


ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Faith as skill: an essay on faith in the Abrahamic tradition

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Abstract

What is the nature of religious faith as understood in the Abrahamic tradition? This article suggests a novel answer to this question. To this end, I first outline five desiderata, characterized by appealing to conceptions of faith in both the Islamic and Christian traditions, which I think every adequate account of faith should satisfy. These five desiderata are: (1) explaining the principle of the relationship between faith and religious actions; (2) accounting for the maxim of the relationship between faith and moral virtues; (3) showing how the thesis of the priority of faith over knowledge can be the case; (4) providing a basis for the axiom of the gradability of faith; and (5) solving the dilemma of faith as a gift or an achievement. Then I make my case and develop a model of faith that satisfies all five desiderata. Following the accounts in the literature that describes faith as a kind of know-how, the central idea of my suggestion is that religious faith is partly constituted by intellectual, practical, and moral skills.

Keywords: faith; the Abrahamic traditions; practical skill; intellectual skill; moral skill

Introduction

What is the nature of faith? Although philosophers have addressed the nature of faith by studying it in both religious and non-religious contexts, this article focuses only on religious faith in the Abrahamic tradition. I attempt to sketch a novel model of faith that satisfies several significant desiderata for every plausible account of faith as understood in the Abrahamic tradition. The central idea of my account is that religious faith can be partly explained in terms of skill.

Christians and Muslims have linked faith to a range of components, including belief, love, reason, trust, will, verbal confession, moral virtues, religious acts, and religious knowledge. Consider, for example, the problem of the relationship between faith and reason. In the Christian tradition, denying that philosophical reason can play a role in the constitution of faith, Tertullian famously asked: ‘What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?’ Thomas Aquinas, on the other hand, developed a natural theology and considered there to be a significant role for reason in the acquisition of faith. We observe similar disputes in the Islamic tradition. Ibn Sina, who thought that faith and reason could be reconciled, provided several philosophical arguments for religious claims; Al-Ghazali (2011, 30), on the other hand, rejecting the role of philosophical reason in

the constitution of faith, suggested even that a mimic faith which is not based on reason could still be described as a genuine instance of faith. Similar controversies have been observed regarding other components linked to the nature of faith in the Abrahamic traditions, but the disputes in this area are so ancient and extensive that I cannot hope to address them all here. I therefore consider only some desiderata of a good account of faith in the Abrahamic traditions, seeking to highlight the role of one component which, I think, has not received sufficient attention within explanations of the nature of faith. This component is *skill*.

Although my account does not seek to address all aspects of the nature of faith, I do hope to widen a discussion that has, in the recent literature on religious faith in the Abrahamic tradition, been overly focused on Christian texts. Philosophers who have worked on the nature of religious faith have not paid enough attention to voices from Islamic sources, and in making my case I take steps towards filling this gap, covering ideas from both the Christian and Islamic traditions.¹

In order to defend my account, I put forward philosophical arguments including thought experiments, as well as exegetical evidence. There is a methodological consideration regarding the latter method that needs to be underlined at the outset. I want to develop an account of the notion of faith in Christian and Islamic traditions; and one common way of testing such an account is to see whether the sacred texts of these traditions support this account or not. Two difficulties emerge when we try to carry out this task. The first is that each of these traditions contains a large volume of sacred texts which involve a wide range of different (and in some cases apparently conflicting) ideas. The second is that, even if we focus on one part of a sacred text, we find that what it means is typically open to different readings. With these difficulties in mind, I want to emphasize that I never claim that the account suggested in the present article is in accordance with all interpretations of all parts of all the sacred texts of the Abrahamic traditions. Rather, my claim is that, among other well-founded accounts, my suggestion is plausible since, in addition to philosophical arguments, *some* (reasonable) interpretations of *some* (significant) parts of the sacred texts relevant to faith support it.

In order to develop my proposal, I proceed in two steps. In the section ‘Some desiderata for a theory of faith in the Abrahamic tradition’, I establish five desiderata that every plausible account of religious faith in the Abrahamic tradition should meet. Then, in the section ‘Faith as skill’, I develop my account according to which religious faith is partly explained in terms of skill, showing how it can satisfy all five desiderata for every plausible account of religious faith formulated in the previous section.²

Some desiderata for a theory of faith in the Abrahamic tradition

The relationship between faith and action

[here]The first desideratum for a theory of faith, I suggest, is that it secures a close link between faith and action. I discuss this desideratum in Islamic and Christian contexts in turn. The equivalent term for ‘faith’ in Islam is ‘*iman*’ and its opposite is ‘*kufr*’, these being. ‘*Iman . . . and Kufr . . . are two of the most important term in the Qur’an*’ (Izutsu 1965, 7). Ibn Taymiyah (1961, 142) tells us that ‘the dispute on what these two words mean was the first internal discord to occur among Muslims’. According to classic Arabic lexicographers such as Ibn Manzur (1984, vol. 13: 21), the lexical meaning of ‘*iman*’ is assent and acceptance.³ Although this lexical meaning is contained in the technical meaning of ‘*iman*’ in Islam, the term as used in the religious context has further components:

The classical form in which Muslim theologians discuss the nature of Iman is based on the recognition of three major factors in the concept of Iman. These are:

- (1) *tasdigh* (*bi-al-ghalb*), assent and avowal by heart.
- (2) *ighrar* (*bi-al-lisan*), verbal acknowledgement or confession by word in mouth.
- (3) *amal* (*al-ta'at*), acts of obedience or (good) work. (Izutsu 1965, 93)

The first controversy to arise among Muslims after the prophet Muhammad was over the third factor, specifically over whether following God's command in action is a necessary and constitutive condition for faith (*iman*). Excommunicating their opponents in that conflict, the Khawarij was the first group to believe that those who commit great sin no longer have faith (Fakhry 2004, 40), and the Mutazila would also later claim that doing actions commanded by God is a constitutive part of faith.⁴ On the other hand, Al-Ghazali (2011, 230–233) and Fakhr Al-Din Al-Razi (1938, vol. 2), challenging the Mutazila's view, suggested that although faith and action have a close connection, it is not the case that action is a constituent of faith. One reason for this claim is that there are several verses in the Qur'an in which action is considered as distinct from faith and separately commanded by God. For example:

As for those who have faith and do righteous deeds, for them will be gardens of bliss.
(Qur'an 31:8)

If action were a part of faith, it would not be plausible that God should frequently cite them as two separate notions. Moreover, it appears to be overly demanding to require that doing religious duties is a necessary condition for faith: most religious people sometimes fail to perform their religious duties, and if doing them were a necessary condition for faith, then the members of the group of people who have faith would be very few.⁵ What is crucial for our purpose is that even proponents of the separation of faith from religious acts acknowledge that these two notions are closely connected, such that faith has an explanatory priority over relevant religious actions. If someone has faith in religious doctrines, she is *in a position* to do religious duties. Put differently, the fact that someone has faith in religious doctrines *manifests* in the execution of religious duties by her. Most views on faith in Islamic history have been sympathetic to this more moderate position regarding the relationship between faith and religious acts.

