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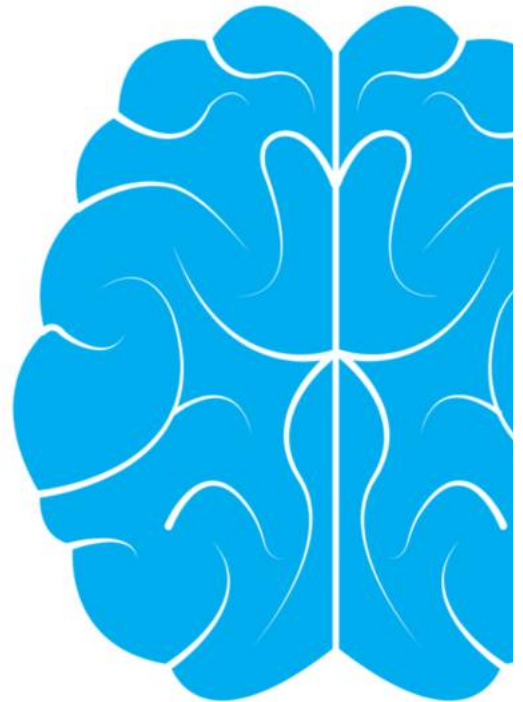
## Religious Knowledge Systems Notes

Post 17/17

# TOK NOTES

WOKs: Language, Sense Perception, Emotion,  
Reason, Imagination, Faith, Intuition and  
Memory

AOKs: Arts, Ethics, History, Human Sciences,  
Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Mathematics,  
Natural Sciences, and Religious Knowledge  
Systems



ToK Notes

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## Religion Quotes

- "There is only one religion, though there are a hundred versions of it." (George Bernard Shaw)
- "I believe in God, only I spell it Nature." (Frank Lloyd Wright)
- "Where knowledge ends, religion begins." (Benjamin Disraeli)
- "When I admire the wonders of a sunset or the beauty of the moon, my soul expands in the worship of the creator." (Mahatma Gandhi)
- "Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind." (Albert Einstein)
- "My religion is very simple. My religion is kindness." (Dalai Lama)
- "God is a metaphor for that which transcends all levels of intellectual thought. It's as simple as that." (Joseph Campbell)

# Religion Definitions

- "A specific fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a number of persons or sects." (Dictionary.com)
- "A set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies (God or gods), usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs." (Dictionary.com)



The modern word religion comes from **the Latin word religio**. To the ancient Romans "Religio was not based on "faith", but on knowledge, including and especially correct practice (Ando). Social harmony came from the gods were owed correct practice (i.e. ritual and sacrifice) from people and in return they received social harmony.

Anthropologists sometimes refer to religion simply as a "**cultural system**" because they can affect so many ways of how people think and act communities. Religion can act as a **strong social glue**, holding a community together, explaining the world and governing behavior without the requirement of additional justification. "Worldwide, **more than eight-in-ten people identify with a religious group**," while others (roughly 1.1 billion) don't (Pew). Religions play a strong role in communities. This positive effect can be evidenced by the words of the Dalai Lama, "My religion is very simple. My religion is kindness."

## Insights from religion

Religions help people learn all sorts of insights, the dominant of these being moral teachings. However, religions also serve as:

- **A way for believers pursue a different kind of self-knowledge** --getting in touch with insights (i.e. often from a combination of faith, emotion and intuition) which they might not have accessed otherwise. This could be called spiritual growth or enlightenment.
- **A historical source** --explaining for example how the world was formed.
- **A code of culture** for the community. In Japan, people follow religious rituals during ceremonies for births, weddings and funerals and many will also visit a shrine or temple at the New Year and participates in local festivals (matsuri), most of which have a religious significance (Japan-guide.com).
- A source of **insight into the sacred and divine**.

