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# *The Philosophical Quarterly*

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## LOYALTY AND VIRTUES

BY R. E. EWIN

When loyalty is discussed, a very rare thing in recent years, it is sometimes listed as one of the virtues and just as often derided. Its relationship to the virtues, or to the other virtues, is difficult to discern, and that is at least partly because the role that judgement plays in loyalty seems odd.

At the surface level, it is clear that there are examples of good and bad loyalty. But what is it that makes for the goodness or badness of the loyalty: is it something extrinsic or something intrinsic to it? If we take the first line, we seem to miss something that simply *is* morally significant about loyalty itself; but if we take the second, we face the seemingly intractable problem of accounting for how, in the case of a bad loyalty, loyalty 'misattaches' itself to the wrong object, an account which, crucially, cannot directly base itself on the badness of the object. This puzzle is deepened by the fact that to some extent, at least, loyalty requires us to suspend our own independent judgements about its object.

The argument of this paper is that there is a core value to loyalty, and that understanding this core value is of critical importance in understanding the virtues despite the fact that loyalty is not itself one of them. I shall suggest at the end of the paper that it is the raw material of the virtues and of at least some vices.

### I

There are problems that must be dealt with if one is simply to list loyalty as a virtue: the problems are the excesses to which it seems to lend itself so readily. John Ladd, for example, makes one attempt to rule out those excesses so that they will not count against loyalty:

Loyalty, strictly speaking, demands what is morally due the object of loyalty. A loyal subject is one who wholeheartedly devotes himself to his duties to his lord. What is due or owed is defined by the roles of the persons concerned . . .

It follows that mere blind obedience to every wish of the person who is the object of loyalty is not loyalty; it is a perversion of loyalty. There is no moral value to it at all, since it is not something that is morally due. A loyal Nazi is a contradiction in terms, although a loyal German is not.<sup>1</sup>

Here Ladd has surely taken too quick a way with the problems that can arise about excesses of loyalty. A *disloyal* Nazi is surely a possibility: a party member convinced of the truth of all its doctrines, who nevertheless sells the party out for private gain. Not only will other Nazis think that he is disloyal, but the rest of us will recognize his disloyalty too. His disloyalty is one reason that we should never trust him even if he willingly comes over to our side later; he is the sort of person who might sell us out, too, since he has previously shown a willingness to sell out what he believes in. It may be only one of his failings on top of many others, and only one reason amongst many for not trusting him, but his disloyalty is a failing that we can recognize.<sup>2</sup> That we can recognize it seems to imply that we can recognize other Nazis as loyal. And if that is the case, then there remains a problem about whether loyalty is an unalloyed virtue, or, indeed, whether it is a virtue at all.

One might also note an oddity in the claim that loyalty demands what is morally due the object of loyalty: on the face of it, loyalty is one of the things that would have to be considered in determining what was due, and, to that extent, Ladd's account is therefore circular. I owe more to somebody to whom I owe loyalty than I owe to somebody to whom I do not owe loyalty, and I owe more *because* I owe loyalty; to explain loyalty in terms of what I owe is, therefore, inadequate. Loyalty must be called on to explain *what* I owe.

The account of loyalty that Ladd gives is one suggesting that loyalty is largely the same as dutifulness, and that seems to be simply false. What is missing in that suggestion is something like what Ladd finishes with:

Loyalty includes fidelity in carrying out one's duties to the person or group of persons who are the object of loyalty; but it

<sup>1</sup> John Ladd, entry on loyalty in Paul Edwards (editor-in-chief), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan and the Free Press, 1967), p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> I shall return to further discussion of this case later on.

embraces more than that, for it implies an attitude, perhaps an affection or sentiment, towards such persons. Furthermore, at the very least, loyalty requires the complete subordination of one's own private interest in favour of giving what is due, and perhaps also the exclusion of other legitimate interests.<sup>3</sup>

I include the last sentence in that passage so that we can note at this stage that one is not really concentrating on what is due if one excludes legitimate interests, and that rules out loyalty's being the same as dutifulness.<sup>4</sup> If one is concerned to give everybody his or her due, then one is concerned to consider all and only legitimate interests; if one excludes legitimate interests from consideration, which is different from deciding *after* consideration that they have been outweighed, and if what one is doing requires one to do so, then one is not in the business of being dutiful, or merely dutiful. And Ladd seems to be right about that, too, because we *do* expect loyal members to put the interests of their group ahead of those of other groups, even if there are limitations to the extent to which they may do so. But the main point is that there is an attitude or affection or sentiment that is involved in loyalty.