The idea that faith manifests in relevant actions is widely endorsed in Christian sacred texts as well. This is made clear in particular in Hebrews 11, where it is stated that the paragons of faith obey God's commands in action in virtue of their faith. Here are two examples:

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went. (Hebrews 11:8)⁶

By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons and worshipped while leaning on the top of his staff. (Hebrews 11:21)

The idea that faith is manifested in religious actions is also supported by contemporary Christian thinkers. McKaughan (2018, 198), for example, writes: 'In my view, much of what is most central to the response of faith can be located in the realm of action.' In Buchak's terms (2012, 226): 'a person's having faith in something should make a difference to her behaviour'. In order to explain the idea that faith manifests in religious actions,

some thinkers suggest that faith is a disposition to acts: 'Faith volitionally conceived is a matter of suitably strong dispositions to intend and to act' (Audi 2019, 10). What is required for faith is a readiness to act rather than actual action. As Buchak (2012, 226) argues, someone who has faith manifests it in religious actions, at least in normal situations when enabling conditions are satisfied:

It would be enough for faith that if a person were put in a particular situation, she would then manifest the relevant behaviour (assuming that there are no forces that would stop her). Faith is thus linked to a *disposition* to act.

With these ideas regarding Islamic and Christian conceptions of the relationship between faith and religious action to hand, I propose to think of the following principle as a desideratum for every plausible theory of faith in the Abrahamic traditions:

The principle of the relationship between faith and religious actions

Although faith is distinct from religious actions, it has an explanatory priority over them such that when enabling conditions are met, faith manifests in religious acts.

The relationship between faith and moral virtues

The second desideratum is that there should be a close relationship between faith and the possession of moral virtues. This becomes clear if we consider that in addition to religious practices (for example, confession or prayer in Christianity and doing Hajj or fasting in Islam), which are specific to faithful persons, religious faith is also connected to moral tasks that are common to faithful and unfaithful people alike. A significant part of the sacred texts of the Abrahamic traditions consists of moral instruction. In both Christian and Islamic traditions, persons of faith are commanded to perform moral tasks and acquire moral virtues. For example, according to a hadith, Muhammad says:

Someone who has true faith is one with whom others feel secure – one who returns love for hatred.

As another instance, the Qu'ran, extolling the virtue of trustfulness, insists on the claim that faithful people are truthful:

The faithful are only those who have attained faith in Allah and His Apostle . . . It is they who are the truthful. (Qu'ran 49:15)

Similar ideas are found in sacred texts of Christianity. As an example, consider this passage:

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence . . . (2 Peter 1:5)

As another example, regarding the relationship between faith and honesty, we read in the Bible that:

A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness will utter lies. (Proverbs 14:5)

In addition to these textual reasons, I think, our intuitions accommodate the idea that the possession of faith leads a person to moral virtues. Christians applaud Mother Teresa as an exemplar of the kind of faith that leads her to excel in the virtue of kindness; Muslims highlight certain moral virtues of Muhammad such as his honesty. Of course, I don't deny that there are controversies regarding the moral aspects of the Abrahamic traditions,⁷ but I don't have space to struggle with these problems here. Thus I take only a modest view of the relationship between faith and the moral virtues, claiming just that someone who exemplifies faith is required to have at least *some* moral virtues. In addition to the exegetical evidence, I think, our intuitions strongly support this modest claim. It is hard to imagine that we should ascribe real faith to a person who is possessed by moral vice and entirely lacking in virtue. Thus I assume that providing an explanation for the following maxim is another desideratum for every account of faith as understood in Abrahamic traditions:

The maxim of the relationship between faith and moral virtues

Someone who exemplifies faith is required to have at least *some* moral virtues.⁸

The relationship between faith and knowledge

The relationship between religious faith and knowledge has also been controversial. Most discussions about this relationship are concerned with answering the question of whether faith is reducible to, or at least partly constituted by, knowledge.⁹ In this article, however, I pose the problem in reverse order: Is it the case that a kind of knowledge is the result of faith? Important figures in both the Christian and Islamic traditions have given a positive answer to this question. The most famous version of this idea in Christian history was formulated by St Anselm in the phrase 'faith seeking understanding'. A similar idea was expressed by several Christian figures, among them Augustine and Bonaventure, and even appears in Isaiah 7:9. Quoting this part of Bible, for example, Augustine remarks:

Faith seeks, understanding finds; which is why the prophet says, Unless you believe you shall not understand. (Augustine 1998, 15.2.2)

Granting that understanding is, or at least involves, a kind of knowledge, it follows that faith has a priority over a kind of religious knowledge and plays a role in acquiring this knowledge.

In Islamic culture, an analogous thought is commonly found in Sufi teachings. For example, Ayn Al-Quzat Hamadani, a great medieval Persian mystic, writes: 'if you have faith, God himself guides you' (Shajari 2013, 79). Similar ideas are endorsed in the Qur'an: 'whoever who has faith in Allah, He will rightly guide their heart; and Allah has perfect knowledge of all things' (Qur'an 64:11). This verse can be interpreted such that there is a kind of knowledge which is the result of faith in Allah who has perfect knowledge of all things.¹⁰ There is also a hadith from the Prophet Muhammad which can be understood as if faith resulted in knowledge:

Messenger of Allah 'Peace be upon him' said: 'Faith is naked, . . . and its fruit is knowledge.' (Al-Ghazali 2011, 12)

In this sentence, the prophet Muhammad is employing metaphorical language to confirm that faith has a kind of priority over a kind of knowledge.

What kind of knowledge is the result of religious faith? To answer the question, let us look at some other instances of the idea of the priority of faith over knowledge in the

sacred texts of Christianity and Islam. Here are two verses that acknowledge the idea that faith results in a kind of knowledge:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and was created with the faithful in the womb, . . . and is known with the just and faithful. (Sirach 1:14–16)
By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God. (Hebrews 11:3)¹¹

The second of the above verses is clearly a kind of propositional knowledge. The idea that some kind of religious knowledge is the result of faith is also a motif in Calvin's commentary on the Bible. He frequently talks of *eyes of faith*:

it is a mystery hid from men's minds, whereon the chiefest philosophers did never think, neither can we otherwise comprehend it, than when we lift up the eyes of faith unto the infinite power of God. (Calvin 1844, 136)

In a commentary on Hebrews 11:1, Calvin (2018, 316) tells us that the object of knowledge due to faith is invisible facts:

Faith has, indeed, its own sight but one which does not confine its view to the world, and to earthly objects. For this reason, it is called a demonstration of things invisible or not seen, (Hebrews 11:1;)

Turning to the Islamic context, a similar idea is supported by Al-Ghazali (2011, 11), who talks of the 'faculty of religious intelligence' and 'religious understanding'. When discussing the above-mentioned hadith, Al-Ghazali quotes other relevant hadith, such as the following, to cast light on the object of the knowledge that is due to faith and religious intelligence:

The closest from amongst the people to the rank of Prophethood are those endued with knowledge, . . . it is those who guided the people to what was brought about by the Messengers. (Al-Ghazali 2011, 12)

It seems safe to think that what was conveyed by the Messengers, that is, their sacred books, constitute a set of propositions. In addition, in one of the greatest commentaries of the Qur'an, *Tafsir Al-Kabir*, in the context of an interpretation of the extract from verse 11 of surah Al-Taghabon mentioned above, namely that Allah 'will rightly guide their heart [of faithful people]', Fakhr Al-Din Al-Razi poses the question of what it is that Allah will guide them to. Then he answers:

He guides their heart to surrender to God's command . . . [or] to gratitude when prosperity and patience when tribulation (Al-Razi 1981, vol. 30: 555)

This suggests that, in virtue of their faith, faithful people know, for example, that God's command is to show gratitude to God when they face prosperity: but this is another instance of propositional knowledge.

