

## Concepts related to belief

Knowledge

Evidence

Proof

Faith

Truth

Doubt

Trust

Hope

Disbelief

Reason

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## Philosophical terms related to belief and faith

Theism: the belief in the existence of one or more divinities or deities.

Atheism: the lack of belief in the existence of one or more divinities or deities; or, the denial of their existence. Broadly, the opposite of theism.

Agnosticism: the belief that definite knowledge is unattainable, in general or about a specific subject; especially, about the existence a deity or other religious concepts. (Sometimes also applied to mere lack of confidence on the subject.) (Not the opposite of Gnosticism.)

Rationalism: a philosophy that all or most knowledge is attainable by logical reasoning from clear evidence and/or the most basic truths. In extremes, denial of the validity of anything that cannot be so logically derived. (Pythagoras; Pascal; Descartes; Spinoza)

Postivism: an extension of rationalism; the philosophy that the only valid knowledge is that derived by the scientific process. Includes the concept that all demonstrable truths are therefore interrelated and interdependent. (Comte; Zola; Hawking; Dawkins)

Skepticism: classically, a refusal to assert positive truths; belief that no statement of truth can be made with confidence. (Also called pyrrhonism.) More generally, an attitude of doubt about propositions that have not been adequately explained or demonstrated. (Pyrrho; Hume; examined by Descartes)

Optimism: In philosophy, the doctrine that since (it is assumed) God created the world, and God is omnipotent, omniscient, and all good, this must be the best possible world. Any apparent flaws only indicate our lack of understanding. (Leibniz.)

Existentialism: the philosophy that existence is the only basis of meaning; there are no external essences or values by which people can be measured. Therefore meaning and coherence cannot be assumed; value in life can only be found by embracing existence and dealing with it rationally. (Kierkegaard; Nietzsche; Sartre)

“Pascal’s wager” (for discussion)

## “Truthiness”

I will speak to you in plain, simple English. And that brings us to tonight's word: 'truthiness.' Now I'm sure some of the 'word police,' the 'wordinistas' over at Webster's are gonna say, 'hey, that's not a word'. Well, anyone who knows me knows I'm no fan of dictionaries or reference books.

I don't trust books. They're all fact, no heart. And that's exactly what's pulling our country apart today. 'Cause face it, folks; we are a divided nation. Not between Democrats and Republicans, or conservatives and liberals, or tops and bottoms. No, we are divided between those who think with their head, and those who know with their heart.

Consider Harriet Miers. If you 'think' about Harriet Miers, of course her nomination's absurd. But the president didn't say he 'thought' about his selection. He said this:

(video clip of President Bush:) 'I know her heart.'

Notice how he said nothing about her brain? He didn't have to. He *feels* the truth about Harriet Miers.

And what about Iraq? If you think about it, maybe there are a few missing pieces to the rationale for war. But doesn't taking Saddam out feel like the right thing?

- Steven Colbert, on The Colbert Report, October 17, 2005

Colbert in a more serious moment:

Truthiness is tearing apart our country, and I don't mean the argument over who came up with the word...

It used to be, everyone was entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts. But that's not the case any more. Facts matter not at all. Perception is everything. It's certainty. People love the President because he's certain of his choices as a leader, even if the facts that back him up don't seem to exist. It's the fact that he's certain that is very appealing to a certain section of the country. I really feel a dichotomy in the American populace. What is important? What you want to be true, or what is true?...

Truthiness is 'What I say is right, and nothing anyone else says could possibly be true.' It's not only that I *feel* it to be true, but that *I* feel it to be true. There's not only an emotional quality, but there's a selfish quality.