

On the Implication of Faith

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Received 5 April 2015; accepted 11 June 2015

Published online 26 July 2015

Abstract

The German philosopher Karl Jaspers once said, “it is not enough to have faith: After we establish a firm faith while not understanding the deep meaning of the faith, in my opinion this is a hasty attitude.” To define faith from the approach of “genus + species difference” helps us to have a more in-depth understanding of the characteristics and the nature of faith. Faith refers to that the subject of faith is extremely convinced by “truth, goodness and beauty” of the object of faith and then generates respect, admiration, reverence and belief and other psychological consciousness and advanced spiritual consciousness with ultimacy. Faith is not a “proper noun” for religion or politics. People can have faith in anyone, anything, any object, any opinion or doctrine, purpose or meaning of life and so. However, there are scientific and non-scientific faiths.

Key words: Faith; Implication; Truth

Qiu, Y. Q. (2015). On the Implication of Faith. *Canadian Social Science*, 11(7), 65-68. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/7297>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/7297>

INTRODUCTION

German philosopher Karl Jaspers once said, it is not enough to have faith: “After we establish a firm faith while not understanding the deep meaning of the faith, in my opinion this is a hasty attitude.” Although each interpretation of faith has its positive side as well as

disadvantage side and there is no perfect definition, yet but we can still give faith a relatively “perfect” definition to help us deeply understand the characteristics and the nature of faith. So what is faith? Is it just a religious or political “proper noun”?

In academia, there are two approaches to define a concept. One is from the perspective of semantics to define a concept in the approach of “extension + connotation”; the second one is from the perspective of logics to define it in the approach of “genus + species difference”. The approach of “genus + species difference” will involve the “extension” and “connotation” of the concept and the revealing of the “extension” and “connotation” is more precise; therefore, this paper only uses the approach of “genus + species difference” to defining the meaning of faith.

1. THE FORMULA AND BASIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEFINITION APPROACH OF “GENUS + SPECIES DIFFERENCE”

1.1 The Formula of the Definition Approach of “Genus + Species Difference” Is: The Item to Be Defined=Species Difference + Adjacent Genus

When we define an item using the approach of “genus + species difference”, we should first find out the adjacent “genus concept” (also known as the “main item”) of “the item to be defined” (also known as “sub-item”), that is to determine which “category” it belongs to; and then we compare the object the “item to be defined” reflects with other “species concept” under this “genus concept” to find other the unique properties of the object that “the item to be defined” reflects different from other objects that “species concept” reflects, that is “species difference”; and finally we organically combine “genus” and “species difference”.

1.2 The Basic Requirements of the Definition Approach of “Genus + Species Difference”

“Genus + species difference” is one of the most commonly used definition method, but it also has its limitations and we cannot use this method to define the biggest “category” such as philosophical category as a philosophical category reflects some of the largest “category”; therefore, we cannot find a “genus” which contains it. We cannot use this approach to define “individual concept” either, because “individual concept” reflects a unique individual thing and therefore we cannot find out its species difference.

2. THE DEFINITION OF FAITH USING “GENUS + SPECIES DIFFERENCE”

Whether we can use “genus + species difference” approach to defining faith, we first need to check whether faith is “the largest genus concept” or “individual concept”. Faith belongs to mental activity, so at least mental activity is a bigger category; besides faith, there are other concepts such as belief and confidence belonging to mental activities. Therefore, faith is neither “the largest category concept” nor “individual concept” and it can be defined using “genus + species difference” method.

2.1 The “Adjacent Broader Concept” of Faith

The key to defining faith with the approach of “genus + species difference” is to find an adjacent broader concept of faith and fully reveal its same unique properties with other species concepts which belong to the same “genus”.

What is the “adjacent broader concept” of faith?

From the existing studies, most researchers have positioned the “broader concept” of faith as “attitude” (psychological attitude) and a few position it as “mental activity and mental phenomenon”, “social activity and cultural phenomenon”, “spiritual home”, “self-awareness”, “ideology” or “a special way to understand the world and grasp the world”. What in the end is the “broader concept” of faith? We can start to investigate it from the etymological perspective.

