

## CollabOrate

### Justice #9

#### Locke

LADY JUSTICE, JUSTITIA, GOES TO HER EIGHTH PSYCHIATRIC APPOINTMENT. *Justitia opens the heavy oak door to find a finely-dressed Englishman with a gaunt triangular face. Prominent, thoughtful eyes peer from below a high forehead and neck-length white hair. The gentleman smiles warmly. Justitia removes her sword and sets her scales and blindfold on the end of her divan. She settles her toga on her sturdy marble thighs. Justitia had no time to change to jeans and sweatshirt this harried afternoon. The black box of conscience jostles a bit of its own accord on the coffee table.*

LOCKE: My name is John Locke. I am denominated your counselor this session, though I fail to see how *Two Treatises of Government* and *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* qualify me for this task. My education makes of me a philosopher. I am no priest.

JUSTITIA: I know your work, Sir. I am American these days. You influenced Jefferson and others.

LOCKE: Your constitution drafters wracked my ideas. Spawn oozes from their distortions.

JUSTITIA: You surprise me. Thanks at least in part to you, we remain free and loud. I have come this afternoon from protests. A menagerie of semi-employed citizens in tents makes shrill demands for income redistribution and environmental reform. A rabble of opponents, having tea it seems, rankle just as loudly about spiraling government debt and taxation and loss of liberties. My ears are ringing. America splits down her middle: urbanites against rural folk, evangelicals against secularists. Who is right? How can I decide? You have pondered my file. I am confused.

LOCKE: Indeed. You seem to believe you possess the luxury of time to deliberate. Would that be correct?

JUSTITIA: Well... I cannot decide rashly. I must find some measure of certainty before I...

LOCKE: You can be replaced, dear creature. The American people have inherent liberty to throw off your yoke. Rightful government proceeds from the people; it is their natural and inalienable right. The people therefore possess a natural right to rebellion. They form government; they can substitute another as easily. You must hear and respond. Now! Not when you feel comfortable doing so. My entire theory aims to produce government responsive to its people.

*The black box of conscience springs open, revealing Plato. The ugly, little man in his dirty toga stands a full five inches. "Ever, John, you spout democratic obscenities. Socrates taught me, as I reported to you in my Republic, the true structure for government. Philosopher-kings must rule. They alone harbor the requisite wisdom. Justice legitimates the commands of carefully-groomed rulers. The people, as you rightly note, are blank slates. But the Good imprints itself upon the rabble's mind dimly. Only a philosopher-king achieves clarity. Lacking regal acumen, governments fester like brimming spittoons."* John smiles wanly at the contentious Greek. *Plato sits and the black box closes itself.*

LOCKE: Plato may be right, Justitia. I taught that human brains become beacons of light if benefited by careful education. But see what has come of America! Trash in, trash out. Minds shaped by Cialis and *Survivor*.

JUSTITIA: We Americans are certainly suffering some behavioral dysfunctions. Congress cannot seem to find its way. Some lost souls, guns in hand, come wholly unhinged. Too many Americans revel in vapid materialism. Still, most Americans are productive, caring people. And the world is really a very much better place than it was in your own day, John Locke.

LOCKE: That is perhaps so. We suffered the Great Fire and the Great Plague of London. And we gave ourselves to colonial frenzy. Nevertheless, the United States Constitution surrenders every American's independence to representative government. So, "representatives" travel to swampy Washington D.C., where they rule like French despots. It is scant improvement when a people overthrows one fractured king in favor of 535. Plutocracy is nothing more than tyranny in a party mood.

JUSTITIA: What would you have me do, John? Is there a way out of this forest of confusion?

LOCKE: Certainly, Justitia. Do less. Government, including the courts, must abandon its sentiment to do everything for everybody. Limitations, my dear. Circumspection born of observation of the human condition. Frame laws to protect property and liberty. Make utterly certain that education works. Crush crime and foreign invasions. Step aside and let the planet's future emerge.

JUSTITIA: You sound like Robert Nozick. Nozick undoubtedly cherished dog-eared copies of your works.

LOCKE: Robert and I are intellectual kin. Our philosophical family enjoys little applause in America, I fear.

JUSTITIA: It is worse than that, John. America has forgotten you and Nozick. When I learned that John Locke was today's visiting psychiatrist, I thought I would be chatting with the bald guy from *Lost*.

LOCKE: What? Who...?

*Before Justitia can explain, Locke vanishes. The limestone lady gathers her things and trudges back to the courts.*

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