



Teaching Modern Political Philosophy

with Joshua Gibbs

Lesson 14: Sin No More by Rémi Brague

Outline:

Sin No More by Rémi Brague

- Sin No More is about honor codes rather than legal codes.
- Christianity is an honor code, or a spiritual aristocracy which is open to all human beings.
- There are two modes of existence, two kinds of time, and two ways of viewing reality which open up over the course of the first week.
 - Secular time – for servile work
 - Sacred time – for things that make life good, leisure
 - These two kinds of time were appropriate for certain activities.
 - Ask your students to consider what the difference is between secular and sacred time.
 - What does the building need to function (foyer, to keep out the wind and rain)? Artistic flourishes are not necessary to the function of the building.
 - Leisure activities don't make life possible, they make it good. Leisurely things make the building enjoyable to be in. You are more than a body. Beauty or leisure confirms to you that you are not sure a body, you are a soul too. Beauty is the food of the soul.
- The biblical narrative of creation makes possible a leisure that encompasses everybody. The Bible stresses that the servants are to be granted a day of rest.
 - The Sabbath is not a gift to those who have proven themselves worthy of it, including the stranger (pagan).
 - Why is the Sabbath not a reward? Why does Israel have to grant rest even to those who don't serve their God?
 - The Sabbath has a metaphysical dimension.
 - The Sabbath is both the institution of the freedom of nature to seek out its own good.
 - All created men need leisure because they have souls.
 - The freedom of creation is its nature. The nature is its spirit.
 - There is a rational spirit (human/angelic spirit) which is capable of contemplation.
 - A day of rest is appropriate for all free creatures. Whether you worship Yahweh you still have a nature which is your own.
 - An aristocracy is less a class of people and more a quality of all human beings. There is something aristocratic about all human



beings because each is invested with a nature and freedom of its own. The Sabbath applies to all men.

- The Sabbath is set apart for things of beauty, principally the worship of God.
- The Koran does not allow creatures to have a freedom of their own.
- God's job is setting people free, opening a common life up to a divine aristocracy.
- Because you are now a free people, you won't do what slaves do (ten commandments/utterances).
 - A slave is treated as a mere material reality.
 - The Israelites in Egypt were treated as objects.
 - The one who accepts their slavery (as opposed to fighting it) has no reason to not steal or kill if they can get away with it.
 - **What God confirms in the Ten Commandments is that his people are incarnated spirits and the health of the body is less important than the health of the soul.**
 - The Ten Commandments have a legal component (they are policed), but they are more like the honor code of a free people.
 - The master treats the slave as though he is a mere body. Slave owners live in constant fear/anxiety about a slave revolt.
 - If you want to be a free people, you must live like free people. You know what is typical of slaves, you can't live that way anymore. Let me tell you how incarnated people live. I have empowered you to obey my commands.
 - The Ten Commandments are like a gentlemen's code, they are the way that free people behave.
- Most schools don't have an actual honor code. The honor code is often handed out on the first day of class and then never referred to again unless the student violates the honor code. This is a legal code.
 - What is the difference between an honor code and a legal code?
 - Honor codes don't usually arrest the imagination.
 - Consider what a real honor code in a school would look and sound like? How often would you have to look at it to persuade your imagination to conform to it?
 - A good honor code is worth memorizing.
 - Who polices an honor code? Your conscience polices it.
 - For most schools an honor code would be a statement about what kind of people you want your students to turn into. It is not legally policed but it leads to the real freedom of the individual, which is the freedom to do good and the inability to do evil.
- Correct some incorrect assumptions that students have about aristocrats.
 - The aristocratic life is assumed to be a life of self-gratification.
 - In a healthy society, in an aristocratic society, where aristocrats exist in the healthy manner in which they are supposed to.



- The aristocrat shows people how to live the good life. Aristocrats were highly observed people. They were to be a moral exemplar to the people.
- The aristocrat was to be educated and to be a servant of the common people.
- The aristocrat was a governor of the people, but they also depended on common people for their substance. Aristocrats knew this.
- The aristocrat was to subsidize good things.
- In consumer societies, art is produced that will sell. It typically plays up people's most base needs.
- In an aristocratic society, art is not sold. Music is not sold in the same way as in a consumer society. To make music you have to appeal to educated aristocrats. They would choose which musicians to subsidize based upon what would lift the people up.
- An aristocratic society is set up in such a way that common people have a guide on how they should spend their time.
- Our guidance in human emotion is shaped by what sells, not by what lasts. This means sour feelings are often cheapened.
- Subsidizing the arts is one of the chief purposes of the aristocrat.
- A classical education is an aristocratic education.
 - An aristocrat is a consumer of what others produce.
 - A classical education is geared towards a place where you do not depend on a job for your ultimate happiness.
- Sin says it is allowable to lust in order to stave off boredom. People never describe virtue that needs justification outside of itself. Love and hope are good for their own sake. We don't justify them by something outside of themselves.
- A classical education is its own reward. You are trying to make them into virtuous people inasmuch as you are trying to make them free.
- Liberty is virtue. Liberty is escape from the arbitrary power of the devil, which sends us in circles and refuses to allow us the fruit of our labor.
- The conservative tradition allows things to be good for their own sake. Tell your students that you are trying to make them free. You are trying to make their lives good, not pleasant, but good.