In the West,

Faith is derived from the Latin word “fides” (trust), comprising a double meaning: first is the “confidence” gained through rational or experiential argument; the second is “piety” which absolutely does not appeal to logic rationality and completely relies on emotional care. Since it does not appeal to logic, faith often can give people power beyond this side of the world and that is the so-called “mission” and the so-called “moral force”. (Wang, 2000)

Faith comes from the Latin word fides and has the meaning of “reliance” and “dependence”. There are four Hebrew verbs to express the meaning of faith: aman (stable, reliable), batah (trust, hope), hasah (looking for refuge) and hakah (patience, expectation). That is to say, the concept of “faith” in the use of

human languages means the subject’s stable confidence in the spirit of a certain object, state of idea, and very consciously trust, rely on, and obey the object he or she is confident with and put hopes on such an object. (Luo, 2007)

In our country, in the *Analytical Dictionary of Characters*, “xin means honesty, following others”; “yang means lift, following people”. Yang is a devout admiration which dare not offence or betray. Just from the literal meaning, it is not difficult to understand that the so-called “faith” believes “existence” and “truth” and there is no doubt in the heart. Yang, which literally means to rise the head, here refers to respect and admiration. The combination of xin and yang refers to the undoubtedly devout and pious admiration of an object and the heart hopes for it and pursues it. Faith is the emotions of respect and admiration and the psychological trend to resolutely implement which are produced because of the belief of its truth, goodness and beauty; therefore, different from the simple cognition, emotion and will, faith includes all of the components of cognition, emotion and will. **From this we can see that, the “adjacent broader concept” of faith is psychological consciousness, and the “species concepts” which belong to the same “genus” include belief, convince, trust and confidence, etc..**

Regarding faith as an independent psychological consciousness different from cognition, emotion, will have been existed in home and abroad. Fromm believes that,

Faith is a basic human attitude, which permeates all his experience of character. Faith can make people face the reality without illusion, and rely on faith to live. It is hard to imagine that faith first is not to believe in something, but if we regard faith as a kind of inner attitude, then the specific object of faith is the second important thing (Fromm, 1988, p.184);

Jing Xuemin believes that, faith is a special state of mind when a person as an active subject. This special kind of state of mind is different from the state of human intellect, emotional state and will state. It exists simply as a form of value. Overall, faith is an extremely convincing spiritual state of consciousness that the subject holds to certain object (including material and spiritual) and put it as their own code of conduct. Faith in activity theory or from the perspective of activity theory is not just “a separate mental factor”, but a psychological mechanism. The trait of such psychological mechanism is that once its object has been established, it will adjust the whole mental state of consciousness (knowledge, emotion, meaning) of the subject to take it as the core. It will orient, regulate and control the behavior of the subject and it is in the dominant status of the thinking and behavior of the subject (Jing, 2008, p.33).

2.2 The “Species Difference Properties” of Faith

What are the “species different properties” of faith?

For the properties of species difference, it can be described from the nature, function, role and other aspects, but the

most fundamental property of “species difference” is the “nature property”; therefore, in this paper we mainly use the “nature property” to reveal the “specie difference property” of faith. From the “nature property”, faith is not only the psychological consciousness of respect and admiration based on the extremely convince of the object (that is the mentality of belief and admiration), but also advanced spiritual consciousness with ideal, the highest purpose or highest value.

(a) As a psychological consciousness, faith is the integration and unity of the subject’s cognition, emotion and will to the “truth, goodness and beauty” the object implies.

