



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

Lesson 9: Comments on Secularism and on Human Sexuality

Outline:

What changes came from Christianity regarding our understandings of sexuality and romance?

- David begins by asserting that Christians need to be more forthcoming about discussing sexuality with their children and each other because it's a topic of importance and strong opinions in the wider culture.
- Although not a subject expert, David is familiar through his reading with the sexual practices of the ancient world, including
 - sex with temple prostitutes as a form of religious worship;
 - the rarity of romantic love between husband and wife (Pericles and Aspasia were considered an anomaly);
 - pederastic relationships between men and boys, by which they formed romantic attachments.
- David claims that Christianity's opposition to such practices had a "profound influence" on sex, marriage, and romance in ways that we now take for granted.
 - He points to the prevalence of abortion/infanticide in pagan culture before Christianity rose up to oppose it.
 - Citing a sociologist who inquired into the surprising dominance of Christianity in the ancient world, David suggests that one reason was its fecundity and respect for life.
- David discusses other sexual norms that originated in Christianity, which he observes are now in danger of being lost with its cultural decline and the return of paganism:
 - respecting and treating women as equal members of the family;
 - reserving sexual fulfillment for the bonds of marriage;
 - requiring faithfulness and fruitfulness in Christian marriage, with men bearing the bulk of responsibility for the family.
- David expresses concern that as we fail to help our children understand the linkage between faith and sexuality, our sexual mores will revert to what they were before Jesus Christ and the Gospels.

How would you describe the origins of secularism?

- David responds that the return of paganism in society is the fault of Christians as much as anything else.



- He cites contributing factors that emerged from the Enlightenment:
 - the rise of science and rationalism;
 - the philosophy of Descartes;
 - the “disenchanted” of religion and the social imaginary as observed by Charles Taylor.
- David then discusses General Mao’s “theory of contradiction” between primary (winning) vs. secondary (losing) aspects of society.
 - The theory is that a contradiction exists wherever there is an imbalance of power between the two aspects, and that societies progress as the primary aspect gives way to the secondary.
 - This happens when the primary aspect becomes decadent or corrupt, losing power to the weaker side.
 - At the moment the balance of power shifts, the secondary aspect can strike at the primary aspect to gain political control.
- David claims this shift is happening to Christianity in America today. Although Christians still claim a numerical majority, secularists are quickly becoming the dominant power.
 - It’s popular now to portray Christians as bigots. This has caused many Christians to move towards the “political left” and has prevented others from speaking too openly about their beliefs.
 - David cites examples of abortion, racial and LGBTQ ideologies, and the diminished witness of the Church speaking out against them.
 - David thinks Rod Dreher is probably right that this shift will ultimately result in greater persecutions of Christians.
- David invokes the story of Adam and Eve, which challenges us with a choice: do we do what God wants us to do and show him we love him, or do we do what *we* want to do and show him we don’t need him?
- He concludes with the need to love our enemies as described in the Lord’s Prayer when we pray, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others.” Do we really want to be forgiven that way? It’s a prayer “worthy of stoicism”.