No doubt more detailed discussions would be needed to clarify the nature and the object of the knowledge that is the result of faith. However, given the above cases, I will take it for granted that such knowledge has two general and, in my view, non-controversial features: (1) it is religious knowledge; (2) it has propositional content, or, at least, can be translated into propositions.¹² Therefore, I propose that explaining the

following thesis is the third desideratum for every plausible theory of religious faith in the Abrahamic traditions:

The thesis of the priority of faith over propositional religious knowledge
Some instances of propositional religious knowledge are the result of faith.

Gradability of faith

Another crucial feature of faith that every plausible theory of this notion should explain is that faith is a matter of degree. The axiom that faith is a gradable property is an idea that is widely accepted in both Islamic and Christian traditions. There are several verses in Qur'an that entail, or even explicitly assert, that faith is a matter of degree. For example, the verse 136 of surah Al-Nisa is this: 'you who have faith! Have faith in Allah'. One way (among others) of understanding a phrase in which God commands someone to have faith even though she is described as already having faith is that God commands her to have a *higher degree* of faith.¹³ The gradability of faith is more clearly expressed in the following verse:

It is He who sent down composure into the hearts of the faithful that they might enhance in their faith. (Qur'an 48:4)

In their commentary on this verse, Al-Mahalli and Al-Suyuti (2007, 599) clearly affirm that faith is gradable:

He it is Who sent down the spirit of Peace, [Divine] reassurance, into the hearts of the believers, that they might add faith to their faith . . .

That faith is a matter of degree is also endorsed in the core Christian texts, notably the Bible. For example, we read in 2 Thessalonians 1:3 that:

We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly.

It is also common in the Bible to speak of weakness and strength of faith:

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. (Rom. 14:1–3)

Yet perhaps the clearest affirmation in the Bible of the gradability of faith comes in Luke 17:5:

And the apostles said to the Lord: Increase our faith.

Given these and similar phrases, we may conclude that the Christian thinkers,¹⁴ like the Muslim scholars, acknowledge that faith is a matter of degree. Many of them think of prophets as persons who have high degrees of faith: for example, Abraham is sometimes called the father or knight of faith, which means that he had a high grade of faith such that his faith can be seen as a model for others.

As a result, we can assume the following as a widely endorsed axiom in both the Islamic and Christian traditions.

The axiom of the gradability of faith
Faith is a matter of degree.

We consider the axiom of the gradability of faith as the fourth desideratum for every plausible account of religious faith.

Faith as a gift or an achievement?

There are two conflicting intuitions regarding faith, as understood in the Abrahamic religions, that produce a dilemma about the normativity of faith, and this dilemma demands a solution. On the one hand, it is asserted that faith is a gift from God. God gives this gift to every person He wants to have it. This conception of faith as a gift can be clearly observed in the following phrase from Ephesians 2:8:

You are saved by grace through faith. Salvation is a gift.¹⁵

A similar idea can be found in Qur'an 18:17:

Whomever Allah guides is rightly guided, and whomever He leads astray, you will never find for him any guardian or guide.¹⁶

Notice that salvation is the result of guidance due to faith, and if Allah guides everyone He wants to guide, and leads astray every person He wants to misguide, this means that the real faith, due to which people are guided and receive salvation, is a gift from God to a privileged group of people.

On the other hand, according to another doctrine of the Abrahamic religions, faith is an achievement that people acquire due to their own efforts and choices, and, in light of this doctrine, it follows that every person is responsible for their own salvation or damnation. God does not suppress anyone. For example, in Romans 2:6, we read:

God will repay each one according to his deeds.

A similar verse that confirms that God rewards people according to their faith and deeds is this:

The LORD rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. (Samuel 26:23)

A similar idea is affirmed in the Qur'an:

Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, should he be faithful, We shall revive him with a good life and pay them their reward by the best of what they used to do. (Qur'an 97:16)

Moreover, concerning the torment of the people in hell, God tells them:

That is because of what your hands have sent ahead, and because Allah is not tyrannical to the servants. (Qur'an 8:51)

It is a reasonable conception of these two phrases to think that they suggest that faith is a necessary condition for salvation, and that people themselves are responsible for whether or not they receive salvation. The idea that faith is a kind of achievement,

that is, something that we acquire by our will and that is under our control, is widely held in contemporary philosophy of religion. For example, Alston (1996, 25) argues for the claim that belief is not a necessary condition for faith since ‘religious faith[, unlike our beliefs] is under voluntary control’. In the following extract, Rettler (2018, 102) makes clear why it is plausible to think that our faith is under our control:

One way to explain why it’s not unfair for God to hold us accountable for whether we have faith is to maintain that we have control over whether we have faith just as we have control over whether we do the right thing.

As a result, it seems that we face a dilemma in answering whether faith is a gift or an achievement:

The dilemma of faith as a gift or an achievement

On the one hand, parts of the doctrine of the Abrahamic religions suggest that faith is a kind of gift that God gives anyone He wishes;

On the other hand, according to other parts of this doctrine, faith is an achievement, that is, something people acquire due to their will and efforts.

It has been argued that the reformed epistemologists, who, inspired by Calvin, consider faith as a result of a cognitive capacity given as a gift by God,¹⁷ have difficulty in explaining the second part of the problem, according to which faith is due to our will (Zagzebski 1993). On the other hand, the problem with voluntarist views is that they cannot explain the first insight, according to which faith is a kind of gift given by God. An adequate account of faith should resolve the above dilemma by accommodating both intuitions behind these two conflicting views. Carrying out this task is the fifth and final desideratum for any plausible account of faith.

The five desiderata introduced in this section do not exhaust the desiderata for plausible accounts of religious faith. As said above, faith may have several other aspects that we have not covered here. I confine myself to the five desiderata, and thus I propose an account of religious faith that satisfies these five conditions:

- (1) Explaining the principle of the relationship between faith and religious actions.
- (2) Accounting for the maxim of the relationship between faith and moral virtues.
- (3) Showing how the thesis of the priority of faith over knowledge can be the case.
- (4) Providing a basis for the axiom of the gradability of faith.
- (5) Solving the dilemma of faith as a gift or an achievement.

