

Following Christ in College

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Cru

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Faith

Knowledge

What is the relationship between these?

Does faith shrink if knowledge grows?

What is Christianity in relation to these?



What is Christianity?

- ▶ The system of thought that surrounds the person and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth who died on a Roman cross so that we might be able to receive God's forgiveness for our fallenness

Following Christ in College

1. Christianity is a knowledge tradition
2. Why the university doesn't think so
3. Responding to the university

Knowledge Tradition

- ▶ Belief/faith tradition: a system of thought that does not necessarily correspond to reality
- ▶ Examples: Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny
- ▶ Basically: Any view of faith that concludes: the more one learns or knows, the less room one has for faith

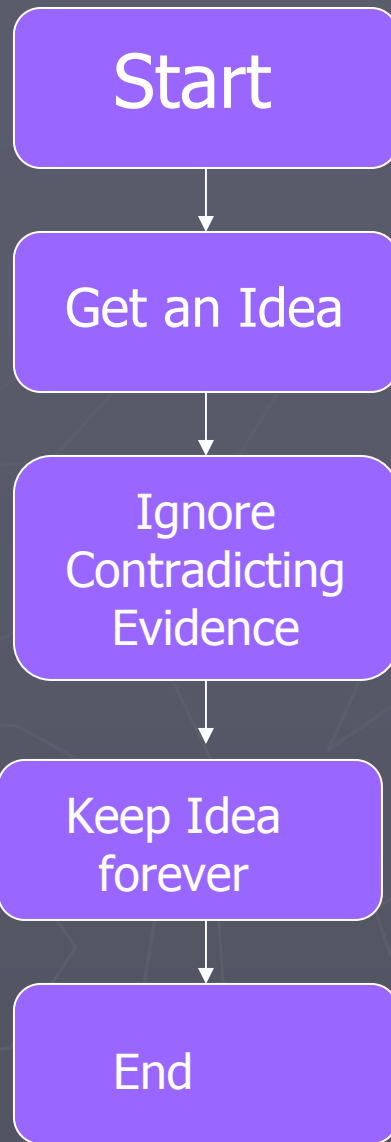


Diagram from
WellingtonGrey.net

Knowledge tradition

By contrast, a knowledge tradition has the understanding that what it takes to be true

- may be known to be true,
- which also means it may be falsified
- Further implies that Christianity is objective

What is knowledge?

“We have knowledge of something when we are representing it (thinking about it, speaking of it, treating it) as it actually is, on an appropriate basis of thought and experience.”

Dallas Willard, Knowing Christ Today

But knowledge is not the same as...

