

10. Faith

Of all of our ways of knowing, faith is probably the one which will most awaken differences of perspective and stimulate exploration of both your own ideas and those of other people. The meaning of "faith" remains ambiguous and its role in people's lives varies significantly between individuals and communities. Yet in many long-standing traditions, the cluster of attitudes most call "faith" has been given a prime spot among ways of gaining knowledge, one more highly regarded in many traditions than any of the other seven we deal with in this book. Consequently, exploration of faith as a way of knowing offers some particular benefits: it invites further inquiry into different perspectives and the relationship between knowledge and belief.

"Faith": concepts

Ambiguities in words can truly sabotage discussions if we do not recognize them. We can end up talking about slightly different concepts and never connecting in communication. However, if we *do* recognize the variable core of a word and its shades of meaning and connotations, we can end up with discussion that gains from either deliberately including variations or consciously laying them aside as irrelevant. "Faith" is one such word: it has

more than one denotative definition, and carries a variety of connotations. Most of these variations are relevant to how we accept knowledge claims.

Although we make no claims to be comprehensive in our survey of language, we can identify at least four slightly different concepts of faith, at least in English. You may be able to identify more.

1. In the first thread of meaning, faith is associated with *trust* – having *faith in* someone, or *placing faith in* a person, a group, or a supernatural being. The security and confidence we gain from this kind of faith can be fundamental to our sense of self and the status we give others as reliable sources of knowledge. It could also be simply a habit of mind influenced by upbringing and culture.
2. Faith, in a second thread of meaning, is associated with *keeping promises* – with pledging one's word, "keeping the faith", and loyalty. This concept, as we cluster ideas, also involves ideas of honour and honesty, such as those involved with people being "in good faith" as they work out problems together.
3. In a third thread of meaning, "taking things on faith" is allied with ideas of *accepting assumptions or appearances* without further questioning for the moment – possibly in pragmatically taking features of the world as "givens", at least for the moment. This practical and provisional acceptance, when adopted in the sciences, is open to change if another set of assumptions proves more accurate, more consistent with



↑ Illustration 1: Hands



↑ Illustration 2: Pledge of allegiance

other findings or more useful for practical exploration (our truth checks). This is, at least, the scientific ideal. Outside the sciences, we may take a similar approach of accepting certain assumptions or "givens". If they are integral to our worldviews, though, we are less likely to treat them as open to change, and less likely to think that we should.

4. In a fourth and final thread of meaning, faith is subjective: in two interpretations, it is either *belief that rejects the need for justification* that could convince people who doubt, or a *justification that is based on other justifications*. In the latter case, it is a commitment of belief after having taken the merits of other justifications into account. Although those other justifications may not convince everyone, they are persuasive for the believer.

It is the last thread of meaning that is most complex and debatable, but all are relevant to how we define and construct knowledge. To use our ideas as a springboard for reflection on and articulation of your own, give thought to the questions in the activity "Roles we give to faith".

In the fourth of the threads of definition we have offered – both above and for your own discussion

in the activity – faith is acceptance without the justification that is demonstrable or convincing to someone who does not possess the belief. For many people who "have faith", little could be so self-evidently right as their own beliefs and the process of accepting them. In the case of many subjective commitments, such as some forms of patriotism or religious belief, their belief taken on faith may be fundamental to their worldviews. However, for many people who do not share this approach to believing, little could be as irrational, baffling, and sometimes even threatening. As we raise a few more questions for you to think about, we are taking religious faith and patriotism as the main examples, anticipating that you will not consider them equivalent.

Faith and culture

As we have considered ways of knowing in this book, we have been doing so primarily in terms of gaining knowledge and justifying knowledge claims. Faith, however, raises some further intriguing issues about knowledge claims accepted not singly but in bodies, and about the relationship between personal knowledge and shared knowledge. In a sense, faith leads only to *personal knowledge* as it is a subjective commitment of belief without the evidence that would compel universally shared agreement. In another sense, though, faith can be seen as significantly *shared knowledge*: it is shared not in a scientific way with research and testing in which people of all backgrounds take part, but it is certainly shared within "faith communities" which provide both a body of beliefs and a cultural connection with other people.