## Weaknesses of religious knowledge systems

It is certainly true that religions provide a path way to knowledge production. However, it is possible that all of these insights, produced through religions, could have been produced without the religion. Of course adherents of a religion would probably insist that the insights of the religion are true in a special way (more true?) than those of other religions or insights from other sources.

Let's look at some of the negative aspects of religion, for those seeking reliable insights.

- Religions **sometimes encourage their members to ignore opposing evidence** --especially in areas such as science or philosophy which can challenge religious teachings. This seems especially true very conservative or fundamentalist religious beliefs, which can discourage learning (Sherkat, 2010).
- Religions are also **sometimes encourage the poor treatment of unbelievers**. William Blake said "Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction." Put another way, "the perversion of religion has been a primary cause of social disintegration, intolerance, hatred, sexism, poverty, oppression and warfare down through the ages (Bahá'í). Religions are even blamed for starting most of majority of wars; however, a thorough analysis has shown that less than 7 percent of wars (123 of 1763) had a primarily religious cause (Phillips and Alan). Of course, in ToK we are more concerned with the ways religion helps people discover new knowledge, rather than how it makes people behave. At it's best, religions promote such traits as tolerance, humility, and compassion --all of which encourage the kind of knowledge production we focus on in Theory of Knowledge.

## Personal and shared religious knowledge

Religion is an interesting place to look at the interaction of shared and personal knowledge. Personal insights and meaning come from a combination of the knowledge received from the group and also from a person's unique experiences and ideas. **Each religion treats this aspect differently** and even within the religion, groups and individuals can have very different approaches.

- Within Christianity for example, Catholicism promotes a set of shared, [orthodox](#) teachings and practices much more than [Evangelicalism](#) which emphasizes a unique experience of being "born again" into a personal knowledge of God.
- Similarly, in Indian religions, it is emphasized that people must know their own Dharma (their own sense of what is right) since the Dharma asks believers to 'Reflect on its teachings and then do as you see fit' (Gita 18.63).

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3 Comments

**Melissa Schuurman**

How is the quality of knowledge measured in religious knowledge systems?

on Oct 15, 2018 [Reply](#)



**Kate Ross**

This should be the Reason notes according to the link .....

on Nov 6, 2017 [Reply](#)

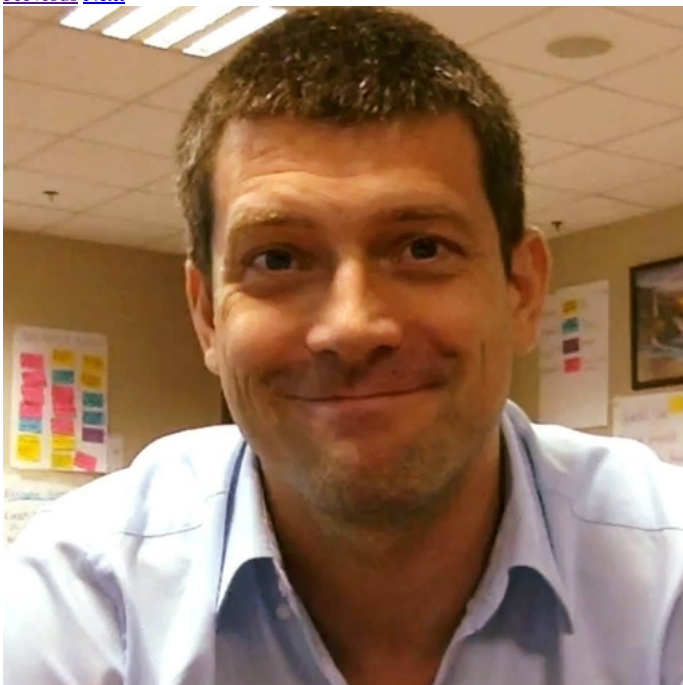


**Tim Woods**

Thanks. I just fixed that. :)

on Nov 6, 2017 [Reply](#)

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Tim Woods

ToK Teacher

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