

University of Nevada, Reno

**Examining Loyalty
The Folk and the Philosopher**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy

by

John D. Baldari

Dr. Christopher T. Williams/Thesis Advisor

December 2012

**© by John D. Baldari 2012
All Rights Reserved**



University of Nevada, Reno
Statewide • Worldwide

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

We recommend that the thesis
prepared under our supervision by

JOHN D. BALDARI

entitled

**Examining Loyalty
The Folk And The Philosopher**

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Christopher Williams, Ph. D., Advisor

Thomas Nickles, Ph. D., Committee Member

Neal Ferguson, Ph. D., Graduate School Representative

Marsha H. Read, Ph. D., Dean, Graduate School

December, 2012

Abstract

In the modern age of individualism, conservative concepts of loyalty have slipped into the background of the Great Conversation. While this may be true in the field of ethical philosophy, it is not true elsewhere. In this paper, I examine loyalty from the perspectives of the “folk and the philosopher” where I consider the points of view of philosophers and non-philosophers. Each presents a uniquely valuable perspective.

The status of loyalty as a virtue is disputed, especially by philosophers, when it is observed that loyalty can be used in the commission of evil. It has also been denigrated as blindly emotional rather than rational. However, through my analysis, I conclude with a rational argument in sympathy with the intuition that loyalty is virtuous. *Loyalness* is “the quality or state of being loyal, the tendency toward loyalty.” *Loyalness* is a virtue derived from reason that, if properly incorporated into life, will lead to excellence. *Loyalness* is a character trait that helps a person make good decisions about the world as a whole, by creating allegiances to objects with positive moral content. Through this tendency, the virtuous person is able to make decisions about morally ambiguous circumstances. In addition, in the event of negative moral circumstances, a loyalty can be used to direct decisions in a consistent way. *Loyalness* is a way of making one larger than the finite limits of the self: through good associations, one shares in the successes and defeats of the objects of loyalty. Loyalties must be tested, both through critical reflection and action. *Loyalness* does not assume that a particular loyalty is costly, but it does imply that, should a good loyalty become costly, the virtuous person will commit to the best interest of the object of loyalty, even at a disadvantage to the agent.

Table of Contents

Problem Statement: The Problem with Loyalty	Page 1
Part I: Introduction to Loyalty in Folk Ethics	
Section 1: Dictionary and Anecdotal Definitions	Page 2
Section 2: Loyalty in Wikipedia	Page 10
Part II: Technical Definitions	
Section 1: Kleinig's Introduction	Page 15
Section 2: R. E. Ewin and <i>Loyalty and Virtues</i> Page	27
Section 3: Josiah Royce and <i>The Philosophy of Loyalty</i> Page	33
Part III: Arguments Examined	
Section 1: Introduction by Author	Page 37
Section 2: Reconciling the Folk and the Philosopher	Page 45
Section 3: Virtue Theory	Page 50
Section 4: Objects of Loyalty and Moral Content	Page 54
Section 5: Forfeiture	Page 57
Section 6: Conclusion	Page 59
Bibliography Page	60

The Problem with Loyalty

Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit and other Soldiers.¹

Loyalty is not commonly found on many of the modern lists of virtues compiled by ethicists. In an age of fierce personal liberty and individualism, conservative concepts like loyalty have slipped into the background of the Great Conversation. While this may be the case in the field of ethical philosophy, it is not true in general. In an online survey of 149 people, more than three quarters of respondents listed loyalty (or a close synonym) as one of the top five virtues.² Why is there a disparity between the importance of loyalty to philosophers and its importance to the folk? The problem is that “loyalty” is a loaded word. Throughout history, the connotation has transformed to such an extent that it is difficult to find a solid point of agreement on definitions. This leaves us with the question, “what is loyalty, and is it a virtue?”