Faith as skill

Before developing my proposal on the nature of faith, I would like to address a view presented in recent years by certain Muslim and Christian scholars that is similar in relevant respects to the suggestion I will make. It is common to think of faith in terms of theoretical propositional knowledge; the view I will consider, however, defines faith in terms of a different form of knowledge, suggesting that faith is a kind of *practical* knowledge (or knowing how). This view is briefly sketched by Tabataba’i, a leading contemporary Muslim philosopher.¹⁸ When discussing Surah al-Mu’minun (meaning: the Surah concerning the people who have faith), Tabataba’i (1996, vol. 15: 7) proposes that ‘faith is practical knowledge’. On his view, ‘religion is a practical tradition . . . , theoretical knowledge by itself does not entail action’. Then he motivates the idea that faith is practical knowledge in the following way:

The faith that religion calls for is a [practical] commitment to what the true belief about God, His Messengers, the Day of Recompense, and the rulings brought by the Prophets requires, which can be summed up in practical knowledge. (Tabataba'i (1996, vol. 15: 7)

Here Tabataba'i does not develop an account of the nature of practical knowledge and knowing how. However, at the very least, it is clear that, on his view, practical knowledge is a kind of state that not only commits a person to do an action but also guides her in doing it.

A similar account has been recently suggested by Cuneo (2014), a Christian thinker, who claims that faith is primarily constituted not by a set of beliefs but by a way of being in the world:

paradigmatic religious faith consists not merely or even primarily in a person's being certain of propositions regarding God (or having certain affections that seal this knowledge) but rather in his being practically oriented toward the world in certain ways, such as being disposed to engage in acts of gratitude toward God. (Cuneo 2014, 367)

This practical way of being in the world requires ritual knowledge that, on Cuneo's view, is best explained by knowing-how:

For in knowing how to do such things as bless, petition, and thank God, one thereby knows how to engage God in such a way that one can know God in the sense of knowing how to live in communion or be in rapport with God. That, I believe, is where the importance of ritual knowledge lies. (Cuneo 2014, 367)

Cuneo's focus is on investigating the nature of ritual knowledge. Concentrating on the nature of faith, and inspired by Cuneo, Sliwa (2018) suggests that faith must be partly explained in terms of know-how: in his terms, 'faith is partly a matter of know how'. Let us call this view 'faith as know-how':

Faith as know-how

Faith is partly constituted by knowing how.

The model of *Faith as know-how* has something in common with the proposal I will develop in what follows. In order to support *Faith as know-how*, Tabataba'i and Silwa appeal to the practicality and the gradability of faith, which we considered, in turn, in the first and the fourth desideratum. I will propose a similar suggestion that satisfies not only these two but also all five defined desiderata.

When Tabataba'i, Cuneo, and Silwa suggest that faith is partly a matter of knowing how to do a task, they are primarily concerned with *practical* tasks such as religious rituals. As an example, Sliwa (2018, 246) writes:

Religious faith, too, is manifested in acts of faith: attending worship, singing the liturgy, fasting, embarking on a pilgrimage.

Inspired by the proponents of *Faith as know-how*, I also propose that faith involves something like knowing how to do a task. However, what I add is that we should be concerned with not only practical but also moral and intellectual tasks. Therefore, my main proposal is that faith is partly constituted by practical, moral, and intellectual skills:

Faith as skill

Faith is partly constituted by practical, moral, and intellectual skills.

I claim that the model of *Faith as skill* can properly satisfy all five desiderata introduced above.¹⁹

Faith as practical skill

First, consider the idea that faith is partly a matter of practical skill. Recall the principle of the relationship between faith and religious action, according to which faith has an explanatory priority to, and can manifest in, religious actions. This principle has a straightforward explanation, provided we think of faith as partly constituted by practical skill. It is a platitude that practical skill has an explanatory priority over successful actions and can manifest in them. A skilled archer succeeds in hitting a target *because* she has a skill of archery; her successful shooting manifests her skill in doing so. Likewise, a person who has faith in Islamic doctrine is successful in performing Hajj *because* she is skilled in performing the required actions for Hajj (performing Tawaf, running between Safa and Marwah, etc.). Her faith, which is constituted by relevant practical skills, is manifested in these actions. Therefore, since, according to our suggestion, practical skill is a part of faith, we can easily accommodate the first desideratum which says faith has an explanatory priority over doing practical religious tasks and manifests in them.

The same point can be made by appealing to the idea that both faith and skill involve a disposition to act. On the one hand, as quoted from Buchak (2012, 226) above, ‘faith is . . . linked to a *disposition* to act’. On the other hand, it is a widely accepted view in the literature on skill that skills consist of dispositions to successful actions. In Pavese and Beddor’s terms (2022, 10), ‘Perhaps the most common conception of skills in the literature takes skills to be dispositions to succeed at the task at hand.’²⁰ *Faith as skill* suggests that faith inherits its dispositional nature from skill. Faith involves dispositions to act because it contains practical skills. In which case, the first desideratum, that is, the fact that faith plays an explanatory role in doing religious practical tasks, can be best explained in virtue of the idea that faith is partly constituted by practical skills.

As a result, one part of the model of *Faith as skill*, that is, the idea that faith is partly a matter of practical skill, can properly explain the principle of the relationship between faith and religious actions.²¹

Faith as moral skill

Let’s turn to the second desideratum, namely, the maxim of the relationship between faith and moral virtues, according to which someone who exemplifies faith is required to have at least *some* moral virtues. The model of *Faith as skill* provides us with a plausible explanation of this maxim. Proponents of virtue ethics have recently developed an account that describes moral virtues as skills. In her article ‘Virtue as a Skill,’ Annas (1995) influentially argues for one version of this account, and in ‘Ethical Expertise: The Skill Model of Virtue,’ Stichter (2007) supports another version of it. If, following these virtue theorists, we admit that moral virtues are kinds of skill, then *Faith as skill* can best explain the maxim of the relationship between faith and moral virtues. In light of this view, someone who exemplifies faith has relevant moral skills that are constituents of her moral virtues. Someone who is a good example of faith has, for example, the relevant skills of being honest, and therefore, when possessing faith, she has the moral virtue of honesty.

One line of reasoning in favour of the claim that moral virtues are skills is that, like paradigm cases of skills, moral virtues can be improved via practice. Borrowing ideas

from recent literature on practising, Fridland and Stichter (2021, 1342) follow this line of reasoning, arguing in detail how our moral virtues, like paradigms of skills, are improved via feedback such as ‘reactions from others’ in practice:

Such feedback can help us learn the difference between honesty and brutal frankness, for instance . . . Often, we will have to learn virtue through real-life experiences, and growth will be incremental, but it’s also well recognized that developing virtue is a lifelong practice.

Thus there are good reasons to think that moral virtues are improved via practice. On the other hand, skills are paradigms of what can be learned by doing and improved via practising. Therefore, it would be plausible to consider moral virtue as a kind falling under the general category of skills, namely, states that are learned by doing and improved by practising.

We observed in the previous section that having faith requires one to have at least some moral virtue. Now we see that there are good reasons to think of moral virtues as skills. It follows, thus, that there are good reasons to think that faith requires skill of some kind – namely, moral skill. In this way, the part of the model of *Faith as skill* that suggests that faith is partly constituted by moral skills provides a basis to satisfy the second desideratum, accounting for the maxim of the relationship between faith and moral virtues.

