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Preview Response

IF EVERYTHING BECOMES ABOUT JUSTICE, WE CAN LOSE THE HEART OF THE ARTS

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I appreciate very much Nick's foundation of justice in relationships. This is, to me, a very Biblical picture. It also drives me into Scripture itself, searching after what a "right relationship" might actually be. How, after all, to understand the normative structure of a friendship, or a business relationship, or our relationship to creation? We have clues, I think, in the "first book" of Creation, but the "second book" of the Scriptures gives us the best picture of what *shalom*, right relationships, might *specifically* look like.

On the other hand, while - as a political scientist - I appreciate this renaissance in justice as a driving category across disciplines, I also worry that this renaissance can preclude what other disciplines are really *for*. I agree with Nick that justice is a feature of every relationship, but it may not be the defining or central aspect. If we read literature, or participate in art, or theater, and all of these simply become a vehicle for conversations about justice, or - even worse - become largely utilitarian mediums for partisan or political commentary, we've suffered a real loss on the intrinsic nature of these activities. None of this is to say justice, as right relationship, should not be a constant partner, but by raising questions of art and history and music into a central, driving question about justice, I fear we lose what some might call the 'leading aspect' of these areas, reducing them to a medium for activism, rather than their full worth.

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