PARABLE: SECURITY, FREEDOM, & JUSTICE ---------- ELLIOTT #2166

Once upon a time there was a king whose name was Security. Because his people were forever frustrating his will, which he, though without cogitation, held to be invariably right and righteous in affairs both domestic and foreign, his Highness set up--respectively, and without respect either for his counselors or his people--both a secret police and a secret army, both financed by unreported income from the royal estates and, in emergencies, from the proceeds, laundered through the slush funds of friendly kings, from the unregistered sales of royal properties.

Of course he could not manage all this alone. He could not even remember it all. But he was fortunate in having a brother who never forget anything, and him he set up in a new office publicly called privy counselor (PC) but whose functions were better described as that of memory manager (MM) or even recall officer for processes and expenses (ROPE). He would live to regret this royal use of his brother, whose undocumented power so increased that within six years he was able to set up a secret infrastructure of his own. Even when all the power had been sucked out of him and into his brother, the king steadfastly averred that he had done nothing wrong either in setting up a two-level deceptional system that necessited the office he chose his brother for nor in choosing his brother as its occupant. Thus he protected himself against the calamity of repentance and preserved, in his own eyes, his integrity--though this self-esteem was as devoid of substance as his authority had now become hollow and his power displaced.

Throughout the six years, both the king and his brother steadily increased in competence in pulling off their separate opperations of secrecy and illusion. As you can readily understand, both also deceived themselves with overweening satisfaction in their slyness. Each by overconfidence became careless. Needing someone to tell it all to, the brother confided in a page, who leaked to the king. Confronted by the king, the brother threatened to blow the king's scene if the king let him go, publicly regreting the loss of so faithful and valuable an aide. So the dismal pair, each immobilized in his conspiratorial net by the other's threat of exposure, devised a process that would get them some insulation from the heat of the public, in partial compensation for the disappearance of all insulation between the two of them. Their language did not have a precise word for this process, so they coined a word that could be roughly translated into English as "deniability." The actual operation could be called binary, as its two possible responses were "0" (knownothing) and "1" (affirmative of No.1).

Now there were in that kingdom two parties whom the king played off against each other. Their names were Freedom and Justice, and they occupied each one side of the roundtable. You will perhaps have a bit more sympathy for the king when you realize that in addition to his vertical, upstairs-downstairs separation, he was daily confronted with this horizontal split. Both parties claimed both the right and the left of the king, who sought to satisfy them by a version of musical chairs, changing their sides with each solstice. But neither Justice nor Freedom had much access to the public purse, which Security kept near exhaustion through his own crusades and anxieties.

But there is no security without both justice and freedom. That fact, not leaks or counterdeceptions, brought the king down.