One expects loyalty of one's friends. In that sort of context, we think of loyalty as a good thing. Jingoism is also a form of loyalty, even if a misguided form, and when we think of it that way we think of loyalty as not a good thing.

It might be replied that jingoism is not a case of loyalty at all, just as foolhardiness is not a case of courage, but that could be so only if loyalty had built into it as part of itself a capacity for judgement that excluded such excess. (It is the capacity that is at issue; mistake in a particular case is a possibility for even the most virtuous.) One way in which we distinguish courage from foolhardiness is in terms of the judgement exhibited by the agent (how well he or she judges whether the risks are worthwhile given the ends, for example), and having that capacity for good judgement is part of what it is to have the virtue of courage.<sup>5</sup> Somebody who dives from a third-floor window into a bucket of water simply to entertain his guests is foolhardy, not courageous. It is far from

<sup>3</sup> Ladd, in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, p. 98.

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting, too, that countenancing the loyal person's exclusion of legitimate interests from his consideration presupposes that there can be bad loyalty: if all *bona fide* loyalty is good loyalty, then whatever interests one's loyalty requires one to omit from consideration, it is morally legitimate for one so to exclude them.

<sup>5</sup> The other virtues also require this capacity for good judgement. Good judgement about the cause is part of what distinguishes the kind person from the dupe, for example. Good judgement about the object is part of what distinguishes the kind person from the busybody. And so on.

clear what the parallel judgement could be in the case of loyalty, enabling us to rule out jingoism as not a case of loyalty at all.<sup>6</sup> It is not the same judgement of whether the risk, effort or whatever is worthwhile given the ends, because loyalty is more a matter of what ends I choose (furthering the good of my group, helping my friend who is in need) than of assessing means to those ends. Judgement does have a role to play in loyalty, I shall show, but not quite the role that it plays in marking courage off from other things such as foolhardiness. Somebody who showed loyalty to an unworthy object might be described as foolish to be loyal, but somebody who performs a high-dive into a bucket of water to entertain guests is not foolish to be courageous; such a person is simply foolish.

One possible role for judgement in loyalty should be ruled out immediately: the judgement that is involved in loyalty cannot be judgement of whether the object is worthy of loyalty, or any translation of the word 'loyalty', because that would be circular as part of an account of what loyalty is.<sup>7</sup> And it cannot simply be that loyalty is the binding of oneself preferentially to the interests of a certain group or individual in circumstances in which the group or individual merits one's binding oneself to them in this way – that is simply accepting the best tender, and loyalty requires an emotional commitment that goes beyond such commercial-sounding calculation. Loyalty cannot be based in any simple and straightforward way on one's views of the merits of the object of loyalty, because the relationship, at least in part, runs in the opposite direction: loyalty to some extent affects one's views of who merits what and it keeps one in the group beyond the point at which cold consideration of desert would cease to do so.

I want now to look for some way of distinguishing good loyalty from other forms, such as jingoism, in a way that would make it possible simply to list loyalty amongst the virtues.

<sup>6</sup> The same point applies if it should be suggested that, as bad judgement prevents willingness to take risks from being the virtue of courage, so bad judgement prevents the Nazi's binding himself to the party from being loyalty and means that that case, therefore, does not count against loyalty. That could be so only if judgement has a role in loyalty parallel to the role it has in courage, which is a matter with which I shall be dealing throughout this paper.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Nathanson ('In Defense of "Moderate Patriotism"', *Ethics*, 99, 3 (April 1989), p. 538) seems to suggest this sort of move when he says that patriotism (of which he takes loyalty to be at least a part) is a virtue if it leads to actions not in themselves immoral and a vice if it blinds people to the legitimate needs and interests of other nations. His claim is probably best read as one that patriotism (or loyalty) is sometimes a good thing and sometimes a bad thing, really neither a virtue nor a vice.

## II

It might be that good loyalty is distinguished from 'bad loyalty' by the grounds there are for it. The judgement relevant to any possible virtue of loyalty might be a judgement of the adequacy of those grounds.

Gratitude seems to be one possible ground for loyalty. One loyally sticks by one's benefactors: the loyalty would be something owed as a matter of gratitude if this suggestion were correct. The relevant judgement, on such an account, would be of the extent of the debt of gratitude.