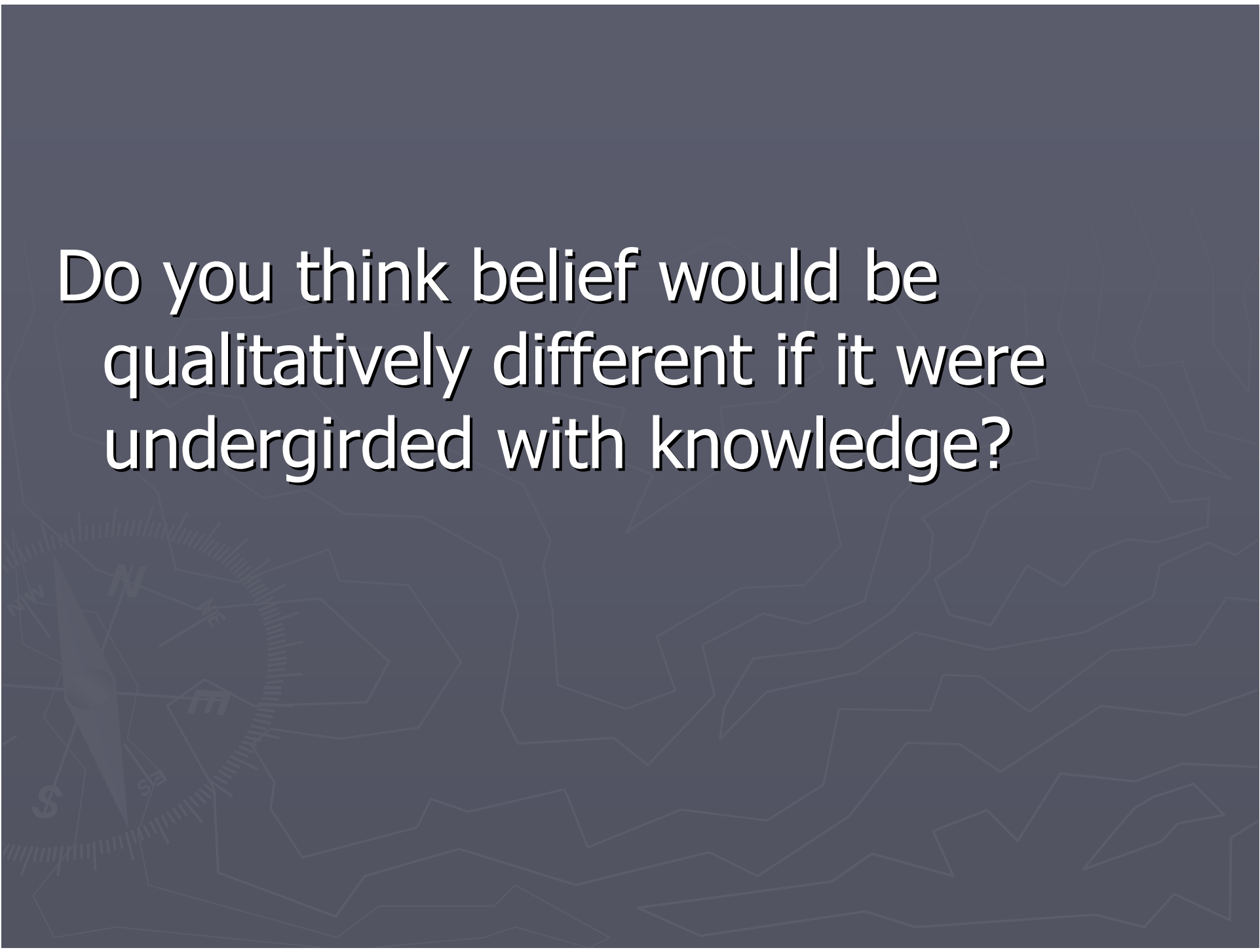
Belief

- ▶ Belief, which we often associate with faith, has no necessary connection to truth, good method, or evidence
 - Can you have a false belief?
 - Have you acted on false beliefs?

Belief

- ▶ Belief is a matter of *tendencies to act*
- ▶ I believe something when I am ready to act as if it is true.
- ▶ Belief involves the will the way K does not
 - If I believe that God exists, I will tend to act as if he exists.

Do you think belief would be qualitatively different if it were undergirded with knowledge?

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“Knowledge is Power”

If you know something, it puts you in a position to think and act confidently and with assurance



If Knowledge is Power, then...

“With great power comes great responsibility.”

-Uncle Ben
(not the rice man)



Dallas Willard

“Knowledge confers on its possessor an authority or right – even a responsibility – to act, to direct action, to establish and supervise policy, and to teach.”

Following Christ

If belief is a tendency to act,
and faith is equivalent to belief
and following Christ is a series of actions
by the follower,
and knowledge supports one's tendencies
to act,

Then knowledge is necessary for following
Christ.

How did this happen?

- ▶ One of the main factors was a redefinition of knowledge
 - Ideologically
 - Impact on university

Ideologically

▶ Francis Bacon

- The New Method for knowing, which we call the scientific method: hypothesis and verification through experiment
- Result
 - ▶ Restricted reason to one method
 - ▶ Made anything not of nature unknowable

Montague Brown, Restoration of Reason

Ideologically

▶ Immanuel Kant

- Phenomena/Noumena distinction

- ▶ We know things only as they appear to us (phenomena)
- ▶ We can't know things-in-themselves, things as they really are (noumena)

- Result

- ▶ Made knowledge, especially religious knowledge, subjective

Stephen J. Wellum, PhD. from Lecture notes on Postmodernism class 2002

Ideologically

▶ Charles Darwin

- Natural selection

- Result

 - ▶ Removed God further from involvement with nature

 - ▶ Seriously challenged religious understandings of nature and God's relation to it, including mankind

- This strengthened scientific knowledge even more via scientific method and left religious knowledge in the dust

Following Christ in College

Henry Poole Is Here



Fact/Value Distinction

- ▶ The scientific method gives us facts, that is, a third-person description of the world
- ▶ Values are dependent upon first-person perspective and thus are subjective

The Making of the Modern University, Julie Reuben, Harvard Press; JP Moreland summarizes Reuben's main points in The Kingdom Triangle.

Fact/Value Distinction

- ▶ These core ideas along with some others led to what is called the fact/value distinction.



Fact/Value's Effect on University

Up until 1880 colleges had two mandates:

- 1) The impartation of wisdom and knowledge and the tools needed to discover them
- 2) The development of spiritually, morally, and politically virtuous graduates who could serve God, the state, and the church well

Fact/Value's Effect on University

“The realm of religion and values became noncognitive (knowledge is not possible) and nonfactual (neither true nor false); the function of religion and ethics is to help people live better lives (whatever that means).”

- JP Moreland, *The Kingdom Triangle*

Fact/Value's Effect on University

What about the 2 mandates?



Fact/Value's Effect on University

What about the 2 mandates?

With regard to (1), the new goal was not the discovery of knowledge, but the facilitating of research that could provide useful information against a background of changing truth

Fact/Value's Effect on University

With regard to (2), ethical and religious training ultimately ended up in the realm of extra-curricular activities

Fact/Value's Effect on University

Administrators put several structures in place because of this:

- The expansion of dorms
- The office of Dean of Students, whose job was to facilitate spiritual and ethical community amongst students
- Freshmen Orientation: instituted as a means of socializing new students to the university community

Fact/Value's Effect on University

Problem: There was no agreement on which values these programs should aim to foster.

