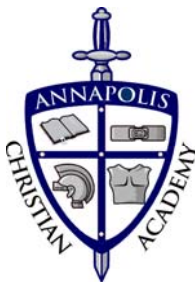


Can We Think Critically

Without Truth?

by Tim Moon



On the surface, this may seem like a confusing question. After all, how often do we take time out of our busy schedules to consider such an abstract question? While it is somewhat easier to recognize someone else's thinking as true or false, it is much more difficult to determine the exact role truth plays in thinking as a whole. Nevertheless, this question is fundamental to the very possibility of education and lies at the root of the difference between classical Christian and modern secular philosophies of education. Please indulge me as I take some time and develop this idea.

The very possibility of thought is intimately dependent on language and corresponds psychologically to the acquisition of language in children. I believe you all would agree that the greater a person's vocabulary, the greater is a person's capacity for thought. This is why as children grow in their knowledge of language, their thinking becomes more and more sophisticated and mature. Now, just as it is impossible for thought to exist without language, so is it impossible for truth to exist without language. Allow me to explain.

Logicians have long been pointing out the fact that the categories of truth and falsity are functions of language. We predicate truth and falsity on statements, not things. For example, while it makes sense to speak of the statements "All bachelors are unmarried males" or "Water freezes at thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit"

as true, it makes no sense whatsoever to speak of "true water" or "false bachelors." What would a bachelor that isn't a bachelor look like anyway? We say, then, that a statement is true when it corresponds to some reality, but we don't speak of reality itself as true or false. Rather, reality is the basis for truth and falsity. We know that our thought about reality is true when our language corresponds with an actual fixed state of affairs. Our thinking and speaking must "image" reality or "signify" it the way it is for our thought to be considered true.

Now, it is a fact that language and thought have certain laws that they must follow in order to "make sense" and arrive at truth. You can't just say any random thing that pops into your head and expect people to understand you. Likewise, you can't just follow any chain of reasoning no matter how disconnected and arbitrary and expect to arrive at truth. But what, you ask, are these so-called rules of language and thought? The answer is logic. Logic derives from the Greek word, 'Logos', which means 'word' or 'account' or even 'explanation.' The laws of logic govern our thought and our language and enable us to speak and think about reality truthfully. That is, they enable our thoughts and words to correspond with reality. Consider this simple statement: "Abraham Lincoln was the sixteenth President of the United States." This statement is either true or false, but it can't be both true and false. Either Lincoln was the six-

teenth President or he wasn't. A statement can not be both false and true without violating the law of non-contradiction. By the way, he was the sixteenth President.

Another law of logic is called the law of identity. This simply means that if a statement is true, then it is true, and if a statement is false, then it is false. A common violation of this law occurs when someone claims that the Bible may be true for one person but not true for another. According to the law of identity, if the Bible is true, it is true for everybody not just some people.

These laws make thinking critically and truthfully possible. Without them, anything goes. If the Bible is true for some and not for others, then the concept of truth is meaningless. If a statement like "Lincoln was the sixteenth President" can be both true and false, then reality would be arbitrary and all thought about it meaningless.

Thus, truth acts as the heart of these laws of thought and language and these laws are all aimed at truth. If truth did not exist, logic and language would not be necessary, and thinking would be utter vanity. Truth is

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A Letter from a Grateful Parent

This letter expresses so well the heart of the administration and board of ACA. It is our sincere hope that each student will grow in the knowledge that they "are loved by God and that they have a purpose and place in God's world" as they achieve growth and success in academics.

I don't know any other way to begin this letter except to say that in the short time my children have been at ACA, our entire family has been changed in so many positive ways. It is remarkable how much more peace there now is in our home, and how much more we are able to simply enjoy raising our children and watching them grow spiritually, intellectually and socially.

My daughter has been in a public school since kindergarten. She was a straight A student and there was no doubt that academics came easily to her. She won awards at school, was obedient to her teachers, and in the eyes of the school district, I suppose she was a success. However, at home we saw a sad, anxious girl. She was moody and irritable. Our time spent together as a family was often dampened by her depression. Our daughter's unhappiness, and our own confusion about what was happening to her and what we should do to help her, clouded a big part of our home life. At school, so much pressure was placed on producing the highest possible scores on the TAKS test that teachers seemed to concern themselves with little else. In our daughter's classroom, a cult of popularity was developing among the girls, with a few girls determining who was "in" and who was "out." Unfortunately, we saw our daughter using the apt mind the Lord had given her to figure out what it took to be popular and channel her energies into being successful in that realm. One day, she came home in tears over a remark a classmate had made to her. When I suggested that perhaps she should "turn the other cheek" and forgive her classmate, I'll never forget her response. She looked at me and said, "Mom, you don't understand. School is about survival."