↑ Illustration 3: Gandhi, respected leader



↑ Illustration 4: Trusting friends

Discussion Activity

Roles we give to faith

Gather your ideas on the following questions in advance of discussion with classmates, so that you have a chance to reflect personally and find words to convey your ideas. In discussion, refer to the seven images provided in this chapter to help communicate your ideas. If languages other than English are spoken by students in your class, you might consider how faith would be defined and discussed in other languages.

1 Faith as trust

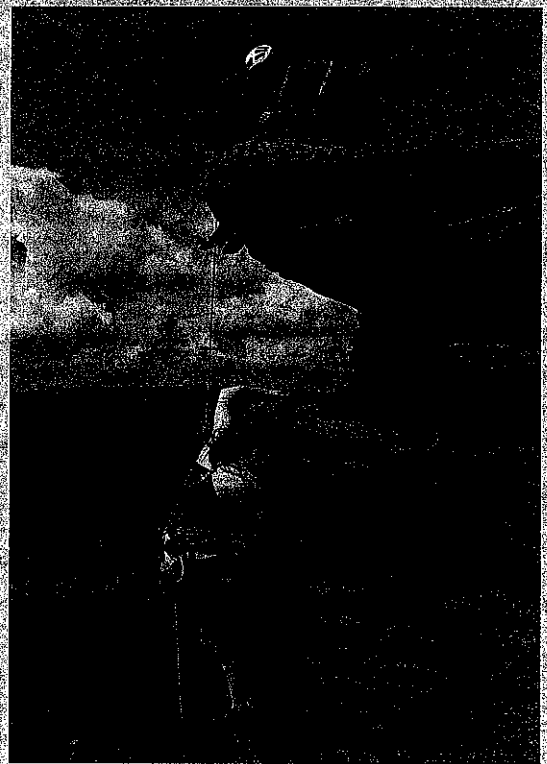
Reflect on the people or organizations in your own life in which you most place your faith, in the sense that you feel you can trust them. You might find the following list useful in stirring your thoughts: a family member, a friend, a teacher, a political leader, a religious leader, a media figure. You may prefer to keep this part of your thinking private, or may want to draw on it selectively to provide examples as you discuss with classmates the following questions:

- How important is it to you to be able to trust others? How do you decide *how much* to trust them?
- Do any of the seven images in this chapter represent in your mind the kinds of faith you have in others, or in particular others?
- What does it mean to “have faith in yourself”?
- If you trust someone emotionally, are you more likely to accept knowledge claims that he or she makes? Does critical thinking feel uncomfortable or inappropriate in a personal relationship?

2 Faith as pledge and commitment

Pledges of loyalty can have a significant cultural and social role: Vikings “pledging their troth” to their leader; serfs pledging fealty to their lord; social groups forming sworn allegiances; citizens pledging allegiance to their monarch or country; marriage partners taking vows. People swearing loyalty (even if doing so is not a free choice) are expected to be “faithful” to their country or their spouses.

What do you have to believe *first* in order to make a pledge? What influence do you think a pledge of allegiance – such as to a flag – can have on what knowledge claims you are inclined to accept thereafter? Does any of the seven



↑ Illustration 6: Life hanging by a rope

images in this chapter represent, for you, a pledge or commitment?

3 Faith as acceptance of assumptions

We sometimes accept knowledge claims pragmatically, when we cannot prove them, because they are *useful* – for example, accepting the world really exists outside our sense experience of it, or accepting within a scientific model “all things being equal and neglecting friction”, or accepting the axioms at the base of a mathematical system. (See chapter 3 on pragmatic truth.) Do you think that this pragmatic acceptance, which is open to change, is a kind of faith?

When we affirm basic assumptions – our foundational beliefs that we offer as the premises of further argument, as in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – are we asserting principles of faith? From the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): “the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women...”

Can you pick out an assumption that you take on faith yourself? Does any of the seven images in this chapter represent, for you, this kind of faith?