Firstly, faith and cognition are closely related. Faith expresses an affirmation of people to the value of “truth, goodness and beauty” implied in the related object (including facts, figures, ideas, propositions, theory, etc.). The subject of faith must be “cognitive” to the value contained in the faith. However, due to the limitation of their experience, ability or need, the cognition of the subject of faith to the value of the object of faith may be an objective perception, correct understanding and rational cognition, or it could be purely subjective emotional cognition and misperceptions. However, whether the cognition of the subject of faith to the value of the object of faith is correct, true, or whether it can withstand the test of practice, as long as the subject of faith believes that they are the “truth”, they could generate faith. Therefore, the core of faith is not whether the cognition itself is correct or not, but “trust” and the degree of the “trust”. **Secondly, faith and emotions are closely related.** The doubtless trust and high affirmation of the object of faith and its “truth”, “goodness” and “beauty” would inevitably produce affection and admiration. **Thirdly, faith and will be related.** The cognition of “truth”, “goodness” and “beauty” of the object of faith, affection and admiration inevitably produce a mental attitude to overcome various difficulties and resolutely practice the faith. Any faith contains strong value consciousness (what the subject of faith admire or hope to pursue) and reflect the desires, motives, interests, hobbies, emotion and will of the subject of faith and reflect the will selection of the subject; therefore, faith is actually a manifestation of the selection of will, emotion and value consciousness of the subject. It can put the perceived evidence as a basis, or be decisive to objects, states and ideas that are not recognized and confirmed, and even can take things that do not exist in the world as its own object. Therefore, faith is not mere cognition, but the integration and unity of cognition, emotion and will, as Paul V. Kopni says: “Faith appears as an intermediate between knowledge and practice. It is not only simple knowledge, but full of the transformation of human will, emotions and wishes into the knowledge of faith.” (Kopni, 1982, p.271). **Finally, faith and belief are closely related, and belief is the basis and premise of faith.** Literally speaking, belief

can be easily misunderstood and people would consider belief as the concept produced when people believe in some object. However, a “concept” does not need to be based on “believing” and it can be produced based on the general perception. The real meaning of belief lies in the doubtless believing of the implication of the “truth”, “goodness” and “beauty” of the object; therefore on the relationship between faith and belief, there are usually two kinds of propositions. The first one claims that belief contains faith and believes that faith is a part of faith, and that is the highest hierarchy. Although both faith and beliefs take “trust” as the core, for “trust”, they are concepts at different levels. Faith is not an ordinary “trust”, but more specific, more intense, more determined, more conscious, more durable, and more profound than general “trust”. **The second proposition believes that belief means those beliefs except the highest belief (that is faith),** that is beliefs at lower levels in terms of abstraction, generalization or value importance, that also is, we tend to use belief to refer to more specific or relatively unimportant beliefs and use faith to refer to the most abstract or the most important beliefs. **But either proposition agrees that belief is the foundation of faith,** and that is to say faith is generated based on belief.

(b) As a spiritual consciousness, faith is ultimate. Whether faith is towards a confirmed, realized or unconfirmed, unrealized object, or it is a rational or irrational faith of the object, it is not based on the existing state, but a “transcendence of individual to their egos, transcendence of the ideality to reality, transcendence of infinite to finite, and transcendence of future to present.” (Tong, 2011) The real content of the object that faith respects, reveres and admires is not “any” realistic state, but the “ought-to-be” state or the most perfect state of the object of faith; whatever faith is the last pursuit or the highest pursuit of the “ought-to-be” state of the object of faith. That is to say, after this or above this, there is nothing worth pursuing and everything else is derived out of it or the means to achieve it; therefore, faith is ultimate.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, faith refers to that the subject (including individuals and groups) of faith is extremely convinced by the “truth, goodness and beauty” of the object (including people, life, things, objects, theory, concepts, propositions, etc.) of faith and then generates respect, admiration, reverence and belief and other psychological consciousness and advanced spiritual consciousness with intimacy. Therefore, faith is not a “proper noun” for religion or politics. People can have faith in anyone, anything, any object, any opinion or doctrine, purpose or meaning of life and so. However, there are scientific and non-scientific faiths. However, faith without scientific

and rational support o will make people lost into the quagmire of self-paralysis (such as superstition) or self-indulgent (such as cult), give up fighting spirit, sense of responsibility, morals or sense of survival, and influence length, thickness and height of human existence, and thus the key of life is to establish the scientific life faith.

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