This suggestion seems a plausible one. There are several ways of failing with respect to loyalty. There is, for example, the straightforward case of disloyalty in which one has and recognizes a loyalty but acts against it, letting down the object of loyalty. But there is also the case of the really cold fish who simply does not feel loyalty, no matter how appropriate it might be to do so, and the fact that we are all inclined to be wary of such people is one reason for thinking that there is some special relationship between loyalty and the virtues. Somebody who simply feels no loyalty at all to a person who has gone to a lot of trouble to help, when help was needed, would usually be considered just such a cold fish: not to feel loyalty in such a case would be regarded as a failing. What makes gratitude appropriate seems, to that extent, to make loyalty appropriate, and gratitude and loyalty have in common the element of feeling as opposed to being a cold fish.

And a debt of gratitude is, at least usually, of the appropriate open-ended sort. If I owe the bookshop \$150 for books, then I can pay the bookshop \$150 and the debt is dealt with and out of the way. It no longer exists. A debt of gratitude or what is owed as a matter of loyalty is not usually like that. If I owe the grocer \$100 and he, seeing that I have fallen on hard times, says that I should forget the debt, then I owe him a debt of gratitude, and a considerably greater debt of gratitude than if the original debt had been for \$10. The debt of gratitude is not the same sort of thing as the debt proper, the original debt: if it were the same sort of thing, then I should still owe the grocer \$100, would be no better off than I had been before and would have no ground for feeling grateful to the grocer. A debt of gratitude is not a matter of requirement in the same way as is a debt proper: if the grocer should try to turn it into one, insisting that I give him \$100 later on, then he has changed the nature of his earlier act; he might have given me an extension of credit then (for which, of course, gratitude might be proper), but he has no longer simply given me the gift of \$100 I owed him and I could no longer be grateful to him for *that*. With the removal of that idea of requirement, the idea of definitively *meeting* the requirement also disappears. If things

change as time goes by so that the grocer falls on hard times and owes me \$150 for philosophical services rendered, the market in private philosophy having boomed, then I show a rather contemptible legal-mindedness instead of gratitude if I respond by knocking \$100 off the bill. Gratitude might be a matter of giving him \$50 in some circumstances or \$150 in others, of trying to cheer him up when he is depressed, or of looking after his cat when he goes away on holidays; there is no specific action that is owed as there is in the case of the debt proper. There is only whatever the action is that is provoked by the feelings proper to the case. And that seems to fit the pattern we see in what is owed as a matter of loyalty, too. One can see, sometimes, that loyalty or gratitude has ceased to be appropriate and that the debt has been paid, but there is no specific act that is required as the payment of what is owed because of gratitude or loyalty; there is nothing as precise as handing over exactly \$100 and thus extinguishing the debt.

But loyalty, like friendship, is the sort of thing that one grows into rather than decides to have. Like gratitude, it is the sort of thing one simply finds that one feels, rather than decides to have. The sort of calculation suggested in that picture of deciding whether to feel loyalty is not appropriate when what is at issue is a matter of whether one has a certain feeling or emotional commitment. One does not decide to have it, let alone to have it to a certain extent, and one can grow into it or start to feel it for all sorts of reasons that might have nothing to do with gratitude. A group of people who are unfairly persecuted are likely to develop a loyalty to each other, identifying with each other because of their common plight, but they do not develop the loyalty because they are grateful to each other. One can simply grow into the emotional ties, and it can be a quite proper loyalty that one grows into without gratitude. Things other than gratitude can lead one to identify with a group. Gratitude, at best, is not a complete explanation of loyalty.

And, anyway, appeal to gratitude will not do the job that needs to be done, since, at least on the face of it, similar problems can arise with gratitude to those that arise with loyalty. Gratitude can be a splendid thing, and we expect it of any decent person in the appropriate circumstances; but when gratitude leads somebody to concentrate only on the interests of the person to whom they are grateful, making them uncaring about the interests of anybody else and perhaps even cruel or unjust to them, then it is not clear that gratitude is a virtue or adequate to the task of marking off those cases of loyalty in which loyalty is a virtue. And gratitude does sometimes lead to that sort of behaviour.

Courage, or one's recognition that one had courage, might make one vain. The fact that courage in such a case had vanity as a consequence

does nothing to show that courage is not a virtue. My point about gratitude, though, is not like that point about courage: it is not simply that gratitude can have cruelty or injustice as a *consequence*, as something separate from itself. The gratitude *is* the inclination to give preference to the one over the other, to ignore some of the legitimate interests; the injustice or cruelty in those cases is not a separable consequence of the gratitude, but is the very form that the gratitude takes.