In this paper, I examine loyalty from the perspectives of the “folk and the philosopher.”³ Analysis of the positions, and discovery of how the two can be reconciled, follows. First, I thoroughly examine the folk position on loyalty, then I consider a number of unique perspectives from the philosophical tradition. The philosophers examined are

¹ This quote is taken from the US military doctrine known as the Army Values, a unique virtue-based ethical system that provides insight into one of the direct applications of loyalty outside the learned community.

² As asked within the facebook.com group for Secular Philosophy (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/114023208619060/>) on August 30, 2012, of the 149 members of the group. Approximately 10% of the group admits to any philosophical training outside the online community.

³ “Folk” is not meant to be a disparaging term. I use “folk” here like military personnel use the term “civilian.” In other words, one is either a professional philosopher or not. Historically, “folk” simply means “untrained in scholastic traditions,” but I am more specifically using the term to denote those who are not trained in the philosophical tradition. Therefore, a folk is a group of people with little or no technical philosophical training, whereas a learned philosopher is one who professionally works within the academic community. To be true, I would be considered folk to a philosopher in a field other than my own and non-ethicists often think similarly to the folk in regard to loyalty in many ways. Both the folk and the philosopher can be equally brilliant, well-educated, and correct.

John Kleinig⁴ for the introduction to loyalty as a philosophical concept, R. E. Ewin⁵ for the negative position on loyalty's status as a virtue, and Josiah Royce⁶ for the positive position. Meanwhile, my treatment of folk ethics is drawn from conversations with, and polls taken of, non-philosophers, as well as dictionary⁷ definitions and collaborative websites.⁸

I conclude with a defense of loyalty-as-a-virtue, or *loyalness*. Loyalty, when examined, well reflected upon, and aligned with worthy objects, is a virtue trait that, when embodied, can lead to good character.

Part I: Introduction to Loyalty in Folk Ethics

Section 1: Dictionary and Anecdotal Definitions

The folk perspective must be respected, even by the philosophical eye. The philosopher does not have the luxury of shaping the world to fit their philosophy. One must work within the concepts and applications of the world in which one lives. By looking at loyalty from the folk perspective first, I am able to bracket my discussion to carefully include folk concepts while making arguments to improve the overall understanding of the subject.

The OED defines “loyal” as “giving or showing firm and constant support or allegiance to a person or institution”⁹ (with “loyalty” simply being the quality of being

⁴ Kleinig, J. (2008). *Loyalty*. (E. N. Zalta, Editor) Retrieved July 25, 2012, from Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/loyalty/>

⁵ Ewin, R. E. (1992). Loyalty and Virtues. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 403-419.

⁶ Royce, J. (1908). *The Philosophy of Loyalty*. New York: The Macmillan Co.

⁷ Dictionaries, at least the standard style, are notoriously poor at strict technical definitions, tending more toward folk than learned concepts. Therefore, dictionary definitions during an examination such as this one, no matter how rigorous the words have been researched, must be considered from the folk perspective.

⁸ Such as websites like <http://en.wikipedia.org>, non-reviewed publications like Philosophy Now, and unmoderated internet forums such as facebook.com

⁹ *Loyal*. (2002). *Oxford English dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

loyal). This fits well with what I observed in conversations with the folk. Loyalty is invoked in cases of adversity where allegiances become instrumental. The core of the folk concept is constancy in times of adversity. One who shows allegiance in untried times is not necessarily considered loyal. It is only after some hardship, no matter how slight, that loyalty to a particular object can be established. Therefore, one must first develop loyalty, and then through some adversity remain steadfast thereafter in the loyalties formed.

