

Knowledge and Religion: Evidence of the Sacred 2

Lesson 2: Fact-Finding Task

Focus: *How do different forms of evidence shape our understanding of religious artifacts and miracles?*

Objectives	Evaluate religious artifacts and miracles using historical, scientific, and testimonial evidence. Critically analyze how different forms of knowledge shape our understanding of the authenticity of religious artifacts and miracles.
Homework Preparation Task	Case Study Task <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion Prompt: What kind of evidence is most convincing when evaluating religious artifacts?• Divide students into small groups and assign each group a case study related to the topic. Suggestions are listed below. Students will add their evidence to the Kialo discussion from Lesson 1. <p>Each group will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect on how these cases connect to the concepts discussed in Lesson 1.• Explore their assigned case using the provided resources (articles, videos, or curated primary sources).• Prepare a short presentation (5–10 minutes) responding to the following questions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What is the knowledge claim being made about the religious artifact or miracle?<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ What is believed about its authenticity or significance?■ Who promotes or defends this claim?○ What types of evidence support or challenge this knowledge claim?<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Is the evidence scientific, historical, testimonial, or experiential?■ How reliable is each type of evidence?○ Who controls the dominant narrative about this artifact or miracle, and why?<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Is it religious authorities, scientists, historians, or media?■ What interests or biases might they have?○ What ethical justifications or challenges exist in questioning or defending the claim?<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Is it ethical to debunk or question religious beliefs with scientific analysis?■ How does skepticism impact faith communities?○ How do power structures, cultural values, or historical contexts shape the knowledge in this case?

- Are certain perspectives privileged over others?
- How does culture influence belief in miracles?
- Can this knowledge claim ever be considered 'true' with certainty? Why or why not?
 - How does this case challenge or reinforce our understanding of certainty in knowledge?
 - Does faith require different standards of evidence than science?

Case Study Options

1. The Shroud of Turin:

- Focus: The debate over whether the Shroud of Turin is a genuine relic of Jesus Christ or a medieval forgery.
- Task: Examine the scientific, historical, and religious perspectives on the Shroud's authenticity.
- Resources:
 - [How did the Turin Shroud get its image?](#) – BBC History
 - [Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI](#)
 - [Shroud Of Turin - BBC Documentary](#)

2. The Weeping Statues:

- Focus: Reports of religious statues miraculously shedding tears or blood.
- Task: Compare supernatural claims with scientific explanations and psychological interpretations.
- Resources:
 - [A Message From Our Lady - Akita, Japan](#)
 - [Vatican overhauls how it evaluates visions of Mary](#)
 - [A "Weeping" Virgin Mary Statue Had Its Tears Tested](#)

3. The Hindu Milk Miracle:

- Focus: The 1995 phenomenon where Hindu statues were said to "drink" milk offerings.
- Task: Analyze cultural, scientific, and mass psychology explanations for the event.
- Resources:
 - [BBC – The Hindu Milk Miracle: Faith or Physics?](#)
 - [Idols 'drinking' milk is pure science](#)
 - [Indian Idols Drinking Milk](#)
 - [The 'milk miracle' that brought India to a standstill - BBC...](#)
 - Scientific studies on capillary action and optical illusions

4. Lourdes Healing Miracles:

- Focus: The claims of miraculous healing at the Lourdes pilgrimage site in France.
- Task: Evaluate medical records, personal testimonies, and theological interpretations of healing.
- Resources:
 - [The miracles of Lourdes](#)
 - [My miracles at Lourdes](#)
 - [Lourdes confirms 71st miracle](#)
 - First-person accounts from pilgrims

Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction (5 mins): Recap and frame the task <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap Lesson 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review key arguments from the debate on the validity of religious knowledge. ○ Reflection questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What makes religious knowledge different from other types of knowledge? ■ How do historical and scientific methods challenge or support religious claims? • Present the task's central question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How do different forms of evidence shape our understanding of religious artifacts and miracles? 2. Bridge to Lesson 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that students will investigate real-world examples of religious artifacts and miracles to explore how knowledge is constructed, challenged, and defended. 3. Presentations (30 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students present their case studies to the class. • Students should take note of any useful points from other groups' presentations to use in the Kialo discussion. 4. Recording Findings in a Kialo Discussion (20 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students use their case study and their peers' presentations to update and substantiate their arguments in their Kialo discussion from the previous session, focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conflicts between faith and empirical evidence: How does science validate or challenge religious claims? ○ Power and authority in knowledge: Who determines what is accepted as religious truth? ○ Cultural and historical influences: How do different societies treat religious artifacts and miracles? ○ Bias and justification: Are arguments based on faith inherently different from those based on reason?
Reflection Questions	<p>Class Discussion and Reflection (10 mins): Discuss the following reflection questions in open discussion or exit ticket format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does your case study shape your understanding of the relationship between faith-based and evidence-based knowledge? • Can religious artifacts and miracles ever be considered “true” with certainty? Why or why not? • What type of evidence is most convincing when evaluating religious knowledge—historical records, scientific testing, or personal belief? • If an artifact or miracle is widely accepted as real despite lacking scientific verification, does that make it true? • How do different standards of certainty apply to religious knowledge compared to scientific or historical knowledge? • Connect the cases to TOK concepts: Evidence, Truth, Certainty.

Resources	<p>Lesson Slides</p> <p>Kialo discussions from previous lesson</p>
TOK Concepts	<p>Evidence: How do different types of evidence (scientific, historical, testimonial) influence the credibility of religious artifacts and miracles?</p> <p>Truth: How can we understand the difference between truth based on scientific evidence and truth based on personal belief or faith?</p> <p>Certainty: Can religious knowledge ever reach the same level of certainty as empirical knowledge, or does it operate under different epistemological assumptions?</p>
Critical Thinking Concepts	<p>Confronting Biases and Assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating Confirmation Bias: Recognizing how religious believers and skeptics might selectively accept or reject evidence that aligns with their existing views. • Challenging the Assumption of Authority: Questioning whether religious institutions, scientists, or historians should have the final say on an artifact's authenticity. <p>Exploring Contexts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural and Historical Influence on Knowledge: Understanding how different societies and historical periods shape the way religious relics and miracles are perceived. • The Role of Power in Knowledge Claims: Examining how religious authorities, scientists, and media influence public belief about artifacts and miracles. <p>Responsiveness and Flexibility of Thought:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing Faith and Evidence: Considering whether personal belief and empirical evidence can coexist when evaluating religious claims. • Revising Perspectives: Encouraging students to adapt their views based on new information from case studies, scientific analysis, and historical accounts.