4. Faith as subjective commitment of belief

- a. Faith, in a first interpretation, is *belief that rejects the need for justification*. This subjective commitment to believing is sometimes called the "leap of (or to) faith". Christian philosopher Kierkegaard, speaking of religious faith, insisted that objective uncertainty increased the significance and value of the personal commitment necessary for belief. From this point of view, to have indisputable evidence in the existence of God would destroy meaningful *faith*.
- b. Faith, in a second interpretation, is a *conclusion based on other justifications*. For religious faith, those justifications might include mystic experience, revelation, sacred text, and the authority of religious leaders and institutions. Faith based on them, in a hierarchy of justification, then acts as justification for further beliefs.

If you have religious faith, which of these two interpretations better describes it? If the second, on what do you base your own faith? Do you have a different way of describing the relationship between faith, justification, and belief? Use this opportunity to put into words what you think yourself, phrasing it in terms of what kinds of justifications you find persuasive, or unpersuasive, and why. Does any of the seven images in this chapter represent, for you, a subjective commitment of belief? If you do not claim a religious faith, explore instead your thoughts on *either* patriotic faith (that is, commitment to your country) *or* secular humanism (a worldview focused on human beings, and reason, justice, and ethics).

Use this opportunity to learn about what others think, pushing aside any impulse to tell them

Without risk there is no faith. Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of inwardness and objective uncertainty. If I can grasp God objectively, I do not believe, but because I cannot know God objectively, I must have faith, and if I will preserve myself in faith, I must constantly be determined to hold fast to the objective uncertainty...¹

Søren Kierkegaard

that they are wrong and you are right. Are the justifications that others advance for their faith similar to what you advance for yours, even if you believe somewhat different things?

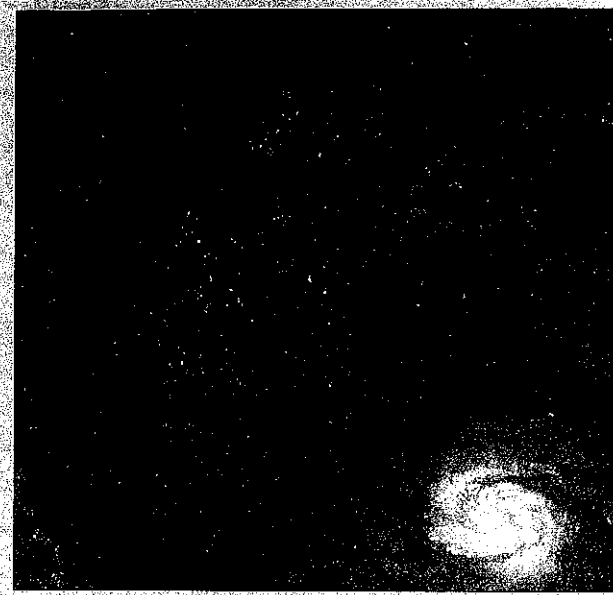
5. Faith and other ways of knowing

What would you say is the relationship between faith and other ways of knowing? Is a subjective commitment of belief primarily *emotional*? If so, what emotions are involved? Does it involve *reason* in evaluating other justifications? In what ways might *sense perception, intuition, memory, and imagination* be involved? Is *language* essential? What is the role of sacred text in informing or directing religious faith?



↑ Illustration 7: Prayer book

¹ Kierkegaard, S. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* taken from *Philosophical Skepticism*. 2003. Edited by Charles Landseman and Roblin Meeks. Malden, USA. Blackwell Publishing. P 267.



↑ Illustration 5: Stars and galaxy

Religious beliefs, accepted on the basis of faith, are generally woven into the whole of a believer's perspective on life. Although the primary knowledge claims accepted might be *metaphysical knowledge claims* – belief in a spiritual reality or a god or gods – much else follows. A religion teaches *value judgments*, most significantly about good and evil, and about living a good life, and gives *predictions* about what will happen as the result of actions taken in the present (for example, karma, or an afterlife in heaven). It also sometimes prescribes ways of eating, dressing, and forming relationships with other people, and involves believers in traditions and customs of the particular faith community.