The older, encyclopedic citation, the definition from *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th edition, 1910)¹⁰ defines loyalty as “allegiance to the sovereign or established government of one’s country” or “personal devotion and reverence to the sovereign and royal family.”¹¹ The word is traced to the fifteenth century, primarily in regard to feudal fidelity in service, in love, or to a personal oath. The Old French origin of the word is “loialte,” which is born from “lex” (or “law” in Latin). Therefore, loyalty can be associated with a kind of lawfulness, especially to one’s sovereign. Early common definitions even cite the monarch as the only worthy object of loyalty. One was not considered worthy of rights without fealty to the lords. Loyalty does not seem to hold that old connotation any longer. Lawfulness, while still valuable, is not synonymous with loyalty for modern folk. Although one who is disloyal may be breaking a law, it is far too easy to consider examples of betrayals that are well within the confines of legality.¹²

¹⁰ This can be found in the public domain at <http://www.theodora.com/encyclopedia/>

¹¹ The difference between the definitions in the OED and the old *Britannica* are so significant that it is difficult to compare the two. What is interesting is the how the two definitions highlight the great debate regarding loyalty. This debate, regarding *loyalty* and the *object* toward which loyalty is shown, is a central focus of this work.

¹² I would be willing to say that lawfulness and loyalty hold almost no common bond, but I can see that such a statement would open an argument regarding whether loyalty is binding in some sense, and is therefore capable of an esoteric “legislation.” This may be worth discussion at some later date, but is not considered here.

One's adherence to the law is seen much less as a choice than as a willful forfeiture of rights (for some public good or protection). The merging of the new and old definition creates an error. Wikipedia is particular guilty of ignoring this confusion. This will be known as the "categorical error in loyalty" and will be given focus in Part III.

The trait of loyalty among the folk requires external judgment. To be judged as loyal, much like being judged as trustworthy, is a social state that is easily lost. Few will forgive betrayal, no matter what one's former actions were or the end consequences of the action. One could look at loyalty in this way as a kind of reputation. It would be impossible, from the folk point of view, to be loyal in a vacuum; therefore, it is a social virtue,¹³ or a virtue that requires interaction with other people. This is unlike a virtue such as courage, which can be practiced wholly outside the venue of social interaction. Why loyalty is so important to the folk is of interest.

My conclusion in regard to the folk view centers on judgments. Subconsciously, loyalty is not seen as a personal virtue by the folk (or, likely, by the philosopher in some cases), but rather an important trait to find in others (unless one is inspired to introspect). There is a comfort in knowing that one can rely on the steadfast loyalty of friends and allies. When reflecting on *virtue* and *expectations of virtue*, it can be easy to confuse the two. A virtue is a trait of good character, whereas an expectation of virtue is that which is judged as a trait of good character in others. If one is not particularly careful, when considering the list of virtues to be reflected upon, one considers only what one wants from others as opposed to the expectations of the self. To make sure that I am understood,

¹³ There are some ethicists that believe that only social virtues can be virtues at all, since ethics revolves around being good in relation to others. I disagree, and assume that virtue can be either social or autonomous throughout this work.

for the remainder of this work, virtue is referred to simply as “virtue” or “virtue-of-character,” and a virtue that is expected is referred to as a “virtue-of-judgment.” Virtue is to good character what expectation is to reputation.

I must digress here a moment to briefly introduce some of my ideas on virtue.¹⁴ Virtues-of-character are superior to virtues-of-judgment based on the concept of excellence. If the target of being a good person is to achieve a level of excellence, reliance on the judgment of others removes significant power from one’s ability to achieve one’s own excellence. Although virtues can have significant social components, the practice and acquisition of virtuous habits doesn’t seem like it should rely on those things outside one’s own control, such as others’ judgment.

Not all virtues-of-judgment are social virtues. One can be judged on one’s beauty, good health, courage under fire, or some other trait in which reputation plays no role. There are lists of virtues that can be practiced entirely on the environment or within one’s own consciousness, such as self-acceptance (a newer virtue) or wisdom (an ancient virtue). If the *product* of these traits is observable (let’s say, for example, that one with the virtue of courage survives a long, lonely stint shipwrecked at sea: courage is the virtue and survival is the product), then one may be judged virtuous (building on my example, reports of the courageous voyage reach civilization, whose people then say that this was indeed a virtuous person). Being judged virtuous and being virtuous are not the same.

