

**CollabOrate**  
**Justice #3**  
**Rawls**

LADY JUSTICE, JUSTITIA, GOES TO HER SECOND PSYCHIATRIC APPOINTMENT. *When Justitia enters, a tweedy professorial-type, suffering severe comb-over, perches on a chair. He sports eyeglasses with dated domey lenses. A black-lacquer wooden box with a hinged lid sits next to the academic. Justitia hesitates.*

RAWLS: Sit, Justitia. I seldom bite. My name is John Rawls. I used to teach political philosophy at Harvard. I wrote *A Theory of Justice*. Then I died. By means I do not entirely grasp, I am resurrected today as your psychiatrist. You appear a solid, eminently-sane lady.

JUSTITIA: That mask is pure courthouse game-face. All my friends find me deeply confused. And lonely.

RAWLS: How so, Justitia? In what way are you jumbled?

JUSTITIA: I have been so hashed over, tweaked, ignored, and regurgitated, I never know what's up. Lawyers and courts relegate me to the rules of civil procedure and precedent, there to moulder. Anarchists invoke me when they bomb children. Politicians pound their fists about me when getting their friends sweet deals. Most ignore my heart. My heart is stony, but not cold.

RAWLS: Tell me about your heart, Justitia.

JUSTITIA: That is my problem, Dr. Rawls. I cannot articulate my fractured heart. The Mediterranean toga, sword, scales, blindfold, sitting around courthouses all day. Where is my heart in all that? My deepest self has something to do with children, sick people, the ignored. Yet, every day I slash. My sword of retribution skewers criminals and wrong-doers. The gore I make feels right—but also wrong. I am torn. I sometimes peek past my blindfold. I gag. Often, I crush poor people who have nicked rich people's sense of entitlement. Most days, I suffer intense self-loathing.

*Justitia cries, wetting a lachrymal trail down limestone cheeks. Rawls waits silently, offering a Kleenex.*

RAWLS: I spent most of my life thinking about you, Justitia. I am one of your admirers.

*The black box on the coffee table pops open. A six-inch tall human stands up from his miniature La-Z-Boy within.* “No, John. You are not Justitia's champion. You want Justitia to coerce every person into unchosen uniformity under a government-mandated leftist morality. For you, good behavior lacks consequences; all citizens are theoretically identical, especially regarding property. Your advice is just thoughtful neo-communism, a closeted knock-off of Marx. No offense, John. You know I am your buddy.” *The mini-man winks. Dr. Rawls beams at the vocal little creature, and asks him to sit again. Rawls closes the box top.*

RAWLS: That was Robert Nozick. Robert inhabits the black box of conscience wherever I go. He was harsh in critique but dear as a colleague. Well-intentioned critics become a man's conscience. I am grateful for Robert, though he is a dreadfully misguided libertarian.

JUSTITIA: Tell me how you think I should sort myself out, Dr. Rawls.

RAWLS: As you wish. The big problem in conceiving justice is self-interested rhetoric. That is your problem, Justitia. Every person argues for what serves him, and calls it justice. That confuses you. One must, in fabricating a just society, duck into an intentionally amnesiac mindset. One forgets one's situation and gifts, one's self and personality, one's culture and its history, classes and prejudices among persons—quite literally, everything vanishes behind a veil of ignorance. From this “original position,” one joins with other amnesiacs to fabricate rules for society that will apply to all. In the coming realm, one never knows whether she will be a queen or a pauper. Two principles moderate all original position deliberations. First, individual freedoms must be as expansive as is compatible with the equivalent liberties of others. And, second, opportunities (and the skills necessary to capitalize on opportunities) must be open to all. Social and economic inequalities can be tolerated only to the extent that they benefit disadvantaged persons. That's it, I think.

JUSTITIA: What about little Nozick? Would you have me drag people kicking and screaming to a just society they do not want and for which they will be required to pay?

RAWLS: Robert is right. One cannot countenance a just system that prioritizes community well-being and simultaneously does full justice to individual autonomy. One must choose an emphasis and make compromises. I focus on the community and the plight of those getting demolished by society's malformations. Nozick tolerates politically-induced suffering in favor of insulating individual liberties from communal erosion or obliteration.

JUSTITIA: How should I work out my mental troubles, in your view, Dr. Rawls?

RAWLS: A psychiatrist draws maps. The patient chooses her destination.

JUSTITIA: Shirker. And you think my heart is made of stone.

*Justitia squeezes Rawls's hand and flutters her eyelashes at the professor.*

RAWLS: I have affection for you, but love lies elsewhere. I've a nice wife, four children. Gotta go.

*Justitia pouts.*

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