To sum it up, our young grammar school age daughter was becoming cynical and depressed. I knew other parents in my daughter's classroom who shared the same concerns about their children. One mother took her son for professional counseling and was told his anxiety stemmed from worrying about the upcoming TAKS test! I'm embarrassed to admit that at one point, we even thought our child was a candidate for anti-depressant medication. There seemed to be nothing in the curriculum or school environment that inspired the better parts of her nature.

The changes we have seen in our daughter since she has been at ACA have taught my husband and me how much our child needed God as the central part of her education. A weight has been lifted from her, and we now see a child at home who is relaxed and is enjoying her childhood. She continues to make good grades, but what impresses us the most are the changes we have seen in her heart. Every day, we see her learning to love God more and more, and we see her looking at her classmates and teachers and finding qualities to love about them. Her prayers have an increasing depth and sincerity. Instead of popular songs from the radio, she now sings beautiful songs she is learning in choir. She still enjoys many of the things popular culture has to offer, but she is beginning to question some of the images and messages from a young Christian's perspective.

Since enrolling her in ACA, we have witnessed the reemergence of joy in our daughter's childhood -- joy in companionship, joy in learning, and above all, joy in the knowledge that she is loved by God and that she has a purpose and place in His world. As you know, Mr. Moon, no one can place a grade on that!

Thank you and the wonderful teachers and staff for everything you are doing for the children and families at ACA. We praise God for your mission and the many miracles he is performing through each of you.

Sincerely, A Grateful Parent

"...our child needed God as the central part of her education."

Providence Classical School in Spring, Texas to Host 4th Annual Conference on Christian Classical Education

You are invited and encouraged to attend this worthwhile conference. Our own Mr. Tim Moon and Mr. Peter Hansen will be presenters at this weekend conference being held February 10th & 11th. The conference is designed to foster and encourage a community of Christian Classical educators who pursue truth, goodness, and beauty in a culture largely satisfied with

the mediocre and convenient. Sessions and workshops have been planned with teachers, administrators, parents and home school families in mind. Three of our ACA staff members attended this conference last year and were very enriched and encouraged. Additionally, this past August, Mr. Troy Wathen, the Headmaster of Providence Classical School participated

in ACA's teacher training speaking to us on the topic of Gracious Discipline. If you are interested in learning more about Christian Classical Education, we encourage you as parents to attend this informative conference. For more information, please contact the school office at 361-991-6004 or e-mail at academy@ACA-CC.org.

ACA 5th Graders Prepare for Upcoming “Oceans in Jeopardy” Academic Competition

During a recent chapel, the 2005 Oceans in Jeopardy team encouraged the current 2006 team by praying for them as they began their studies in preparation for the upcoming area-wide competition. ACA has participated in this event for the past seven years and has always proven to be very competitive reaching the final round many years in a row.

“Oceans in Jeopardy” is an academic competition sponsored by the Texas State Aquarium offered to area 5th grade teams. Each year over 25 teams compete in the contest modeled after the game of Jeopardy, and is always very exciting and very competitive.

Each year ACA’s teams have been well prepared, very competitive, and always represent ACA very well.

Please enjoy the letter received by Mr. Moon from the staff of the Texas State Aquarium complementing our ACA students who have competed in this reputable competition in years past.

Dear Mr. Moon,

Thank you for your continued support and participation in the Texas State Aquarium’s “Oceans In Jeopardy” competition. The students at Annapolis Christian Academy are well prepared in their knowledge of ocean sciences and conduct themselves with respect toward their peers and adults.

You as Headmaster, the teachers, and the parents of these children deserve to be commended on the positive nurturing of these inspired young people. We admire their hard work, dedication, and interest in the important resources of the oceans.

Again, thank you for your participation and we look forward to Annapolis Christian Academy competing in the “OIJ” 2006.

Sincerely,

Donna Stockwell

Tara Schultz



Front Row - 2006 ACA Oceans in Jeopardy Team - Denys Locke, Monica Moon, Joshua Majek, and Korrin Alpers.

Back Row - 2005 ACA Oceans in Jeopardy Team - Sam Hoffman, Zachary Denais, Alex Reid, Cambrielle Carver, and Katie Thompson.

“...most important goals of classical liberal arts education is to equip students with the intellectual and linguistic virtues that aim at truth...”

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to the mind what nutrition is to the body. And this is why the belief in and search for truth accompanied by rigorous training in the arts of thinking logically and speaking correctly have resided at the heart of a traditional liberal arts education throughout most of western civilization. One of the most important goals of classical liberal arts education is to equip students with the intellectual and linguistic virtues that aim at truth: grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Without these, critical thinking aimed at truth is impossible.