Folk loyalty, then, is foremost a virtue-of-judgment. In Part III, I argue that, through testing, the evaluation of loyalty can include true virtue by focusing those

¹⁴ This will be given considerably more effort in Part III

judgments internally on oneself.¹⁵ However, at first blush, folk consider and judge the loyalty of others before they examine their own. That does not imply that the folk believe loyalty to be reliant on the opinion of the object. If this type of loyalty is a virtue-of-judgment by the folk, then who are the folk, and where do their ideas originate?

Authors that are not trained in the philosophical condition are, for all intents and purposes, members of the folk. Loyalty is often examined in literature, and is a prominent topic for some extremely insightful, morally-sensitive authors. It would be fair to say that loyalty receives more interest from the folk than from all of philosophy.

It is easy to see how the folk concept of loyalty is informed by the tales of old. The following piece is from a book that examines the ideals of chivalry. The author, Eugene Waith, is a literary critic interested in the knighthood. He writes:

...prowess in these poems is not very different from the *arête* of Homeric epic, which Werner Jaeger defines as “a combination of proud and courtly morality of warlike valour”. [...] The feudal system, founded upon the mutual obligations of vassal to suzerain, gave loyalty an unusually high place in the scale of values. [...] Because loyalty was so basic a virtue, conflicting loyalties provided chivalric literature with unusually interesting situations. Bernier’s dilemma is essentially a conflict between loyalty to his liege lord and to his family, [...] loyalty to a lady causes disloyalty to a king. [...] Lancelot, the lover whose disloyalty to his king brings about the dissolution of the Arthurian court. [...] Loyalty, as an obligation to another person, was a curb on the proper exercise of prowess, as was courtesy, another major ideal of chivalry.¹⁶

Here we see that knights had strong thoughts on chivalry, some of which survive to this day. The purpose of this passage is to illustrate the historical roots from which the conception of loyalty sprang. Romantic ideals of virtuous loyalty to king and country

¹⁵ The self, or as I call it, the introspective self is the internal dialogue or conscience that we imagine when we consider ourselves as beings through time. There is an entire field of philosophy that deals with issues concerned with identity, but for the purposes of this paper, I mean the intuitive “person with whom we converse in our own skulls.”

¹⁶ Waith, 1971

such as this were often the first examination person has with the idea of loyalty;¹⁷ they inform much of the love affair that civilized people have for loyalty in general. Romantic loyalty is almost always seen in the best possible light. The stories lead readers through great tragedies wherein loyalties are greatly tested, yet the hero is victorious and the knight's sovereign rewards him handsomely. The reverse treatment is shown to those who forsake their loyalties to higher orders in order to pursue love or camaraderie; misfortune falls on the "disloyal" protagonist in every way.

For this reason, that stories excite introspection of loyalty, I offered the following short thought experiment to several groups of people untrained in the philosophical tradition.¹⁸ The story of Wilhelm. Wilhelm is a young man, a soldier, who has lived his entire life as a loyal subject to his country and his political party. Wilhelm finds himself suddenly captured by an enemy. He is imprisoned, but does not break under interrogation, all the while suffering horrible tortures. He borrows strength to endure horror from his loyalties.

When interviewed, the vast majority of people felt that Wilhelm was a loyal, virtuous person. I offered a number of embellishments to the story, all with Wilhelm receiving similar accolades (e.g. he follows the spirit of his country's rules, always worked in the country's best interest, suffered for the cause and made great personal sacrifices). There is a twist, though. The party was utterly destroyed during Wilhelm's imprisonment. Interviewees still sided with Wilhelm as a virtuous person due to his

¹⁷ We are confronted by loyalty from birth in regard to our family, friends, home, and whatever allegiances are pressed upon us. This is usually inculcated and does not involve much reflection. It isn't until we read stories of loyalty that we give the trait much thought.