Faith as intellectual skill

The model of *Faith as skill* can also satisfy the third desideratum, showing how faith can result in some instances of religious propositional knowledge, accounting for the thesis of the priority of faith over knowledge. Given the idea that faith is partly a matter of *intellectual* skill, this priority thesis is best supported by accounts that suggest that propositional knowledge should be explained in terms of intellectual skill. One prominent account of this kind is virtue reliabilism, chiefly developed by Sosa. He characterizes knowledge as ‘apt belief’, that is, ‘as belief that gets it right through competence rather than luck’ (Sosa 2015, 10). According to Sosa, competence is a skill when both its internal enabling conditions (shape) and external enabling conditions (situation) are met. ‘The complete competence [is] the Skill, Shape, and Situation, SSS complete knowledge-constitutive competence’ (Sosa 2015, 61). With this idea on the table, Sosa explains propositional knowledge of different kinds in terms of different kinds of intellectual skills. His goal is ‘to explain knowledge of all sorts, including sorts where the competences involved are those of a skilled art critic, scientist, mathematician, or detective, [etc.]’ (Sosa 2015, 37). I suggest that we can extend Sosa’s insight to the *religious* domain, proposing that some instances of propositional religious knowledge are best explained in virtue of the possession of religious intellectual skills.

To illustrate the basic idea, consider an expert radiologist and a non-expert person who both look at a medical image of a patient. The non-expert person does not see anything meaningful in the image, whereas the radiologist recognizes the type of disease of the patient simply by looking at it. The expert, unlike the non-expert, acquires knowledge of the type of disease *because* the expert, and not the non-expert, possesses relevant intellectual skill, meaning the intellectual skill plays an explanatory role in the constitution of the relevant knowledge. Using Sosa’s language, the knowledge-constitutive skill of the expert *manifests* in her true belief regarding the type of disease, and her successful recognition is *attributable* to his medical skill.

According to the model of *Faith as skill*, the same goes for at least some instances of religious understanding and knowledge. Religious faith provides a person of faith with

a set of intellectual skills that constitutes a religious understanding of the world. The person who has faith acquires, for example, the skill of understanding beautiful aspects of nature, such as the beautiful night sky, as signs from God. Just as the expert radiologist's intellectual skills make her immediately perceive the image as a sign of the disease, the faithful person's intellectual skills bring her immediately to perceive the beautiful night sky as the manifestation of the beauty and glory of God. In other words, her religious aesthetic skill and also her faith *manifests* in the religious knowledge that the beautiful night sky is a sign from God. We credit her as a faithful person for this manifestation of her religious skill.

As another example, recall that the Bible asserts that faith provides people with knowledge of the fear of God. When we are inclined, for example, to betrayal or lie, if we are skilled in having faith, we would be aware of the knowledge that the faithful are in fear of God; in other words, our skilful faith *manifests* in this religious knowledge in relevant critical situations.²² Another example is that while an atheist conceives the cancer from which she suffers as bad luck, a theist may conceive of it as a divine affliction or test. We credit her with faith because of this religiously masterful understanding of her disease. Notice that the examples we have considered here are instances of ordinary religious knowledge. The excellent versions of this religious knowledge via faith-constitutive intellectual skill are the prophets' revelations and the inspirations of saints. Therefore, according to the model of *Faith as skill*, religious intellectual skill provides a person who has faith with a perspective on the world and on life that yields religious knowledge and understanding either at an ordinary or at an excellent level.

Here *Faith as skill* has something in common with reformed epistemology. Both recognize a religious intellectual capacity that results in religious propositional knowledge. The difference, however, is that reformed epistemology is rooted in Plantinga's version of externalism and considers the capacity to be a brute faculty,²³ whereas *Faith as skill* borrows ideas from virtue reliabilism, describing it as a kind of skill. According to *Faith as skill*, unlike what the reformed epistemologists suggest, the capacity for understanding the world and life in a religious way is not a brute capacity which is given to some people once and forever; rather, it is an intellectual capacity that people can acquire and improve with training and by engaging in religious activity. The more a person trains and has experience of seeing the world from a religious perspective, the better the version of this intellectual capacity she has. Given that 'skill is a paradigm of what can be improved with training' (Stanley and Williamson 2017, 721), it follows that the intellectual capacity which partly constitutes faith and furnishes us with religious perspective is a kind of skill.²⁴

As a result, with the idea that faith is partly a matter of intellectual skills at hand, *Faith as skill* can easily satisfy the third desideratum and explain the thesis of the priority of faith over knowledge. According to this model, faith results in at least some instances of religious propositional knowledge because faith is partly a matter of religious intellectual skill and this skill constitutes that knowledge and manifests in it.²⁵ In light of this account, Anselm's doctrine of 'faith seeking understanding' means that one should try to acquire and improve the religious intellectual skills which provide one with a special perspective on the world and life, which in turn yields religious understanding.

Faith as gradable skill

Let us turn to the fourth desideratum, providing a basis for the axiom of the gradability of faith. As Sliwa (2018, 256) clearly asserts, faith has several components that admit gradability, one of which is know-how:

Faith emerges as a rich and complex psychological state, which involves doxastic elements, conative states, as well as practical knowledge. All these elements admit of

degrees, and so an agent's degree of faith is partly determined by the strength of her desires and on her degree of know-how.

To the extent that know-how typically entails skill (Pavese 2016), the above claim can properly be applicable to skill too. Faith is gradable *partly* because faith-constitutive skills are gradable. Notice that I don't deny the clear fact that other components of faith are also to some extent responsible for its gradability. For example, consider two persons who have the same degree of all elements regarding faith, including the same degree of skill, except for their levels of trust in God. It is obvious that, while having the same level of skill, they have different levels of faith due to their different levels of trust in God. I don't deny this obvious fact. What I argue for is that, other things being equal, someone who has a higher degree of the skills relevant to faith has a higher level of faith too.

One part of the gradability of faith that may be explained in terms of skill is relevant to practical and moral tasks. For example, we attribute a higher degree of faith to Mother Teresa *partly* because she was more successful in helping other people and engaging in charitable work. This high degree of successful religious practice is partly explained in terms of her high degree of moral and practical skills in helping other people. Similarly, Christ had a higher degree of faith than ordinary people since, in addition to his great love of God, he was more skilled in, for example, guiding other people through loving them. Muhammad had a better version of faith than others since, in addition to a high degree of trust in God, he was more skilled in, for example, behaving piously. Therefore, *Faith as skill* provides a *partial* explanation of the gradability of faith regarding practical and moral tasks.

In addition to that, this model can best explain the gradability of faith concerning *intellectual* tasks. One reason for admiring religious figures with high degrees of faith is that they have more valuable religious knowledge and understanding than others. In light of *Faith as skill*, this is because these figures are more skilled in performing relevant intellectual tasks. A paradigmatic instance is the skill of receiving revelation. Only a few religious people with a very high degree of faith can attain this religious intellectual skill. It seems, therefore, that the model of *Faith as skill* best allows us to capture the intuition behind the axiom of the gradability of faith concerning not only practical and moral but also intellectual tasks.