Loyalty and pride frequently go together, so it might be that, where there is something about the group for me to be proud of, my loyalty is to that extent owed,<sup>8</sup> and it might be that loyalty is a virtue in so far as it is given when owed and not otherwise. As an Australian in London, for example, I can take pride in the Sydney Harbour Bridge; a Canadian cannot, even though I had just as little to do with building the thing as he did.<sup>9</sup> In the same way, I can be loyal to Australians as such, whereas the Canadian could not be, even though we could both be loyal to the British Commonwealth of Nations. So the suggestion is that where the group is one of which I can be proud, it deserves my loyalty. By doing or being the things that make me proud of it, which reflects also the fact that there is at least some sense in which I am part of it, it has earned my loyalty. It might be that a tendency to loyalty where it has been earned is a virtue and that *only* under that condition is the tendency a virtue. But it is not clear that a general and satisfactory account can be given of what constitutes loyalty, and it is certainly not clear that a satisfactory account can be given in terms of pride.

People can be proud of their groups for many different sorts of reasons, not all of them good. Whether a person can be proud of something depends, amongst other things, on the values held by *that person*; the values held by a Nazi might lead him to be proud of the Nazi Party, but that was the example I took earlier of a bad loyalty and is therefore unlikely to solve our problem here. I might be proud of my gang because it is the toughest bkie gang in the land, excelling all others in ruthlessness. Whether it would *earn* my loyalty by that fact is a different matter altogether.

What the talk of *earning* loyalty suggests is that loyalty might be thought of as some sort of commercial arrangement. This means taking the idea of earning loyalty as straightforwardly parallel to earning one's pay; but that makes it very difficult to distinguish loyalty from justice,

<sup>8</sup> But remember Andrew Oldenquist's remark ('Loyalties', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 74, 4 (April 1982), p. 188): 'Feeling shame about something is as much a sign of loyalty as is pride.'

<sup>9</sup> Compare Philippa Foot's discussion of pride in 'Moral Beliefs', reprinted in her *Virtues and Vices* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), p. 114.



and the two surely are different, as I pointed out earlier. It also makes nonsense of the catalogue in my own university's library: the majority of the books on loyalty in that library are located in the Business Management section, not in the Moral Philosophy section. That might sound appropriate to the idea of loyalty as some sort of commercial arrangement in which one gives what one owes, but, quite clearly, what those managers have in mind is that they will get *more* than they pay for if they get the loyalty of their employees; and we would, indeed, expect that. Loyalty might motivate an employee to do what justice required anyway<sup>10</sup> and, say, refuse to pass on secrets about the firm's technology to members of the competition, but the really loyal employee is expected to be prepared to do more than he or she is paid for and more than justice would require: such employees are expected to stick to the firm through the hard times, to refuse better job offers from other firms and so on. Accepting a better job offer from another firm might not show disloyalty, because loyalty and disloyalty are not exhaustive as possible motivations, but it is loyalty that would be called on to explain why the better job offer was rejected. Absence of loyalty in a particular case need not show disloyalty; it might show only that the relationship was nothing more than a commercial one, or a number of other things. A really loyal person subjugates (at least to some extent) his or her private interests to those of the object of loyalty, and that is quite different from being an entirely independent item entering a commercial relationship. Loyalty involves emotional ties and not merely commercial ties.

Or it might be that what earns loyalty is that the group does something worthwhile. This is weaker than pride as a ground, but suffers from the same problem: so many different things can be judged to be worthwhile. And it will not even do to make the weaker claim that the activity must be worthwhile in some way and also not be immoral: one should not protect wrongdoers from the consequences of their actions, but if the wrong done is not too dramatic and the wrongdoer is, say, the son of the person appealed to for help in covering up, one would think the person appealed to a remarkably cold fish and lacking in quite proper feelings of loyalty if he or she did not at least feel *torn* before turning the son over to the processes of the law. Such cases are complex and various, and I do not suggest that the issue of whether to turn the

<sup>10</sup> My insistence that loyalty is something more than simply dutifulness or justice should not be taken to mean that one can never show loyalty simply in doing one's duty. Loyalty can be the motivation for duty. Sometimes one's duty might be so onerous that one would not stick at it unless one had loyalty as a motivation; one's simple sense of duty might not be up to the task.

son over to the police should always be settled in the same way, but it seems clear that we should commonly regard a parent as lacking in family loyalty if he or she did not at least feel torn in those circumstances; loyalty is an appropriate motivation in such a case even though the action performed might be reprehensible. If the parent eventually decided that the offence or the likelihood of its recurrence did not allow of covering up, one would expect the son to be handed over *regretfully*.