The second mandate devolved into a vague aim of developing a rich student life as part of the college experience.

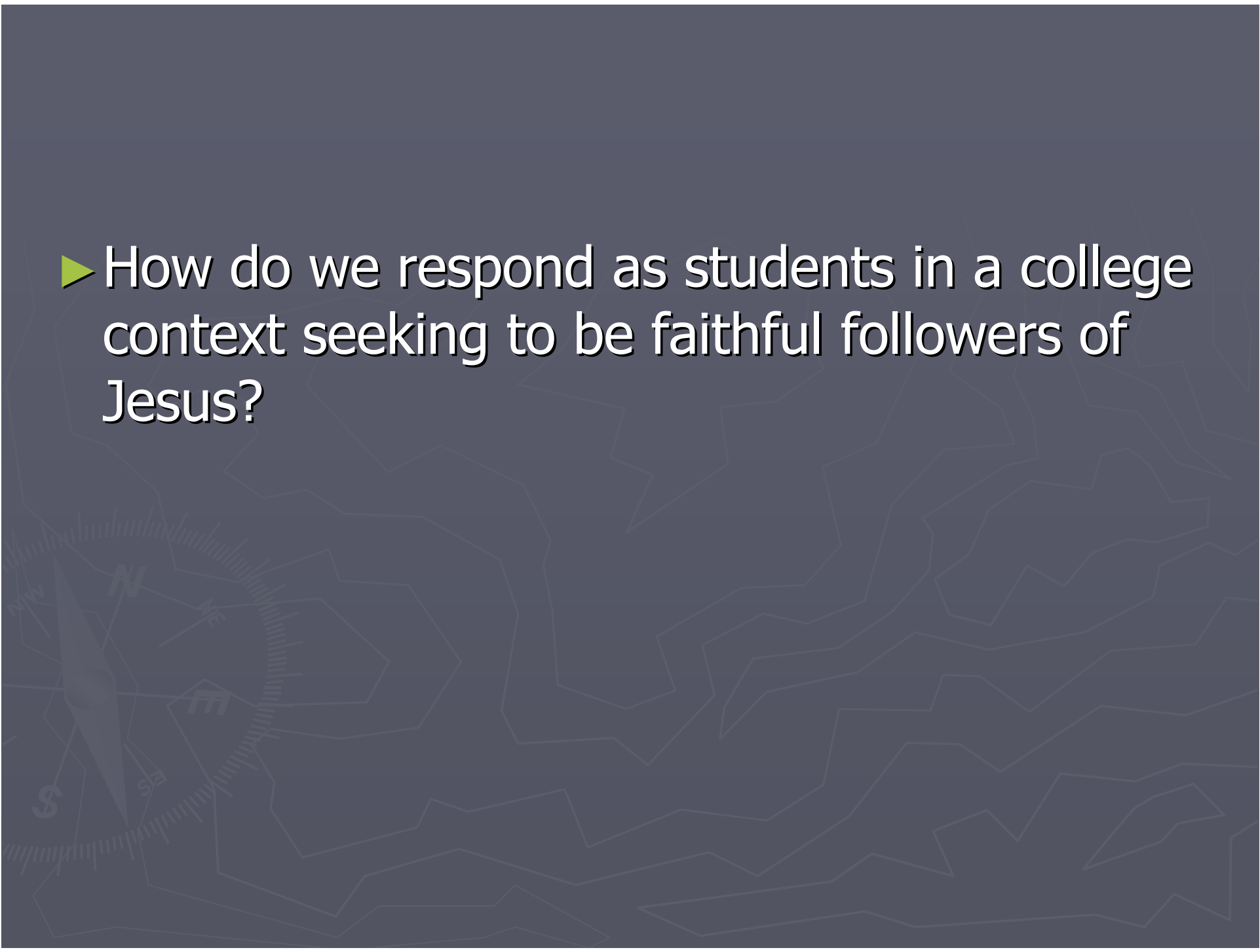
Fact/Value's Effect on University

As time went on, morality soon became morale or school spirit.

Thus, administrators of the American university measure their success in making virtuous graduates by how much and how hard one cheers for the school's athletic team.

Which one is more virtuous?



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- ▶ How do we respond as students in a college context seeking to be faithful followers of Jesus?

Response to the University

- Understand that Biblical faith is defined in terms of trust or confidence, not mere belief or commitment. (1Cor 15)

Response to the University

- As followers of Jesus Christ, we need to be people of knowledge.

“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will **know** the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (Jn 8:31-32)

Response to the University

- ▶ The Trinitarian Creator God provides the unifying basis for knowledge: all truth is God's truth
 - Your studies are a means to know God. If they are a means to know God, then they are a spiritual activity and thus contribute to spiritual growth.
 - Calls for discernment: not everything asserted in the classroom is knowledge