¹⁸ These conversations were held over the course of several months in internet forums and at local gatherings, to people met during travels to Greece and Barbados, and anywhere else where it was socially acceptable to discuss philosophy.

steadfastness. The folk reported that it wasn't the object of Wilhelm's loyalty that made him virtuous,¹⁹ but the fact that he was a loyal person. If asked whether one could be loyal to "nothing," the answer is in all cases "no." Would one consider Wilhelm to no longer be loyal? The folk are quick to answer that, in fact, Wilhelm is still quite loyal, even with nothing to be loyal to. If Wilhelm were dropped into a dungeon and forgotten, then the loyalty he borrows his strength from is still present, even if the object is not. The folk conclude that Wilhelm is not only loyal, but that his loyalty is a trait of good character. In short, the interviewees judge Wilhelm to be a good person based on the story of his loyalty to his faction.

Let's take a deeper look at poor Wilhelm. Wilhelm is a Nazi. His loyalty to his party has been evidenced throughout his career via the willful genocide of fellow Germans based on their ethnic designation. He knows that his actions are heinous, but does not question what is asked of him in the name of the party. His loyalty is so strong that he willingly sets aside any other morality, following the strictures of the Nazis as closely and dogmatically as possible. The Nazis are notoriously evil, and therefore one can assume that Wilhelm is tainted in some way by even the slightest affiliation, but Wilhelm takes it much further than affiliation: he takes pleasure in fulfilling his duties for the glory of the party. From that perspective, Wilhelm is an evil person, and cannot be virtuous. One can see that he is quite loyal to his party. Therefore, I would be required, when writing about Wilhelm's character traits, to account for his virtue and nonvirtue. Can I still claim loyalty for the side of virtue if this blatant example of evil character can

¹⁹ This is important, key to what loyalty is and what it is not for the folk.

hold such a trait? This seems to be a problem.²⁰

Regardless, even when all of this was discussed, the folk still felt that loyalty was a virtue. When questioned further on how this could be possible, the tendency to reconcile virtue with “knowing the whole story” was common. The intuition seemed to be that one did not want to discount this trait simply because there was a bad seed. An example of this might be to judge an entire high school as bad based on the delinquency of a few of the students, when in fact the school is a trusting environment. The school might be thought of as “good character,” with the school’s trusting environment (one aspect of the school) analogous to “loyalty.” If a student takes advantage of the trusting environment to be delinquent, it is not the fault of the environment.

To continue my examination of folk loyalty, I made use of a number of resources, some of them more academically rigorous than others. In addition to the polls, dictionary entries, and Wikipedia introduction, I had the wonderful opportunity to sit with Brigadier General Frank Partlow, United States Army (ret.).²¹ BG Partlow’s impressive credentials include several commands and teaching posts at the US Military Academy at West Point and the Army War College. I interviewed BG Partlow regarding his thoughts on loyalty, both within and outside the military complex. The conversation touched on dozens of topics in the field of ethics and command, but he had much to say regarding loyalty specifically.

To summarize our conversation, the general said that loyalty was a kind of toleration. Human beings cannot be totally solitary, nor can we be allowed to do whatever

²⁰ One that I address in later arguments.

²¹ <http://origin.library.constantcontact.com/download/get/file/1101687507628-570/Frank+Partlow+Bio.pdf>

we want in the presence of others. Humans build allegiances of toleration. “I will allow you to live with me if you allow me to live with you. You will not harm me, I will not harm you. You will not steal from me; I will not steal from you.” These kinds of agreements are then kept under the guise of mutuality. But one cannot make similar deals with all the people that one’s friends have made deals with (think “six degrees of separation” principle²²). Eventually, humans begin to tolerate more restrictions with less mutuality. There reaches a point at which a society tolerates *absolutely*, with no mutuality in the end. BG Partlow is a brilliant military mind, yet his concept of loyalty is quite different from any previously experienced view. When I posed the question of whether loyalty was a virtue, he stated that “loyalty, my friend, is a necessity.”