Perhaps whether a group earns the loyalty of its members does vary with their judgements of what is worthwhile and what is valuable. In that case we should have to be content to say that loyalty itself was not a virtue, but was sometimes a good thing and sometimes a bad thing depending on the object of the loyalty. If the judgement we are making is one of when it is a morally good thing to be loyal and when it is not, then that is a judgement external to the loyalty and referring to it; it cannot be a judgement internal to loyalty, marking off a virtue of loyalty from a vice of jingoism as good judgement marks off courage from foolhardiness. A loyal Nazi is a possibility but not a good thing. Jingoism and the various forms of chauvinism might be forms of loyalty, but forms that show loyalty not to be a virtue as such. We should teach our children to be just, kind and courageous whenever the opportunity arises, but perhaps we should teach them to be very choosy about when they are loyal, and to what, and how much.

### III

Clearly, there is an issue about judging what is worthy of loyalty, and it takes a somewhat sharper form than I have suggested so far.

When it comes to a matter of taking risks and a question of whether somebody has and is exhibiting the virtue of courage, it is possible for the person who has the opportunity to be courageous to make an error of judgement: he might under-estimate or over-estimate the risks involved, for example, or he might make a mistake about how worthwhile those risks are in the circumstances that prevail. The problem about loyalty at least appears to take a somewhat more difficult form.

The thing about loyalty is that it appears to involve as part of itself a setting aside of good judgement, at least to some extent. If I stick with the firm, or the football club, or whatever, only when reason makes it clear that that is the thing to do, then I am a fairly calculating person and not particularly loyal. The loyal person sticks in there in the bad times as well. In the world of commerce, in which one would think it

appropriate that judgement be exercised on commercial grounds, the loyal executive sticks with the company even when a better job offer comes along from another company; and if it is a better job offer then good commercial judgement would dictate that he take it. Failure to follow good judgement is not just a possibility when an issue of loyalty arises; willingness *not* to follow good judgement, at least some of the time, seems to be part of what it is to be loyal.

Trusting somebody might also involve setting good judgement aside (to some extent), and, clearly, such trust can be earned or unearned. There can be good reason for setting aside or handing over one's judgement at times. There may be no algorithm for working out when it is a sensible thing to do, and there will, no doubt, be cases in which it is not clear whether it is sensible, but we all know how the job is done. In rough terms: look at the past record and see how good they are at this sort of thing. And one does not completely give up one's own judgement: I trust my doctor, but if he tells me that I can fix my back by jumping head-first off the roof of my house, then I shall seek a second opinion.

The model of trust seems to fit reasonably well a number of the things that we have noticed about the role of judgement in loyalty, but it does not fit all of them. I might stick with the group through the hard times, and I might do so because its past record suggests that good times will come again. But if that is why I do it, then I am simply a wise investor – loyalty would be called on to explain why I stick with the group despite the fact that all I see ahead is persecution and further hard times. Loyalty in the hard times can depend simply on what one owes because of the past and not on expecting the group to come good again in the future. And what one owes from the past will be owed in an extended sense not covered by a straightforward commercial understanding. It will be a matter of emotional ties and identification, a willingness to share the hardship with those I regard as my own.

What carries the weight might not even be a matter of how many of the particular judgements of the group I regard as correct, but rather of the general grounds on which they are made. Loyalty to the group is not simply a matter of expecting it to come up with the right answer more often than not, which is pretty much the case in my relationship with my doctor, but often of feeling that they care about the right things and make their judgements, even when they are mistaken, in terms of those values.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Loyalty that stresses values in this way can even lead me to oppose the group with which I identify. It was loyalty to the American ideal (whether or not that loyalty was

## IV

What is it that is at issue when we ask whether loyalty is a virtue? What is it for anything to be a virtue, and how can one work out whether it is?<sup>12</sup> At this stage of the argument, an outline of a solution to these problems must be provided.

People are social beings. We may be born incapable of social activity, but, given our biological needs, it is no accident or surprise that we grow into social ways. We recognize ourselves as parents, philosophers, carpenters and so on, all terms which take their meanings from a social framework. If we were not social beings, capable of living peacefully in communities and with some inclination to do so, then, given that there are enough of us for us to be constantly coming into contact with each other, we should be in a Hobbesian natural condition and would wipe ourselves out in a generation. If we are willing to get along together, then we shall form peaceful conventional means of resolving disputes arising from clashes of interests or differences of judgement; if we are not willing to get along together, any such differences will be provocation to fighting, and that fact would itself be further provocation to pre-emptive defensive action. What enables us to avoid this is that people, or enough people, *are* social beings with the qualities of character appropriate to social life. Those qualities of character will be virtues in social beings in much the same way as clear type is a virtue in a typewriter. What is a virtue is not simply something that each of us can decide for himself or herself, but is set by the necessity of people's having social ends: different people might set different ends for themselves, but that the human race has lasted more than one generation presupposes that people, by and large, are social beings with social ends.

