

CollabOrate
Justice #12
Numen

LADY JUSTICE, JUSTITIA, IS SUMMONED TO HER PSYCHIATRIC DIVAN. *Justitia lays aside her blindfold, sword, and scales. No psychiatric stand-in awaits her. Alone, but not quite alone, Justitia sits. She folds her marble hands in her limestone lap. She smooths her stony toga. The black box of conscience on the coffee table slides toward Justitia. A depression in the seat cushion of the psychiatrist's armchair shifts. Justitia perceives a presence, but sees and hears nothing. Suddenly, a gravelly voice interrupts Justitia's reverie.*

NUMEN: Tell me, Justitia. How do you imagine god?

JUSTITIA: God is a social construct that augments cohesion in human groups. I am not religious.

NUMEN: You blather what god is and state your orientation. I asked, How do you imagine god?

JUSTITIA: You mean, like a photo....? Well, I suppose god looks like Charlton Heston in my mind. *Air swirls, rustling. Charlton Heston sits in the psychiatrist's armchair, beaming his patented smile.*

NUMEN: I bring a gift for you. And I come to hear the fruit of this psychiatric regime I orchestrated.

JUSTITIA: Are you...god?

NUMEN: I am me. People name me. Those names always mislead. Humans know nothing of me. They see my acts, but I elude them. Human confabulations about gods amuse. The very best humor is theological.... Enough of me. Tell me how goes this introspective and conversational process for you, O demi-god of justice.

JUSTITIA: Well, I have loved the talks. I was repulsed, chided, fascinated, and challenged.

NUMEN: Decisions. I need decisions from you, Justitia. You require a quick review.

The room enlarges and darkens. A stage appears, and a band. Her several psychiatrists march in from stage left. The band strikes up a breezy tune. The drafted shrinks begin an intricate tap dance, shoulder to shoulder. Except for the capuchin. The monkey skitters across the stage before the queued tappers. The assembly breaks into song: "To heal confusions and make them few, We sing our thoughts in brief for you!" Sequentially, each master steps forward, falls to one knee, and belts out a three-word lyric summary for Justitia.

Capuchin: Deep mammalian feeling.

Rawls: Micromanaging societal malformations.

Nozick: Markets amidst freedoms.

Nietzsche: Eagles eating lambs.

Jesus: Heartfelt divine intervention.

Confucius: Gentlemen ruling benevolently.

Moses: Commandments and sanctions.

Locke: Populism with safeguards.

Marx: Utopian wealth-sharing.

Amish Naomi: Restoring fractured communities.

With a flourish, the band crescendos. The tapping psychiatrists pratfall in unison, then crawl to exit stage right. Naomi peeks around the curtain to curtsy. The capuchin, a bit lost, twirls, and climbs into the rigging overhead. Justitia laughs and applauds. Charlton smiles. He then turns his head toward Justitia, and raises an eyebrow.

JUSTITIA: Okay, okay.... Changes. I have to change myself to be rid of divided loyalties. Those make me confused. I have to deviate from my English and Roman heritages more readily. In particular, I must change my values.

Money: I am going to make justice less about money and more about social capital. I will start caring about people's relationships more than their pocketbooks.

Access: I am going to make court process transparent, simple, and cheap, and dismantle the attorney legal monopoly. People will need lawyers for wisdom, but not to navigate a labyrinthine bramble. Lawyers will make less money, but be more valued.

Poverty: I am going to open courts to the issues poor people face. The rich have resources to protect themselves. The poor have only me.

Bad actors: I am going to restrain sociopathic bad actors without participating in victims' thirst for vengeance. I am discarding my sword of vengeance. I am taking off my blindfold and learning to recognize sociopaths when I see them. I am going to see that most corporations are sociopathic; they lack consciences, being mostly monomaniacal profit-takers. I am going to prevent corporations from using money to tip my scales of equity in their favor.

Judges: I am going to push judges to make their rulings wise, regardless of precedent. I will tamp down "appeal aversion." Judges will let *normal* people bring cases that change society incrementally; judges will issue orders that effect those changes.

Lawyers: I am going to encourage lawyers to be good people *before* they are advocates. I am going to punish lawyers who do evil, inside courtrooms or outside them.

Public: I am going to teach conflict resolution skills in elementary schools. I am going to require serious peacemaking efforts from disputants before they gain access to courts. I am going to empower disenfranchised peacemakers--religious leaders, grandmothers, and shop supervisors. Courts will be much less busy, and produce much better results.

Peace: I

am going to make the prime purpose of courts the restoration of cohesive community among disputants, not the allocation of scarce resources.

NUMEN: That's a good start, Justitia. Change yourself as necessary. You make society work. Do not forsake that vision. I installed you in every human heart for a purpose. Now, your gift?

JUSTITIA: You are too good to me. What is it?

NUMEN: A metaphor.

The black box of conscience begins to grow. Numen and Justitia catapult through the atmosphere and into a lunar orbit. The black box of conscience expands until the earth hangs within the box. The earth glows. The penumbra of stars gleams warmly, as though showering silent applause.

NUMEN: When all human efforts are acts of conscience,

The earth will not be perfect,

But mankind shall be well.

JUSTITIA: Amen.

Numen fades, again perceived, but not sensed. Justitia falls from orbit, taking up her job at Snohomish County courthouses and her residence in the sanctum of Washingtonian hearts. Justitia commences her changes....

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