Faith as both gift and achievement

Turning to the fifth and final desideratum, *Faith as skill* offers a straightforward solution for the dilemma of faith as a gift or an achievement. The key point is that skills typically involve two distinct components: (1) an inherent talent which is either a gift of God (from a theistic viewpoint) or a gift of nature (from an atheistic viewpoint); (2) a volitional component which is best exemplified in hard training. Michael Phelps has a special inborn mental talent and physique suitable for swimming; but he has also practised swimming for several hours every day. An inherent talent together with a volitional component thus typically play the main roles in the constitution and improvement of a skill. The same goes for faith, provided the model of *Faith as skill* is on the right track. Some people have a special inborn talent for the acquisition of, and improvement in, practical, moral, and intellectual skills which are partly constitutive of faith. For example, prophets seemingly are gifted with this special inborn talent. There are several reports in religious texts that prophets as well as many other religious figures showed this peculiar talent from early periods of their life. However, like every other kind of potential talent, the inborn talent of practical, moral, and intellectual skill relevant to faith requires effort and

training to flourish. Again, similar to every other kind of skill, one may have an average inborn intellectual, moral, and practical capacity required for faith-constitutive skills, but reach high levels of this kind of skill due to hard effort.

Recall the dilemma of faith as a gift or an achievement: On the one hand, parts of the doctrine of the Abrahamic religions suggest that faith is a kind of gift that God gives anyone He wishes; on the other hand, according to other parts of this doctrine, faith is an achievement, that is, something people acquire due to their will and efforts.

On the basis of the model of *Faith as skill*, I can propose that the parts of the doctrine of the Abrahamic religions that suggest that faith is a kind of gift are concerned with the inherent talent which is the first component of acquiring skills relevant to faith; and the parts that suggest that faith is an achievement that is acquired due to effort are concerned with the volitional element which is the second component of acquiring skills relevant to faith. As a result, *Faith as skill*, unlike reformed epistemology that pays attention only to the first component of faith, recognizes a volitional component for it, and, unlike volitionalist accounts that restrict themselves to the second component, shows us how it can be the case that faith is a kind of gift. In which case, the model of *Faith as skill* satisfies the fifth desideratum and solves the dilemma without violating either of the two conflicting basic intuitions which produce this dilemma.²⁶

Let us briefly discuss some worries about and objections to the model of *Faith as skill*.

One might worry that, according to *Faith as skill*, it is not clear how skill is related to other components of faith not discussed above, such as trust, love, belief, reason, will, etc. Is it irrelevant to them? Doesn't *Faith as skill* owe us an account of how skill is related to them?

In replying, constraints of space prevent me from discussing all of these components here. I therefore confine myself to just one of them, namely trust, which is widely accepted as a component of faith in both Christian and Islamic texts.²⁷ I suggest two brief explanations of the relationship between skill and trust as two components of faith. The first is that faith-constitutive skill is relevant to faith-constitutive trust since the latter can play a role in the acquisition of the former. It is a general point that trust in a teacher and her instructions plays a significant role in the acquisition of skills.²⁸ A novice may not understand the meaning and importance of the movements her instructor prescribes, but she should trust her instructor and endure the hardship of the prescribed training in order to acquire the skill. Thus, trust has a key role in the acquisition of a skill.

Something similar to the above point can be applied to the trust and skill relevant to faith. Trust in God, prophets, and their instructions help people to acquire and manifest skills relevant to faith. Think, for example, of the skill of being patient and grateful to God when something tragic occurs, such as losing a loved one. We do not understand the meaning of this bitter loss, but trust in God helps us to manifest the skill of being patience and gratitude nonetheless. This point can be made even more clearly regarding faith-constitutive intellectual skills. In order to obtain the intellectual skills that provide us with a religious perspective on the world, we should *engage* with and *involve* ourselves in religious experiences, living in a religious atmosphere and participating in its form of life. If we think that religious experiences are illusions or that trying to have them is a waste of time, we cannot really engage with them. If we trust in this way of being, however, we are able to engage with it sincerely, and through this we can acquire intellectual skills that furnish us with a religious perspective on the world. Thus trust as one component of faith can play a key role in the acquisition of relevant skills as another component of faith.

My first explanation of the relationship between faith-constitutive trust and skill suggests that trust is more fundamental. There is, however, a second suggestion I tentatively propose in favour of the reverse order of explanation, according to which, although trust

plays a role in the acquisition of other skills, an ability to trust properly itself is a kind of skill. To manifest this ability, we should be sensitive to relevant doubts and ignore irrelevant ones. This flexible, rational, intuitive sensitivity, which can be improved via practice, can be thought of as skill. There are at least some contexts in which we are happy to describe trusting properly as the manifestation of skill. Consider someone who has been the subject of betrayal several times. She may be pessimistic about other people and probably has difficulties in trusting in the future of her relationships even with trustworthy persons. In such a context, it would be plausible to say to her that 'you should revive the skill of trusting trustworthy persons'. This piece of linguistic evidence provides a *prima facie* reason for the claim that trust is a kind of skill. No doubt a much more detailed analysis would be required to support this claim. Nonetheless, if my tentative suggestion is finally tenable, skill would be more fundamental than trust in the order of explanation of faith.²⁹

A second objection can be framed as two cases that seem to be counterexamples for the model of *Faith as skill*. Consider Ahmed who has recently converted to Islam and has tried to learn skills relevant to the Islamic faith, such as the skills of performing daily prayers, fasting, doing Hajj, etc. However, unfortunately, a fake cleric has deceived Ahmed and he is entirely confused regarding the way of doing these tasks such that from a third-person viewpoint his movements cannot be properly described as, for example, praying or doing Hajj. Ahmed does not have relevant practical skills. Is his state an instance of faith?

The case, I think, is underspecified. What about the intellectual and moral skills relevant to faith? Let us suppose that Ahmed has none of them, that is, he has converted to Islam on the basis of an intellectual vice, for example, close-mindedness, is not able to understand the world and life from a religious perspective, and also does not have moral virtues, such as honesty, kindness, charity, etc. In this case I think we are strongly inclined to think that Ahmed does not really have faith. Now let's change the scenario such that Ahmed has some intellectual and moral skills relevant to faith. For example, he is skilled in understanding the beauty of nature in a religious way and has also several moral virtues such as honesty, kindness, and charity. I think adding these pieces of skills to the case changes our intuitions such that we are now happy to attribute faith to Ahmed.³⁰ The moral we can draw from the case is that although it is not the case that all instances of intellectual, moral, and practical skills relevant to faith are necessary for having faith, having *some* of them (in this case, some instances of the relevant intellectual and moral skills) is indeed necessary.

Here is another putative counterexample to *Faith as skill*. Jessica has recently converted to Christianity. She loves God and believes the doctrine of Christianity based on her trust in Jesus. However, she is so new to everything that she has not developed the intellectual and practical skills relevant to this religion. It seems that Jessica has faith without having relevant skills.

The first reaction to this objection, once again, is to request more specification: what about the moral skills? It is hard to think that she is so new to everything that she is not familiar with the moral virtues. If Jessica has not at least some moral virtues, if she is, for example, dishonest, unkind, stingy, etc., we are not inclined, I think, to attribute faith to her. Setting the component of moral skill aside, the second point is that even if we are not reluctant to think that Jessica has faith, her state would be an incomplete, elementary faith. This is reasonable advice to Jessica:

In order to complete your faith, you should learn and do God's instructions.