It must be a matter of qualities of character and natural inclinations to behave in certain ways rather than of people's formulating and agreeing to abide by certain rules which would enable them to achieve their ends. If there were no such natural inclinations, then the people would wipe themselves out before they could formulate the rules, being unable to get together peacefully; and if they were not trustworthy and willing to get along together, then they could not be trusted to keep the agreement even if they made one, a lack of trust which would again make pre-emptive action no less than reasonable.

misguided) that motivated a lot of the Americans who opposed American involvement in Vietnam.

<sup>12</sup> The content of this section is a very quick summary of some of the positions for which I have argued in my *Co-operation and Human Values* (Brighton: Harvester Press; and New York: St Martin's Press, 1981).

It is not only asocial atoms of that sort who make social life difficult: busybodies and people who cannot mind their own business, for example, do so as well even if they are good-hearted about their activities. Discriminating judgement is needed if things are to work reasonably well. We shall not get far if we give up at the first sign of opposition; we need fortitude for life and for any of the other virtues. On the other hand, there is something to be said for knowing when you are beaten and for recognizing your limitations: lift the child out of the way of the runaway bus instead of standing there trying to stop the bus with your body. We can recognize the *daring* in what a bank robber does, perhaps, but whether he shows the virtue of courage is a different kettle of fish: there are doubts to be raised about his judgements of which enterprises are worthwhile or proper, and that undermines his claim to a virtue. Anybody can make a mistake in the particular case, including people of good judgement, but somebody who makes a *career* of bank robbery is not simply making a mistake in the particular case; he lacks the right judgement, one of the abilities that makes up the virtue of courage. We might recognize courage in somebody who, unwillingly and atypically, robbed a bank in order to raise the money for his sister's operation, in which case the end of the enterprise is somewhat different and the judgement was aberrant for that person. Given that judgement is, in this way, part of the virtue of courage, one can say a lot more than that courage is sometimes a good quality to have and sometimes a bad one, but overall is better to have than not to have: the virtue of courage, with good judgement as part of it, is directed towards proper ends, and, *as a settled quality of character*, it is invariably a better thing to have it than not to have it. Mistake in the particular case is always possible, with any alternative quality as much as with courage, but, failing that, the virtue of courage is set up to produce the right results.

Virtues are complex qualities of people; there are many ways of missing out on possession of a virtue, and many limitations on the possession of virtues by those who undoubtedly possess them. A virtue is not something that one either has all of or none of: a fairly long story usually needs to be told to explain the way in which and the extent to which an imperfect being possesses virtues. One does not deny the courage of somebody who braves the raging river to save his child from great danger, even though that same person might be reduced to gibbering terror by a spider; there can be limits on the sorts of dangers one can face and the sorts of fears one can conquer, which are limits on the extent to which one is courageous. Attachment to one's child might make one under-estimate the danger to oneself and over-estimate the danger to the child when defending him, leading to foolhardy action in

such cases even though one usually got such judgements right in cases involving other people. That, too, would be a limitation on one's possession of the virtue. But some limits are too restricting: if I am concerned about justice only when justice suits me, then it is not really justice that I am concerned about and I do not possess that virtue.

The daring bank robber possesses a character trait which is useful in his gang in the same way as courage is useful to the society at large. We can see the similarities in the two character traits while noticing the special and objectionable purpose that the gang has. We can notice that the robber shows an enviable ability to face danger for things that he judges to be worthwhile, and, between bank robberies, he might use that ability in pursuit of ends that the rest of us would also judge to be worthwhile. But, like the parent whose judgement goes astray when it is the interests of his child that are in question, the bank robber shows a lack of good judgement in his views about the worthwhileness of robbing banks. There his judgement is overtaken by a desire for danger for its own sake or the pursuit of his own selfish ends (Robin Hood, with different ends, would be a different story), and that part of his character is not a virtue in a social being. He might show courage in other cases, but there is a severe limitation on his good judgement so that it is not the virtue of courage that he shows in robbing banks.

People have to live with each other, and a virtue is a complex quality that makes it possible or easier for them to live with each other. Judgement is part of the complex quality, and I have been unable to locate the judgement that could do the job of marking off a *virtue* of loyalty from vices or failings in the same area, such as jingoism. Loyalty, indeed, seems to require a setting aside of good judgement to an extent that is inconsistent with its being a virtue. As we saw earlier, we cannot limit that extent by saying that the end must be morally worthwhile or even that it must be somehow worthwhile and not immoral.

