

Faith: the invalid argument

Having faith doesn't make it true

Having faith that the moon is made of cheese doesn't make it made of cheese. You cannot use faith as a way of gaining knowledge and bypass the need for that knowledge to pass the test of truth and reason. For example, the Mormons have faith that a community of Israelites settled in North America about 2,000 years ago – why don't **we** believe their faith? After all, the Mormons know it is true – don't they? If you have faith that something is true, then why doesn't everyone have it?

Faith causes real suffering

Believing something on faith has caused problems for thousands of years. The 9/11 suicide bombers did what they did because they had faith they would go directly to heaven for doing so. The inquisitors of the Spanish Inquisition had faith that torturing and executing unbelievers and heretics was what their god wanted them to do and they would later be rewarded in Heaven.

Faith is not evidence

Faith **with** evidence is not faith - it is **evidence**. People do not need to have faith in the following: Heliocentrism (the theory that the Earth goes around the Sun), Atomic Theory, Germ Theory of Disease, Evolution by Natural Selection, and Gravitational Theory. People know all of these things are true because they have seen mountains of evidence and this evidence is there for anyone to see if they look.

Faith is only for people who are afraid of not knowing

The argument from faith is just a placeholder for people who don't know or don't want to say why they really believe (typically this is because they fear that their true personal reasons may sound odd to others). If you ask someone why they believe something and they say "faith", this is no answer; you simply have to ask "why?" again. The reason they have faith will typically be a psychological one. Someone who does employ faith should at least have the courage to say they don't know, which gives them a starting point to find out if there really is any credible evidence to support that belief.

Having faith in something does not give it special status

Christians, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientologists, Druids, etc, all have implacable faith in the correctness of their beliefs and everyone who believes otherwise is wrong (because the beliefs contradict each other). They can't all be right - in fact, no more than one of these groups at most could be. However, they could **all** be wrong. Is it really plausible that all the other believers are deluded, but only you and the people who follow your faith are not? Or, is it just possible that you could be as deluded as they are?

Faith is simply wishful thinking

Many people say that they have faith that something is true simply because they want it to be true (for whatever reason such as comfort, disgust or personal taste). However, what people want to be true has nothing to do with what actually is true. Do you believe in dragons and fairies? Pots of gold at the end of the rainbow? Ancient gods such as Zeus, Odin, Ra or Mithras, etc.

You don't use faith in any other aspect of your life

Did you buy your car on faith or did you at least ensure that it existed first and was in working condition? Did you choose your job on faith or did you choose something that you could do, would find interesting or would pay you an appropriate wage? Do you have faith that you are buying appropriate groceries or are you checking the use-by dates? Do you cross the road on faith or do you actually look for evidence of oncoming vehicles first? Then why use faith for determining what you believe?

Faith does not protect ideas from criticism

Some people think that stating that they have ideas based on faith protects it from criticism, it does not. In fact, because it is believed on faith means it is believed without evidence and reason, and so should be the target of rigorous examination, questioning and criticism to ensure the belief is correct. If after such a process there is still no evidence or reason to believe it, the belief should be abandoned until such time as there is evidence and reason.

End

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