The crucial point is that while there are no relevant skills in this elementary faith, there is a *commitment* to learning these skills. Let us change the scenario such that someone who is

familiar with Jessica's character tells us that she will never try to learn and do God's instructions. In which case, I think, we will have doubts about attributing faith to her. If enough time passes and Jessica doesn't try to learn skills relevant to faith, we will really come to doubt whether she has faith in Christianity, trust in Jesus, and love of God. In such contexts, it would be reasonable to say to her that:

If you have *really* faith in Christianity, you should learn and do Christian practice.
If you *truly* love God and have trust in Jesus, you should learn and do their instructions.

This suggests that elementary faith (and also religious trust and love) involves a commitment to the acquisition and manifestation of relevant skills.

Given the above objections, it may seem controversial to claim that skill is the most fundamental constituent of faith. However, even if we admit that love and trust are more fundamental constituents of faith, my arguments support the two following claims: (1) The full-fledged faith consists of intellectual, moral, and practical skills. (2) The trust and love that constitute the elementary faith consist of a commitment to the acquisition and manifestation of at least some intellectual, moral, and practical skills.³¹

Conclusion

I have tried to develop an account of faith in the Abrahamic tradition that satisfies the five desiderata for every plausible account of faith. Following the idea of *Faith as know-how*, I sought to characterize and support the model of *Faith as skill*, according to which faith is partly constituted by intellectual, moral, and practical skills, showing how this model satisfies all five desiderata. I also argued that even if trust and love are more fundamental in the constitution of an elementary version of faith, they involve a commitment to the acquisition and manifestations of at least some of these skills. I do agree that faith understood in the Abrahamic traditions may involve other components³² such as will, belief, reason, and even verbal expression. However, I hope that my arguments in the present article provide a proponent of the model of *Faith as skill* with a touchstone for future work on other aspects of the nature of faith from the viewpoint of this novel account.³³

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Notes

1. Owing to limitations of space, among the other Abrahamic traditions I focus only on the Christian and Islamic traditions. Whether my suggestion is true for Judaism and other Abrahamic traditions needs to be investigated independently. However, one might have doubts whether there is actually one common notion of faith among the Abrahamic traditions, including Christianity and Islam. In reply, notice, first, that I don't think that the notions of faith in Christianity and Islam are identical. In my view, the Abrahamic notion of faith can be thought of as a *genus* of which the Islamic and Christian versions of faith are *distinct* kinds. Given the common historical roots and their similarities in various respects, it would be *prima facie* appropriate to assume that there is such a

common general conception of faith among the Abrahamic traditions. That said, I emphasize that this assumption is not a crucial part of my account. Setting this assumption aside, the gist of my suggestion that skill plays a significant role in the Christian and Islamic notions of faith remains intact.

2. It is worth emphasizing, again, that I do not discuss non-religious conceptions of faith. Thus, in what follows, when I use the term 'faith' I mean religious faith. Note also that it is common to distinguish between propositional faith (faith that P) and objectual faith (faith in someone and something). As will be clear below, both versions can be explained in terms of the central idea of my account.

3. There are similarities between the lexical meaning of 'iman' and the corresponding terms in Christianity and Judaism. For example, the Hebrew term for faith is 'emunah', and in biblical and rabbinic thought one of the root meanings of 'emunah', as it is for 'iman', is 'acceptance' (Manekin 2005, 294). Moreover, the root of the term 'iman' in Arabic is 'al-amn', and for Ibn Manzur (1984, vol. 13: 21), 'al-Amn is the opposite of fear'. Therefore, another sense that lexicographers consider for 'iman' could be *confidence*. Interestingly, the Greek word for faith, namely 'pistis', which is the root of the concept of faith in Christianity, can be interpreted as 'confidence' (McKaughan and Howard-Snyder 2022, 641). These similarities are *prima facie* reason to believe that the various notions of faith in the Abrahamic traditions share a common genus.

4. However, unlike the Khawarij, they don't consider someone who commits a grave sin to be a faithless person; rather, according to them, 'The grave sinner . . . must be placed in an intermediary position between infidelity (*kufur*) and faith (*Iman*)' (Fakhry 2004, 46).

5. Even someone who is not happy with these lines of reasoning, and thinks that religious actions are parts of religious faith, may still be sympathetic to our final suggestion. See note 21 for a relevant point.

6. Regarding this verse, Henry (2018, 1339) writes: 'The trial of Abraham's faith was that he simply and fully obeyed the call of God.' To say that Abraham's faith was tested by calling on him to perform that specific act is another way of saying that his faith was manifested in this action.

7. One of these controversies is that if the Abrahamic traditions are morally defensible, why do they inspire some of their followers to fall into the trap of extremism? Interestingly, however, Cassam reminds us that even religious extremism arises from an intense preoccupation with virtue: 'no account of [the extremist] mind-set can afford to ignore its preoccupation with virtue' (Cassam 2021, 94).

8. In considering this maxim as a distinct desideratum of faith, I am indebted to a reviewer for *Religious Studies*.

9. An adequate account of faith ought to provide us with an answer to this question, but I don't have space to develop such an answer in this article. Nonetheless, in note 32 I propose a sketch of a tentative response which is inspired by the general account suggested in the present article.

10. It might be objected that the verse does not tell us that what Allah gives to someone who has faith is necessarily a kind of knowledge. Perhaps one is guided by receiving something other than knowledge. In response, as I asserted at the outset, most parts of sacred texts are open to different readings. And I don't claim that all interpretations of the parts of sacred texts which I consider as pieces of exegetic evidence for my account support it. That said, in what follows, I address exegetes that endorse my reading of the verse.

11. When discussing this verse, Matthew Henry (1338) writes: 'Faith proves to the mind, the reality of things that cannot be seen by the bodily eye.' This is a confirmation that faith results in a kind of knowledge.

12. As mentioned above, many of these instances of knowledge due to faith clearly have propositional content. I assume that the content of the above instances of knowledge that are similar to knowledge by acquaintance – for example, knowledge of the fear of God – can be translated to propositional content. But my account does not rest upon this assumption. See note 22.

13. When interpreting the second injunction to faith in this verse, Al-Mahalli and Al-Suyuti (2007, 107), two great Sunni exegetes of the Qur'an, add the constraint 'with perseverance', which is clearly a gradable notion. Moreover, Tabataba'i (1996, vol. 5), a great Shia exegete, asserts that the first reference to faith is to an abstract faith and the second reference is to a detailed faith. The move from an abstract conception to a detailed one can be properly thought of as an improvement. (Tabataba'i more clearly endorses the gradability of faith in another part of his commentary (1996, vol. 15: 7–10).) However, the commentary that most obviously endorses my reading of this verse is *Al-Kashaf*, written by Al-Zamakhshari, who construes the second reference to faith as 'being firm and persistent in faith and increase it' (2009, 265; emphasis added).

14. For example, in a commentary on Hebrews 5:11–20, Matthew Henry (1329) writes: 'Hope has its degrees, as faith also.'

15. In the commentary on the Gospel of John, Aquinas (2010, 21) draws the same conclusion as mine from this verse: 'faith is a gift of God, as Ephesians (2:8) maintains'.