## V

I want to step sideways now to look at a relationship that holds between loyalty and various virtues and vices as I head towards the suggestion about its status with which I shall finish this paper. Certainly, loyalty can affect one's exhibition of other virtues. It will affect, for a start, the judgements that are involved in one's exhibition of some virtues. As a loyal Australian I shall judge certain risks to be worthwhile despite the fact that there is no direct gain for me in overcoming them – the gain would be for Australia, with the interests of which, in the example, I identify my own. Because of my loyalty, my courage has an opportunity

to come into play, an opportunity that it would not have had otherwise. Courage does not have to be for *personal* gain: even though they might live happily forever after, the hero beats off the villain so he can untie the maiden from the railway tracks as the train approaches *for the good of the maiden*, not for his own selfish ends. My point is that it is not worth *my* while to risk penury by setting up a risky export business in order to improve the balance of payments of Japan or Argentina. The risk seems to me worthwhile, in my example, and is worthwhile to me, because it is for the good of Australia and I am a loyal Australian.

Or loyalty might affect whether one has the feeling that is part of having and exhibiting a virtue. On the evidence of newspaper reports, Australians are more upset by the problems of Australians convicted of drug offences in Malaysia than they are by the similar problems of other nationalities. Our loyalties can have considerable effect on whether or not, and to what extent, we respond to the plight of somebody else, and that affects whether our kindness or benevolence comes into play. If my benevolence depends very strongly on my loyalties in that way then it is, no doubt, imperfect benevolence, but, then, I am an imperfect being. If, to move to a related example, somebody with harsh memories of a war retains an animosity to members of what was the enemy nation, then that is, no doubt, a failing, but it does not seem to mean that that person is not genuinely being benevolent when he warm-heartedly responds to the plight of somebody else.

Loyalty can affect the way my sense of justice operates, too, because it is a matter of the group with which I identify;<sup>13</sup> it affects whom I see as being in the game of getting shares. If I wield my hoe side by side with somebody else in the field, it is obvious that the other person is entitled to a share of the goods produced unless there is a strange story to be told explaining why not. Once we look beyond contributors, though, the issue is one of whom we see as being in the group for which the work is being done: the appropriate shares have to be worked out for those people. There will, no doubt, be plenty of questions to raise about what the division within that group should be. The appropriate share for one person might be nothing because he was too lazy to do any work;

<sup>13</sup> See Oldenquist ('Loyalties', p. 177): 'Our wide and narrow loyalties define moral communities or domains within which we are willing to universalize moral judgments, treat equals equally, protect the common good, and in other ways adopt the familiar machinery of impersonal morality.' This suggests a similar line, but the emphasis on impersonal morality suggests a concentration on justice at the expense of the other virtues with which I would not agree. Note also that loyalty is not the *only* feature determining membership of the group with whom I have relationships in terms of justice or impersonal morality: as one example, I have such relationships with people with whom I make contracts, but the making of a contract might not lead to any feeling of loyalty.



another who did not contribute might still get something because the lack of contribution was not a matter of unwillingness, but of illness, injury or lack of opportunity. Each is considered because, despite lack of contribution, he is a member of the group to which I have ties of loyalty. The hard work of the hardest worker in the group next door gives him no claim on me, even for consideration, when I do my calculations about sharing out the goods. He is not in the relevant group.

Similarly, loyalty can affect the possibility of my being grateful. I can be grateful to people for what they do for me. I can be grateful to people for what they do for my family. On the other hand, I cannot be grateful to people for what they do for those with whom I have no identification at all. I can be grateful to somebody who helps my compatriots when they are in need, but, as an Australian, I cannot be grateful to somebody who helps a Scot as such. I can admire such a person, can hold them up whenever I want an example of virtue, but I cannot be grateful to them if my loyalties lead me to identify with Australians.

People can, then, exhibit their loyalty in exhibiting other virtues,<sup>14</sup> and the loyalty might, in some circumstances, be a necessary condition of the exhibition of the other virtues. Whether or not loyalty is itself a virtue, it is not unrelated to other virtues.

Equally clearly, loyalty can be exhibited in some vices. My loyalties are to some groups rather than to others; there is always an exclusion involved in loyalty. As in the worse forms of nationalism, that exclusion can take the forms of intolerance and injustice.