As a result, inquiry into faith and belief can be overly restrictive when the questions are *only* about accepting knowledge claims. "Do you believe there is a God?" or "What is the nature of the spiritual reality you accept?" is a question about the basic metaphysical premise for all of the rest of the beliefs, but even then it can miss the point of what else matters to people: a sense of identity and life purpose, a community to which they belong, and memories and expectations concerning customs and relationships. It is possible that interested inquiry regarding someone's religious faith might *not* centre most usefully on questions about belief in knowledge claims. Instead it might centre on the questions we have posed about *recognizing perspectives* from the beginning of this book.

For Reflection

Have you noticed our care to avoid "all" statements, using "generally", "sometimes", "often", "possibly", or similar qualifiers when commenting on faith, religion, patriotism, and culture? Do you think that this care is more important with some topics than with others?

Are you able to describe your own religion, if you have one, in terms of a perspective, with its assumptions and other characteristics as above? What importance does your religious perspective have in your own life?

How would you define "true patriotism" – as unquestioning support ("My country, right or wrong!") or as support that involves critical questioning and possibly opposition?

- What are the basic *assumptions* of this faith or religion?
- What are the *values* associated with this set of beliefs?
- What are held to be important facts according to this religion?
- What are the *processes of validation* for knowledge claims and settling differences of interpretations or views within the group? What councils of authority or leaders make final decisions on matters of doctrine?
- What are the *implications* of the body of beliefs for personal behaviour or other actions?

For patriotic belief in one's country, it might similarly be most fruitful to examine it in terms of perspectives. The foundational beliefs taken on faith sometimes involve metaphysical ones – a state may have an official religion, for instance, or may be seen as a theocracy. However, basic beliefs usually assume the inherent value of one's own country or the principles according to which it is, or should be, run – democracy and human rights, for example, or obedience to leaders. Other beliefs, passed on within the political body, concern the country's status, relationship with neighbours, and future. "True patriotism", it has been argued, demands unquestioning support for the country and the decisions of the leaders. However, "true patriotism", it has equally been counter-argued, demands *not* taking on faith the country's value and its policies, but giving vigilant critical attention

to its ideals and actions, and being ready to oppose the decisions of leaders when they are faulty.

Faith and subjectivity

Regardless of whether faith is considered to be a justification in itself, or whether it is considered to be a conclusion based on other justifications, many would argue that it leads to belief that is *subjective*. Faith as a justification for subjective conclusions is not demonstrable in the way that evidence, testing, or reasoning can be for *objective* conclusions.

That is not to say that evidence and reasoning do not play a supporting role in belief – especially once the belief has been accepted. If you want

evidence, religious believers can say, just look at the order and complexity of the universe! However, non-believers can look and not be convinced; the ordered universe is evidence only through the eyes of belief.

Calling a belief “subjective”, however, does not mean that it is of lesser value than beliefs grounded more “objectively”. We need both subjective and objective elements in our lives. The objective side of our knowledge gives us factual understanding of our world and logical systems. But it is the subjective side – varying with all the personalities and perspectives of the world – that gives it emotional value, cultural meaning, and, for believers, spiritual significance. The subjective side

Voices

Shahla Kanji, IB Diploma graduate 1983

Shahla Kanji is a Canadian Ismaili Muslim living in Vancouver, British Columbia. Her passion is Personal Development—helping people connect more deeply with themselves and each other.



What does faith mean to me as a way of knowing?

Through my faith I know how to be human. My faith is a way of knowing myself, knowing the other, and knowing the world around me. As a Muslim, I do not divide faith and life. Faith informs and infuses my entire existence.

Through my faith, I know how to be in the world. Generosity, understanding, forgiveness, kindness; these are ethics of Islam. The Holy Qur’an emphasizes the unity of humankind, that despite our differences, we are all born from one soul. From this, I know that my connection to others is

profound. You are part of me, and I am part of you. If you hurt or suffer, so do I.

