something is true simply because you want it to be true.