Section 2: Loyalty in Wikipedia

There is no better source for the discovery of popular opinion and conventional views than Wikipedia. It seems a worthy exercise to detail the current entry on loyalty in order to provide insight into the folk view of loyalty. Since the online encyclopedia is not carefully tended by subject matter experts in logic and argumentation, the discussion does not conform to standards of argument. Regardless, it is an excellent introduction for the untrained and trained alike (but one would do well to give it its grain of salt).

Wikipedia defines loyalty thus: “Loyalty is faithfulness or a devotion to a person, country, group, or cause.”²³ The article foreshadows a number of technical distinctions that I discuss later, and cites loyalty as a topic for creative writers, psychologists, sociologists, and others. Each genre treats the subject differently, making the search for a

²² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_degrees_of_separation

²³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loyalty>

solid definition all the more pertinent. Of course, political theory has had an obsession with loyalty, or more specifically, patriotism, since the word's founding.²⁴ One might even posit that political theory is a grand theory of loyalty.²⁵

Wikipedia is particularly guilty of the categorical error in loyalty.²⁶ Specifically, it focuses much too strongly on the objects of loyalty and less on the trait itself. Loyalty to a certain specific object is often given a label of its own. Patriotism and marital fidelity are good examples of loyalties to specific objects (country and spouse, respectively) that have earned special consideration— enough to be distinguished from the more core concept of loyalty to X.

It should be noted that religious adherence is not a topic of this paper, because it relies on a number of subjects well beyond this work's scope (e.g., revelatory truth). In short, I treat religious loyalty as a separate entity due to these special requirements. It is not that religious loyalty is not worthy of reflection, but that it requires an additional component not necessary in folk *or* technical philosophies surrounding loyalty outside of the religious sphere of influence. However, it can be said that religion dominated a great deal of the conversation concerning loyalty until very recently.²⁷

As the concept of loyalty transformed throughout the early days of the twentieth century, the common definition began to incorporate several of the early examples of loyalty that were seldom discussed in tandem. Patriotism, marital fidelity, and allegiance

²⁴ The same could be said for religion, although the religious theorist is sure to claim that revelatory truths are less dependent on the emotions or personal dedication. I have no intention of contesting this in this short work.

²⁵ Patriotism is only a sliver of loyalty. Its importance is related to the scale of the loyalty and the actions taken in its name. It also deals with governments and leadership, the body politic. Patriotism, with its strong connotation and historical ties, will continue to conjure images of the “loyal” agent. Regardless, it is still only one particular loyalty.

²⁶ This will be of interest when we begin reconciling the folk view, both with itself and with the philosopher.

²⁷ It should be noted that Western oath-taking puts a great deal of emphasis on the religious sense

toward one's friends were all seen equally as examples of loyalty, and were equally useful in discussing loyalty and passing judgment.

With the work of Royce in 1908, loyalty was given new life as an idealistic principle of ethics, as opposed to a lone virtue or an obligation to the sovereign. Wikipedia acknowledges that Royce thought loyalty to be a master virtue,²⁸ namely that one virtue acts as a master for all other virtues and is necessary in order for one to be good. Unfortunately, this did not fit well with the common definition and was not terribly influential outside academia. Although Royce's work was never powerful in the folk conception, I will return to him in Section II, as he was incredibly influential in philosophy, and his theory is not without merit.

With patriotism taking on its own connotations as an example of loyalty, the concept of loyalty in totality has steered away from a focus on the sovereign. Even in folk parlance, the recognition that one can show loyalty to one's spouse, to one's friends, to one's nation (and its leaders), to one's community, to causes, and, indeed, to all manner of objects, is prevalent. I posit that it is not unreasonable to assume that one can not only be loyal, but one can issue that loyalty to any number of objects. Since so much of the folk discussion hinges on the topic of objects of loyalty, it is worth a moment to examine the difference between loyalty (the ostensible virtue trait) and loyalties (the objects of loyalty).