16. There are several similar verses in the Qur'an. For other examples, see Qur'an 18:17, 39:36–37, 7:186. Faced with such verses, exegetes of the Qur'an typically divide into two camps. The members of the first camp, who are inclined to Ash'arism, take them at face value, suggesting that God, and not the people themselves, is the immediate and final cause of the guidance or misguidance of people: see, for example, Al-Fakhr Al-Din Al-Razi (1981,

vol. 15: 83). On the other hand, the members of the second camp, who are generally Mutazila or Shia, seek readings that make room for the idea that people themselves are the final causes and are responsible for being guided or misguided. See, for example, Al-Zamakshari (2009, 583). These two opposing views are analogous to the two sides of the dilemma I discuss in what follows.

17. 'Faith is a work – the main work, according to Calvin – of the Holy Spirit; it is produced in us by the Holy Spirit' (Plantinga 2000, 205).

18. Tabataba'i was crucially influenced by Mulla Sadra. When discussing the nature of faith, however, in contrast with his stance in most parts of his thought, Tabataba'i disagrees with Mulla Sadra, according to whom 'nothing defines faith except genuine [theoretical] knowledge' (1981, 5).

19. As I said in note 2, my suggestion is neutral about what kind of faith (propositional or objectual) is the basic kind. This is because each of the five desiderata is a desideratum for an account of faith, whether of propositional faith or objectual faith. Therefore, my suggestion, which is supported by its satisfying these desiderata, can be neutral regarding this issue. In other words, each of these two conceptions of faith is partly constituted by skills in exercising relevant practical, moral, and intellectual tasks.

20. Even intellectualists such as Stanley and Williamson (2017), who claim that the primary manifestation of all kinds of skills is knowledge, endorse that skill manifests secondarily in relevant actions.

21. As this principle suggested, I assume in this article that although faith plays an important role in explaining the execution of religious duties, doing them is not a part of faith. Even someone who disagrees with this assumption, and who thinks that one part of faith is doing practical religious tasks, must still acknowledge *Faith as skill* since it is clear that doing these tasks requires possessing and employing practical skills.

22. As said in note 12, one might worry that knowledge of the fear of God is an instance of knowledge by acquaintance, and that its content cannot be translated into propositional knowledge. I don't think that this is a reasonable assumption. However, even if someone does accept it, the model of *Faith as skill* can accommodate her intuition since it can be argued that knowledge-how and its relevant skill play a role in knowledge-by-acquaintance itself. See, for example, Cath (2019).

23. Plantinga (2000, 207) thinks of it as an instance of a testimonial faculty, 'Scripture is as much a matter of testimony as is a letter you receive from a friend.' It is definitely a *special* kind of testimony, however, that is, 'divine testimony'.

24. How does the intellectual religious capacity work? How can it be improved or deteriorated? Plantinga (2000, 205-207) claims that this capacity, in his terms, the 'sensus divinitatis' can be damaged and corrupted by sin; but he does not clearly spell out how sin functions to damage this intellectual capacity. Vahid (2019), however, provides us with a dispositional account of the sensus divinitatis, describing various interferers, including sins, as finks and maskers. This account is nicely compatible with my suggestion that this intellectual capacity is a kind of skill since, as I argued elsewhere, skills, too, are the kind of dispositions that can be finkish and masked (Khalaj and Shirazi 2022) (Khalaj 2021) (Khalaj 2022).

25. Notice that I argued for the strong reading of the thesis of the priority of faith over knowledge, according to which this is a *constitutive* priority. There can be a weaker reading of this priority on which it is only a *causal* priority. If the weaker reading is the case, 'Some instances of religious knowledge are the result of faith' means faith is only a cause of this knowledge. In the official version of *Faith as skill*, inspired by virtue reliabilism, I support the stronger reading of the priority. This version of *Faith as skill* is in accordance with anti-intellectualism about skill, according to which skills themselves are not constituted by propositional knowledge. If someone sides with intellectualism about skill, on which skill is constituted by propositional knowledge, then the weaker reading of the priority thesis is available to her. In which case, faith consists in intellectual skill that, on the one hand, is a cause of some religious knowledge, and, on the other hand, is itself constituted by other kinds of knowledge. In general, intellectualism about skill is consistent with cognitivism about faith (that faith is constituted by propositional knowledge), and anti-intellectualism about skill is compatible with non-cognitivism (that faith is *not* constituted by propositional knowledge) about faith. See note 32 for a relevant discussion.

26. Here is a relevant point regarding a closely related problem. According to common sense, it is fair to reward people based on their grades of skill. For example, it is fair to give the best gift to the person who lifts the heaviest weight, even when we know that part of this skill is due to an inborn physique suitable for lifting. I hope that this common-sense verdict along with *Faith as skill* can provide new solutions to problems around God's justice. However, developing this idea requires its own paper.

27. See Pace and McKaughan (2022) and Izutsu (1965) for explanations of the central role of trust in, in turn, the Christian and Islamic faith. I am grateful to a reviewer for *Religious Studies* for pushing me to discuss the relationship between trust and skill as two components of faith.

28. See, for example, Fisher and Tallant (2020).

29. There is a third explanation of the relationship between religious faith-constitutive trust and skill, according to which such a trust involves a *commitment* to the acquisition of skills. I return to this point in what follows. A

similar twofold strategy may also be helpful to cast light on the relationship between skill and love. Love can help in the acquisition of relevant skills and itself may be considered as a kind of skill.

30. The loss of skills relevant to faith leads, I think, to our changing our intuitions regarding ascriptions of faith conversely. For example, if Fatima had previously had several moral skills constitutive of virtues as well as the intellectual skill of understanding the world from a religious perspective, and then recently lost them, I believe we are inclined to think that she has lost significant parts of her faith.

31. It is a standard account in the literature that trust involves a kind of commitment. See, for example, Hawley (2014).

32. Perhaps the most relevant question we have not discussed is whether faith is reducible to knowledge, or at least partly constituted by it. In response to this question, scholars in both the Islamic and Christian traditions are divided into two camps: cognitivists answer 'Yes' and non-cognitivists 'No'. As said in note 25, philosophers in the literature on skill are divided into two similar groups: intellectualists argue that skill is reducible, or at least partly constituted by, knowledge, and anti-intellectualists deny this. It seems that a cognitivist version of *Faith as skill* can be motivated by an intellectualism about skill, and a non-cognitivist version of *Faith as skill* can be supported by an anti-intellectualism about skill. The official version of *Faith as skill* suggested here is compatible with anti-intellectualism about skill and non-cognitivism about faith. However, as said in note 25, someone can motivate an intellectualist and cognitivist version of *Faith as skill* if she chooses the weaker, merely causal, reading of the priority of faith over knowledge.

33. In order to have a comprehensive model of *Faith as skill*, there are several projects that need to be carried out, including addressing many worries and answering further questions. For example, throughout the article I frequently spoke of 'skills relevant to faith', and I specified general kinds and paradigm examples of these skills. However, one might want to know the precise borders of these skills. How, for instance, can we distinguish them from illusion or magic? Another difficult question is this: how can we make sense of converting from Christianity to Islam, or vice versa, in terms of skills? Can *Faith as skill* help us to understand such phenomena? These and other significant worries and questions arising from the model supported in this article are to be discussed in future work.

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