Everything in life is a gift, even the most difficult challenges. This I know through my faith. We all experience adversity. It is part of being human. Faith tells me the response to adversity is accepting what has come, facing that challenge, doing my best, and surrendering to Allah’s will with gratitude, hope, and joy. Faith tells me that above all, Allah is Loving Compassion. He is all Merciful. He is Kind. “The place where you are right now, God circled on a map for you” (Hafiz).²

Faith is a way of life. Through faith, I know that my purpose is to tend the divine spark that is in me, to connect with the Divine through prayer and remembrance, to seek to be close to God, to do His work in the world, and to love. When I’m participating in quiet communication with God, thanking Him for the beauty of His creation, when I forget the self to care for another, when my intention is love and I act lovingly, in those moments, the mundane becomes suffused with the spiritual and I am given the gift of knowing the very heart of happiness.

² The Gift, Poems by Hafiz the Great Sufi Master, translations by Daniel Ladinsky. Penguin Books, Middlesex, England, 1999. p.207

What is the role in science, if any, of faith as a way of knowing?

Below is a selection taken from a discussion on Facebook. Your author asked scientist Maarten Jongsma for his thoughts. But he went further: he posted some opening thoughts for his former IB Diploma classmates from more than 30 years ago, and precipitated a wide-ranging discussion. As you formulate your thoughts yourself on what "faith" means and what its role is in knowledge, you may want to consider the ideas exchanged here. What would you post yourself, if you were joining this conversation?

Maarten Jongsma, IB Diploma graduate, 1980

Maarten Jongsma is a senior researcher at Plant Research International in Wageningen, Netherlands, working on the interaction of plant chemistry with the living environment. He leads numerous research projects, including some cooperations with China and North Korea.



Faith (as a way of knowing) in science and religion has different roles. In science it links to knowledge obtained by scientific methods, which represent a rational reconstruction of reality. It is acceptable that the reconstruction will change in the light of better evidence: the initial belief (from personal observation and common sense) that the earth was flat was eventually replaced by knowledge (from experiments) that the earth was a sphere. In good science the conditions that determine the basis of beliefs are made as explicit as possible: they should be falsifiable, and importantly the observer should play no role – we are not the centre of the world.

Religious faith is different in that it is, on the contrary, intended especially to shape one's personal role in the world. In that sense religious and scientific faiths can exist side by side and are complementary.

Janice Brown: Personally, I've always been quite uncomfortable with the stark line drawn between scientific and religious truths. Scientific truths can be challenged of course but, once accepted, they can be astonishingly difficult to displace.

Sissel Gørrissen: Please, can we avoid using the word "faith" for anything other than religious faith? It just seems to cloud understanding!

Barbara Drosten: Sissel, the German translation of "faith" means as much "believe" as "trust" – a reminder of the etymological background. For the sake of Maarten's purpose, I think we should keep it for a while – until we sort it out a bit more, I mean. Science and religion are both very much interconnected.

Anne Maree Vogt: Seems to me that there is a danger of falling into the trap of treating religious and so-called scientific faith as *equivalent* when we adopt the term "faith" in relation to one's acceptance of, reliance upon or even "belief" in scientific knowledge *at all*. Accepting scientific knowledge depends on assessing physical evidence and yes, certainly trusting in the scientific method and the honesty of scientists, all of which can be tested. This is not the same as having faith, in my opinion. Faith does not require evidence, I have always thought. Science is all about evidence. It is not helpful and it muddies our thinking, I think, if we start to talk about two "faiths". In that sense, I think there is no "faith" in science, although I readily acknowledge that many people who have faith are also scientists.

Maarten Jongsma: I think we agree (do you?). When I say scientific faiths and religious faiths are *complementary* I mean that to be the opposite of *equivalent*. I just think that science doesn't cover all.

Janice Brown: No time to respond properly today. But to play devil's advocate, let's consider economics, which has as one of its basic tenets an (in my view) entirely unreasonable faith in the existence of rational consumers and markets and "proves" its theories using models that assume away huge chunks of reality. I think it is important to recognize when any assertion, whether religious or scientific, is essentially a matter of faith – that is, it is something that is as yet unproven and may not be provable – so that we may recognize its limitations and continue to test it.

Marc Patry: You are such a devil's advocate! I think economists would say that they "assume" that consumers are rational, and that very few believe this to be fact. Assumptions are not faith. By assuming, you recognize there are missing elements, but you allow yourself to venture something forth, recognizing that you are open to modifying it if your assumptions are proved not quite accurate.