More recently, the folk conception of loyalty has seen some influence from

²⁸ Royce uses loyalty in much the same way that Plato uses justice. In other words, there are many virtues, but they do not make one a good person without the binding force of a master virtue. One could have all the other virtues, but without the master, one could still be evil.

Humanism.²⁹ The argument for this type of loyalty is based in social psychology. The Humanist claim is that humans have a tendency toward *normalcy* in regard to social contracts: humans will maintain allegiances regardless of moral content or self-interest.³⁰ This talk of “tendency” is a foreshadowing of the main argument for this paper.

The Wikipedia concept of loyalty is often considered to be an allegiance to a person or some group of people. Even when one claims to be loyal to a country or a church, it is often the people with whom one associates within those organizations that allegedly hold the loyalty.³¹

There are two special circumstances within the context of the Wikipedia entry that play on the word “loyalty” without the same level of implication as a discussion of virtue. The first example involves one’s loyalties to brands. Common in the modern era among markets in prosperous countries, one can hold a particular preference for a brand name, and that preference might be dubbed “loyalty.” Brand loyalty has many of the traits of a traditional loyalty, such as allowing one to make decisions between equivalent items, or reducing doubt. However, brand loyalty seems to be more aligned with preferences than allegiances, and seems to lack moral content. It also runs against the grain of the argument that loyalty is only shown to personified causes and entities. Therefore, brand loyalty as an aspect of a conversation on virtue seems to lack merit. This can be contentious. If one chooses to be loyal to a company that practices good hiring techniques

²⁹ I believe the article is referring to the loose organization of contemporaries that hold the life-philosophy of the same name, though it is not implicitly stated.

³⁰ Loyalty is not a virtue if one chooses poor objects of loyalty, but loyalty when considered carefully, and when precisely defined, is a virtue. I intend to give this idea a great deal of weight once all other perspectives have been addressed.

³¹ There is a question in my mind regarding the requirement that all objects of loyalty have some personification of social attachment. I consider the concept contentious, but will refrain from arguing for allegiances to insensate entities until some future time.

or participates in valuable charities, then one's loyalty would seem to have moral content. On the other hand, if the loyalty is based on the fiscal environment ("I like *x*-brand because everything is cheaper"), I would feel uncomfortable laying it on the table with such loyalties as family and country. That is not to say that one *cannot* be loyal to a market, only that preferences are not loyalties and should not be mistaken as such.

The second special circumstance involves animals. When one asks about the loyalty of beasts, it is typically considered among the folk as a possibility. In conversation, examples of stories about the intense loyalty certain animals feel toward certain people are not uncommon. While anecdotal stories abound of animals showing loyalty, the folk readily agree that an animal, even a cherished pet, does not receive the same loyalty as a personified agent and that an animal, even one to which one is extremely fond, can be willfully sacrificed to benefit mankind. What seems to be more common is loyalty to *animals* as a collective entity (the *cause* regarding animals). This loyalty can have the same fervor that traditional loyalties hold, and can be quite destructive. I do believe that there is a mistake in dismissing either the loyalty of, or the loyalty toward, an animal, but I believe this to be a discussion outside of the concept of virtue.

I close this section with these notes. First, I found the Wikipedia article to be quite thorough. Although the online encyclopedia is often considered to be of little use in scholarly endeavors, the simple introduction of the concept of loyalty, combined with some interesting insights into both the folk and learned literature, is an excellent staging point for a more informed and reflective conversation on the matter. Second, I see that the discussion of loyalty takes two directions. The most common is the mistaken concept

of the trivial identity of the loyalty trait and individual loyalties.³² This misplacement of the virtuous idea can derail any reflective discussion of virtuous loyalty. Also, although loyalty is commonly hailed as a great virtue, in its folk form, it is a virtue-of-judgment: the reputation for loyalty is more valuable to the folk than the virtue itself. Therefore, it is not a true virtue using the folk concept alone, but a social expectation that is won or lost, sometimes arbitrarily, in continuous interactions among people.