Despite the intimate connections between language, truth, and logic, most modern theories of education center on the denial of the reality of objective truth rather than on its pursuit. The fact is that we are now living in what historians, philosophers, and educational elites are calling a Postmodern age. At the heart of this philosophy is an aggressive tendency to relativize truth in an effort to do away with “tyrannical” and “oppressive” absolutes. These theorists seek to free themselves from the constraints of truth and

reality only to become slaves to their own imaginations. Constructivism is one such theory. This theory, which pervades much of modern secular education, contends that knowledge is entirely constructed by the individual learner according to his or her subjective personal and individual experiences. This means that if a person experiences an A as a B or a B as a C or an A as meaningful but a B as meaningless, then these experiences are as valid and real as the person who experiences the A as an A and the B as a B.

ANNAPOLIS CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

3346 Airline Rd
Corpus Christi, TX 78414

Phone: 361-991-6004
academy@aca-cc.org



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Can We Think Critically Without Truth? (from page 3)

The wrong answer becomes as valid as the right answer in such a scenario and the objective reality of the alphabet ceases to exist. Although this sounds bizarre, it is a dominant theory in modern secular education and it is no wonder that so many students can't read. Such adherents don't just tolerate illiteracy, they promote it. Despite the obvious absurdity of such a theory, it is seen by modern secular educational theorists as a worldview of tolerance, diversity, and inclusion. After all, they contend, truth is so dogmatic; it makes clear distinctions between right and wrong, good and bad. Truth is intolerant of untruth; good is intolerant of bad. This kind of discrimination and intolerance is simply

unacceptable to the modern educator. Constructivism, on the other hand, is seen as liberating. It liberates mankind from narrow and oppressive systems of truth and morality and allows individuals to create reality in their own image. Seeking to be wise they become fools (Romans 1:21-22).

A major report released last year entitled *Greater Expectations: A new vision for learning as the nation goes to college* decries the lack of critical thinking skills demonstrated by college graduates in America. It claims that in spite of the modern preoccupation with teaching "critical thinking skills," the reality is that over the last two decades, college graduates are largely proving incapable of thinking critically. They are increasingly less capable of evaluat-

ing evidence and making valid arguments and sound moral decisions.

This study offers some solutions to the lack of critical thinking that validate much of what classical Christian education has taught for some time. They strongly support the need to integrate subject matter and teach critical thinking skills as a normal part of teaching the subject matter. If they do this they will experience some success. But the study fails to address a couple of important issues. First, students should be mastering these skills in Jr. High and High School, not college. And second, critical thinking is intimately connected to the concept of absolute truth. In the climate of relativism that permeates education in America, it is a wonder that people

can think at all by the time they get out of college. However, in an environment where truth is given its rightful place of honor and critical thinking skills are promoted through the teaching of all subject matter, the failure to think critically will prove to be the exception not the rule. **Annapolis Christian Academy** has endeavored the last eleven years to provide an educational environment that honors these time tested principles of learning. It is our hope that children throughout Corpus Christi can take advantage of this opportunity and learn to think critically and truthfully before they go to college.

by Tim Moon
Headmaster
Annapolis Christian Academy

ANNAPOLIS CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

To Host Its

1st Annual Enrollment Dinner
*An Evening Celebrating the
Value of Christian & Classical Education*



**Friday, March 3rd
6:30 pm
Radisson Hotel at North Beach**

*Featuring Guest Speaker
Michael Craven*

Michael Craven is the Vice President for Religion & Culture at the *National Coalition for the Protection of Children & Families*. Michael is considered a leading “cultural apologist” offering a rational biblical perspective in response to the various cultural forces that seek to reshape morality and ethics in America. Michael is the author of numerous publications and articles, and has been a featured speaker at places like the University of California at Berkeley, numerous churches and seminaries, appeared on Fox News, CNN, NBC, and many other national television and radio programs. Michael is a regular contributor to Crosswalk.com where his weekly commentary on faith and culture is seen by more than 10 million readers each month. Michael lives in Plano, Texas where he resides with his wife and three children.

You are invited to attend this special evening to enjoy a compelling presentation, choral presentations, and a complimentary dinner.

We encourage you to invite your Pastors and friends. This is a great opportunity to introduce new families to Annapolis Christian Academy and celebrate together the Value of Christian & Classical Education.

Remember, our best advertising comes from the enthusiastic support of our satisfied families!

For more information, please call 361-215-3342.

RSVP 361-215-3342

Seating is Limited