## VI

This leads not to a conclusion that I draw, but to a suggestion that I make, putting it up for further investigation. One can make rough and ready judgements of the relatively unstructured aspects of people's emotional make-ups. As an example, consider things related to cruelty, which is incontestably a vice. If one can make only the crude choices, then, probably, it is better to have somebody who cannot bear to cause pain than to have somebody who delights in it. Somebody who cannot bear to cause pain, no matter what, will be squeamish, which is a failing, and will be quite useless at giving first-aid in a variety of cases.

<sup>14</sup> The way in which this is possible, as I have set out the examples, provides a clear solution to one of the problems raised by Nathanson ('In Defense of "Moderate Patriotism"'): it shows how loyalty can lead to preference for a particular group without necessarily leading to injustice or any other vice and leaves us with a much fuller and richer notion of loyalty or patriotism than Nathanson allows for.



Such a person lacks the discriminating judgement required for possession of the virtues relevant in this area; they cannot judge when it is proper or necessary to cause pain and when it is not. Nevertheless, it seems fairly clear that, amongst those who lack the necessary discriminating judgement, we should do better to encourage a distaste for causing pain than a delight in it. But that quality will not be listed in the family of virtues.

Is all that we can say about loyalty what we said about distaste for causing pain, that is, that it is not a virtue, but that, if one is going to miss whatever the virtue is in that area, it is better to miss in that direction than in the other? Clearly, loyalty readily lends itself to excesses. This shows itself in brawls between groups of football fanatics and in the more excessive forms of nationalism. One might even be tempted to say of loyalty that, not only is it not a virtue, but it is not a good thing by-and-large, given the excesses to which it can lead. This, I think, is going too far, and I want to suggest a half-way house.

One issue had better be dealt with first, even if only quickly. The issue is whether the excesses to which loyalty can lead are properly to be counted against it. The question to consider is this: is a disloyal Nazi better than a loyal Nazi? There are problems in the Nazism, but is there anything wrong with the loyalty? A disloyal Nazi, after all, still has all the vices of Nazism and has added disloyalty to them – as I said earlier, it is yet another thing to be held against him and yet another reason for us not to trust him. But what we need to know is *why* he was disloyal. If he was disloyal for pecuniary gain, then yes, it is just one more failing that he exhibits. If, on the other hand, he is disloyal because, despite his convictions, he is, as he sees it, weak-willed and squeamish and simply cannot stand the thought of putting all those Jews and Gypsies into gas chambers, then his disloyalty reflects the presence in him of some virtue, even if of an incompletely formed virtue that he does not want to admit to. And, in turn, *loyal* Nazism reflects the presence in the person of various vices and the lack of the relevant virtues. And again, loyalty seems to take its colouring from the other virtues and vices that it brings into play.

The suggestion that I want to make is one drawing on the points that I have made about the relationship between loyalty and the exhibition of other virtues and vices. I want to suggest that loyalty is the emotional setting for the virtues and vices; it is not itself a virtue or a vice, but is the raw material for them.

Loyalty is a willingness to stick with the group. As we have seen, the problem is which groups people can choose to stick with and the attitudes they can take to non-members of the group, but willingness to

stick with a group matters because it is the rawest expression of people's social nature: without such a willingness, groups would not be formed and we should all be isolated asocial atoms. The only relationships between us would be contractual relationships. Problems about explaining social groupings on the basis of contractual relationships alone between asocial atoms are widely recognized, and, at a purely practical level, one can see that survival would be extremely difficult for infants. Human ways of life just do depend on emotional ties between people, ties that lead them to take the interests of another as their own and to care for infants for their own sake, not because the infant has entered a contract to look after us in our old age or because we expect the child to enter such a contract later on. Parents, by and large, look after their children even if the child suffers from a disease that makes it quite certain that the child will not live to adulthood. Here, in sympathy, compassion and even love, we find the feelings from which loyalty can be constructed. There are, of course, parents who do not care for their children, but the *norm* must be parents who do or the human race would die out. Since the human race has continued for so long, one might conclude that it is no accident, whether for genetic reasons or for others, that parents by and large care about their children. Sociability, which is at the core of loyalty, is not just a good thing by-and-large, as is a distaste for causing pain; it is necessary to human life. Nevertheless, even though necessary, it must be controlled; we need to be careful of the groups we form and stick with.

Given my brief account of what it is that constitutes a virtue or a vice, one can see that the social nature of people is a necessary condition of any virtue or vice. Loyalty, the desire to be and remain with the group, the willingness to bear some cost for that and, at least to an extent, to take the interests of others as one's own, is the raw material for the virtues. It is also the raw material for at least some of the vices.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> I am grateful to an anonymous reader for this journal whose comments helped to improve the paper.