



## David Hicks: Commentary on Hospitality, Education History, and Classical Architecture

### Lesson 4: What is Classical Education

#### Outline:

How does a classical education address disputed questions?

- In David's own education as a young man, he would be asked to account for in writing the answer to a question that was not a particular aspect of his studies, i.e., what is the difference between love and romance?
  - The point of this exercise was to make you take a position on a disputed question, create a thesis, and then defend it in a short argument.
- One company David worked for following his career in independent schools, had a particular teaching protocol in place to serve a particular end:
  - Every teacher must record on the board the essential questions for that period.
  - The whole point of that class then was to foster argument and debate surrounding the questions.
  - By the end of class, students had to articulate answers to the essential questions.
  - Consequently, student answers simultaneously served as assessments of teacher/lesson effectiveness.

What is the relationship between education, human civilizations, and the idea of perfection?

- What makes the classics great is wrestling with interesting questions.
- Today's students are less interested in the existential or "why" questions as they are in the "how to" questions serving the interest of science.
- The idea of perfection is offensive to the modern world which sees it as imposing judgment or some standard on another person.
  - Rather, the classical distinction being made about perfection deals with the ideal form of an object, not the nature of the object itself.
  - As proof for the existence of God, Aquinas argued that our notions of perfection were a result of being made in the likeness of God's perfection.
  - The idea of perfection haunts us and is what keeps us perfecting ourselves.

Who should receive a classical education?



- This question is a bit absurd in David's estimation. He likens it to asking, "Who is goodness or humanity or beauty for?" because it implies there is some group of people we no longer respect.
- A classical education was once associated with the elite due to the level of education and the examination process to be admitted.
- Today, there are examples of classical schools thriving in inner cities that hold to standards where students take pride in their school and themselves.
- A classical education is for everyone, yet:
  - This basic right does not negate the fact there will be students more capable and motivated than others.
  - No student should ever be written off as worthy of the endeavor.
- A classical education benefits human beings by:
  - showing ultimate respect
  - valuing citizenship and participation in community
  - affirming God's love as the basis of one's worth
- David believes classical and Christian ideals at the most fundamental level belong together.

Would you comment on any of the liberal arts?

- The whole point of being an educated person is to be able to see the whole scope of experience and be able to make connections between knowledge, for instance:
  - considering how mathematics and music are intimately connected
  - having a mastery of symbolic language, whether it is musical notation or mathematics or spoken language.
  - thinking metaphorically and symbolically using poetry, beauty, even astronomy
  - pondering mystery through the lens of quantum physics
- For David, it is easier to believe in the moral dimension and love of the hard to understand biblical mythos and narrative than in a cold, other worldly empirical experience.
  - "We all find believable what we believe."
  - "Blessed are we who have not seen and yet still believe"