

Knowledge Questions

The Heart of ToK

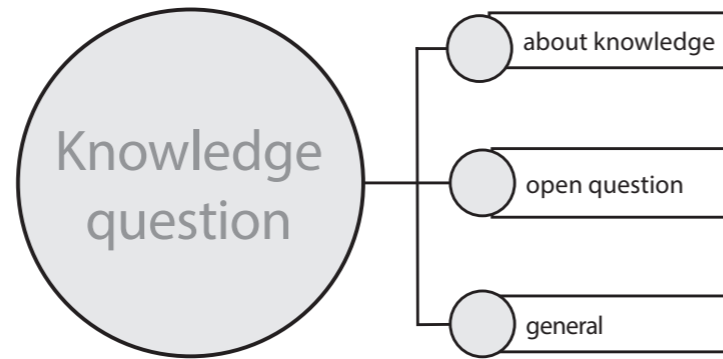
Key ToK Vocabulary

- Knowledge Claim - “An assertion that I/we know X” A knowledge claim is a statement about what is the case, a statement about the world.*
- Knowledge Question - "An open question about knowledge"* often dealing with the “reliability, nature and use of our knowledge claims”**
- “General ToK language” - Language used discuss and analyze knowledge (AoKs, WoKs, certainty, proof, modeling etc.)

*From the IB ToK Guide, 2015

** From Marilynne Sinclair ToK Category 2 CAWS workshop, 2017

Knowledge Questions



Instead of focusing on specific content, knowledge questions focus on how knowledge is constructed and evaluated

Knowledge questions don't have one single right answer. Knowledge questions (and their answers) are contestable

Knowledge questions are expressed in general terms rather than subject specific terms

*First order questions -
questions about things*

Real-life situation
Vocabulary specific to area of knowledge

- Particle
- Mass
- Energy
- Charge

Knowledge questions
General TOK vocabulary

- Hypothesis
- Certainty
- Belief
- Interpretation

*Second order questions -
questions about our knowledge of things*

Examples of KQs from IB ToK Guide

- What counts as evidence for X?
- What makes a good explanation in subject Y?
- How do we judge which is the best model of Z?
- How can we be sure of W?
- What does theory T mean in the real world?
- How do we know whether it is right to do S?

From KC to KQ

Vitamin supplements (a subject)

Harvard health newsletter suggests the supplements have little, or in some cases, no health benefits.

What is the knowledge claim (KC) that could be derived from this?

Vitamins have little/no health benefits.

Critical thinking can lead us to a level one KQ (KQ1)

“How did Harvard researches arrive at their conclusion about the value of vitamins.”

Thinking about the general principles involved in such a question lead us to a level 2 KQ (KQ2):

“How do we know if our method for achieving knowledge is reliable?”

Accessed on 8.13.17 at <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/dietary-supplements-do-they-help-or-hurt>

Level 1 KQ - KQ expressed using reference to the specific knowledge involved

A Level 2 KQ (or a pure KQ) is a KQ expressed completely in general terms using no content specific language.

Note how this process moves from the specific claim to the general principles expressed in “ToK language”

From KC to KQ

NPR story on naming racist protestors on social media (a subject)

What is the knowledge claim (KC) that could be derived from this story?

People have used social media to publicly identify people involved in racist protests.

Critical thinking can lead us to a level one KQ (KQ1)

“To what extent is it ethical to publicly identify people engaged in public protest”

Thinking about the general principles involved in such a question lead us to a level 2 KQ (KQ2):

How reliable is emotion as a guide to making knowledge claims in ethics?

Accessed on 8.15.17 at <http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2017/08/15/543566757/twitter-account-names-and-shames-far-right-activists-at-charlottesville>

Level 1 KQ - KQ expressed using reference to the specific knowledge involved

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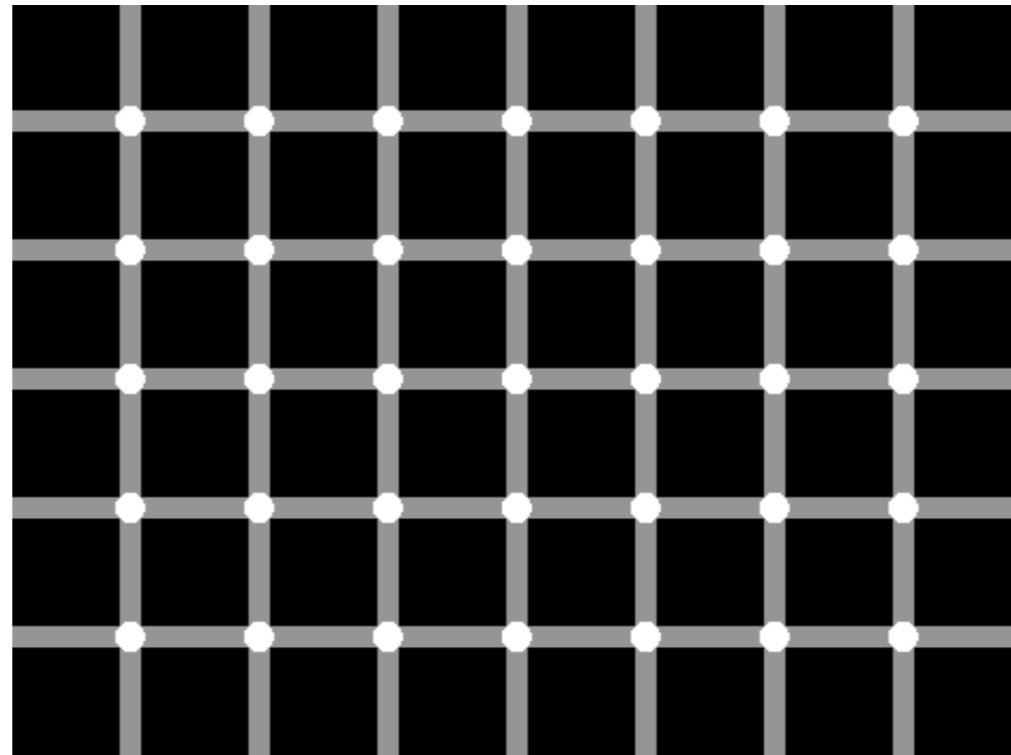
Note how this process moves from the specific claim to the general principles expressed in “ToK language”

In your groups, identify the KC, KQ1 and KQ2 (or none of the above) from the following. Be prepared to explain your rationale for categorizing each as you did

Truman's Decision in 1945

- How does Intuition work with evidence to establish truth?
- Military strategy
- How can we determine if wartime decisions are right?
- Truman ordered the use of the atomic bomb on Japan in 1945
- Was using the bomb the only option available to Truman?

Count the black dots



Based on the optical illusion on the previous slide, arrange the following statements from KC to Level 2 KQ

A.What can we learn from optical illusions

B.This is an optical illusion

C.Do the limitations of our sense perceptions help or hinder the pursuit of truth?

D.Why do optical illusions happen?

E.What, if anything, do optical illusions tell us about sense perception and truth

B
A
C
E
C