Geert Jan van Oldenborgh: Janice, I agree completely, but would argue that every branch of science has unprovable assumptions, ranging from Lorentz invariance in theoretical physics to the Big Bang in cosmology to life being based on carbon-chemistry in biology. The trick seems to be *not* to have faith in them, but check again and again if results based on these assumptions explain the world. If not, it is back to the drawing board, as indeed many economists are doing right now as far as I understand. This latter feedback loop is absent in faith in the religious sense, where questioning the assumptions is often explicitly forbidden.

Janice Brown: Seriously, I HAVE to get back to work, but can't resist one quick comment. I'm no theologian but, from my own experience, I don't think it's correct to say all religion forbids the questioning of assumptions.

Geert Jan van Oldenborgh: A few days of travel and jetlag and I am far behind on the discussion.

One more point that underlies this all is the faith, in science, that the natural world can be explained by simple rules underlying the rich diversity of phenomena around us. I know of no way to justify this other than "it seems to work well up to now". At the deepest level there is no other justification for science than the claim "it works". You cannot logically prove that the sun will rise tomorrow. You can only blend past experience and the laws of physics as far as we know them into a Bayesian probability that is very close to one. Therefore I would argue that any claim that faith in science and faith in religion (or other dogmatic philosophies appealing to absolute truth) are *equivalent* can be shown to be false *only* by referring to the success of science in explaining many aspects of the world and making useful predictions based on that knowledge. The *basis* of science cannot be shown to be different but the *results* are. Does this make sense?

Janice Brown: At an emotional and psychological level, it seems to me religion may offer an explanation for beauty, love and other mysteries of our universe that is more compelling and satisfying than those science has, to this point, at least, been able offer. So where does that leave me? Do I agree there are fundamental differences between religious and scientific faith? Yes, I guess I do, but I don't think those differences can or should be reduced to the simple assessment of which is more rational or evidence-based.

To my mind the difference has more to do with the questions each asks, and the extent to which those questions are provable using existing scientific methods. Perhaps one day science and our understanding of the universe will have progressed to the point that we can begin to address the kinds of questions with which religion grapples (why are we here, what is our purpose, what are our moral and ethical obligations to one another and the world in which we live?) but I don't think they're there yet.

of our knowledge cannot be proved, but we may feel proof to be irrelevant.

This distinction between *subjective* and *objective*, however, could be seen by some believers as simply obtuse – as a failure to recognize the role of faith as going “beyond reason” into higher justification of a transcendent category all its own. If God tells us what to believe and what to do – through Holy Books, Prophets, infallible theological leaders, for instance – then they could argue that human subjectivity and objectivity in building knowledge are totally beside the point. God gives the truth, and it is for us to try to understand.

We remind you of the two different scales of certainty we considered way back in chapter 2. Knowledge is never “certain” objectively, based on evidence and reasoning: it can always be revised as we find new evidence, or think differently about what we know already. However, belief, the psychological component of knowledge, can indeed be “certain”: it can be held in the mind without any doubt whatsoever over a lifetime, and through generations.

Faith and certainty

Faith often attracts critical attention when it is held with total psychological conviction – appearing impervious to counter-claims – and when it becomes damaging either to believers or to others. Some of the problems caused when the “faithful” believe beyond doubt can be demonstrated by beliefs that lie firmly outside of the mainstream.

The Heaven’s Gate cult, for instance, believed that as the Hale-Bopp comet passed the Earth in 1997 it was being trailed by an alien spaceship that would take them away to the Next Level of spiritual existence. Thirty-nine members committed ritualized suicide in order to be taken aboard the spaceship as it passed. They had faith – and we cannot *prove* that they were wrong.

Similarly, doomsday cults of various kinds have followed leaders prophesying the end of the world. Sometimes they have committed suicide or taken violent action against others. Sometimes they have just been quietly disappointed when the world carried on as usual. One group was disappointed first in 1994, when leader Harold Camping had calculated the time of the end based on coded

messages in Biblical text and his own mathematical calculation. When the world did not end, he declared a mathematical error, and recalculated for 2011.³

When again the world did not end, did he abandon his belief? Why should he? With faith unshaken, such a cult can provide plenty of possible explanations: the math was (again) incorrect; God relented because of their faith; God changed His mind; the End Times really did happen, but only True Believers can tell. They can retain their faith and nothing can prove them wrong.

Millions of people worldwide who hold religious beliefs could understandably object to our illustrating faith here by examples drawn from the “fringe”. We pause to point out – as so often – the difference between “all” and “some” statements. All believers are not outliers to standard conceptions of sanity. These people do, however, embody a problem that most people, religious or not, would acknowledge – that there are strains of bizarre belief and fanaticism that use the same justification of faith as do teachings of love and kindness to others.

Yet it is almost impossible to shake people’s beliefs with evidence or argument if they reject the need for either. Faith can bypass further justification and go straight to belief. Consequently, if someone is completely *certain* that God wants him to leap from a mountain top or kill all non-believers, no counter-arguments can be relied on to convince him otherwise.

Faith and doubt

Utter psychological certainty is not a necessary feature of faith, however. Faith can be mild as well as fierce – and it can be moderated or even replaced by doubt. What, then, is the role of doubt as a counter to faith – or even as an integral part of faith?

Within the variable religious communities of the world, doubt, along with its accompanying counter-claims, has been regarded in very different ways. In some religious traditions, faith is sometimes described as an active struggle with doubt – a will to believe *despite* lack of objective evidence, and *despite* some much-debated problems such as the existence of evil. Indeed,

³ Eileen Dombrowski, “Disappointing the doomsday cult,” Triple A Learning blogs, 21 May 2010. http://blogs.triplelearning.com/2011/05/diploma/dp_tokglobal/disappointing-the-doomsday-cult-prediction.

in some religious contexts the dynamic struggle of faith is what makes the commitment of belief significant; the believer has to *achieve* belief through personal thought and emotion and not accept on “blind faith”.

In other contexts, doubt, with its counter-claims, has been seen as failure or betrayal. Consult for a moment your own knowledge of history, current events, and institutionalized religion to consider the reactions of some religious institutions to those who have deviated in their beliefs or put forth counter-claims. What, for example, is a “heretic” or an “apostate”, and how have religious leaders and communities dealt with them?

The variability of faith communities, and institutions of faith, makes all-inclusive generalizations about them nearly impossible. The sheer diversity of concepts, experiences, and expressions of faith makes it elusive and subjective, as do the emotional ways in which it gives interpretation and significance to people’s lives.

Faith: a TOK way of knowing

The ambiguity of what is meant by “faith”, the different ways of interpreting it as a justification, and the immense range of knowledge claims that use it as a justification make it highly unlikely that everyone reading these recent pages will agree with everything on them. There is no need for you to agree – and we encourage you to use what we give here to formulate your own views and your own arguments for them. Our goal is entirely to give you a way into reflections on the role of faith in knowledge, and, we hope, some good exchanges of perspectives with your classmates.

Faith, and religious faith in particular, does come with long traditions of being asserted as

a way of knowing – that is, a way of knowing a metaphysical reality beyond the ordinary one of our world, and thereby knowing much more that is important for our human lives. Faith has also been a powerful social force in binding people into communities, to the point that it has been conjectured that “the urge to worship sparked civilization”.⁴ Certainly, civilization has benefitted in many ways from this urge, and works of music, art, and architecture inspired by faith are among the finest of human achievements. Among the finest achievements, too, must surely rank organizations of community support and international development inspired by living the principles of love and charity. At the same time, however, faith has also been a powerful force of division among people, a force of bigotry and murderous destruction – especially when people have not moderated their own psychological certainty with respect for the lives and welfare of others.

In this chapter, we have led up to some major questions about knowledge, and now we pass them to you to answer yourself, possibly in discussion with others in your class.

For Reflection

Do you consider faith to be a way of knowing? Would it be more accurate – or clearer – to call it a way of *believing*? To what extent can this same question be applied to other ways of knowing? Compare faith in this regard with, for instance, emotion, memory, and sense perception.

What is the relationship between knowledge and belief?