Part II: Technical Definitions

Section 1: Kleinig's Introduction

In philosophy, the learned take greater care with definitions of the concepts being examined, narrowing the focus of colloquial and folk definitions to include only those traits uniquely fixed to the term. Caveats and disclaimers are needed to keep skepticism at bay and move the conversation forward. As such, a quick dictionary definition is seldom sufficient. While the definition in Part I is still perfectly suitable for general discussion, allow me to focus this particular conversation.

I begin by focusing on virtue theory. Central to any discussion about virtues is the principle of *character*. A virtuous person is one who flourishes or excels through good character. Good character is developed through a balance that was introduced by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.³³ This balance is known as the Golden Mean; Aristotle's argument posited that virtue was a metaphysical point between two vices, a vice of excess and a vice of deficiency. This fundamental principle is relevant to the concept of loyalty, even if loyalty as such was not included in Aristotle's particular list of

³² This is the categorical error of loyalty. A loyalty is a feeling or sentiment felt toward a singular, particular object (person, cause, etc). The trait of loyalty is a tendency to make allegiances. The two ideas are quite different, even though they both share the same word "loyalty." I will go into this concept more in Part III,

³³ Aristotle and T. Irwin (1985). *Nicomachean ethics*. Indianapolis, Ind: Hackett Pub. Co., Book I

virtues.³⁴ Also fundamental is the target of virtuousness, *eudaimonia*. *Eudaimonia* is far too often defined as being similar or synonymous with happiness, but this is a mistake. *Eudaimonia* is about achieving excellence and approaching the perfect state of balance between vices. This excellence produces a human being capable of greatness in life, a life of flourishing or maximization of potential. Such greatness reflects in all things surrounding that person, manifesting in personal relationships, environmental mastery, great works, and so on. These things are accomplished through a propensity to do well—a propensity born of virtuous (excellent) action, which is itself born of virtuous (excellent) character. Although the work of the Ancients has some relevance to the overall conversation regarding virtue, this body of work has little to offer to a developed account of loyalty specifically.

With this clarification in place, I look at loyalty as a true virtue-of-character. Before arguing for this claim, I want to introduce loyalty as a philosophical principle. A fine technical introduction to the subject was found in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Professor John Kleinig writes that “loyalty is usually seen as a virtue, albeit a problematic one. It is constituted centrally by perseverance in an association to which a person has become intrinsically committed.”³⁵ This statement seems aligned with the popular definition given above. What is important is the careful distinction of loyalty as a trait of the person, not of one who is judged.

What follows in Part II is an analytical exposition using Kleinig’s argument structure (with my occasional commentary). While I believe it is important to maintain

³⁴ Aristotle focuses instead on the importance of friendship, which includes loyalty as a tenet.

³⁵ Kleinig, John (2008). “Loyalty,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL: <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/loyalty/>>

the integrity of Kleinig's structure, it does tend to leave the reader confused from time to time. Therefore, I will provide a brief map of the article. Also included here are a few short inclusions from thinkers that contribute to the technical understanding of loyalty, but whose work either does not provide sufficient material or is only cursorily connected to the conversation on loyalty as a whole.

The entry written by Kleinig tries to narrow the totality of philosophical understanding of loyalty into a single encyclopedic statement. Technically speaking, Kleinig is not presenting an argument so much as he is presenting an exposition of a concept. That said, he being human, and a fine philosopher, it cannot be helped that Kleinig's entry is bulging with conclusions. From the entry, I have drawn a few topical areas, some longer than others, as key to this work and a good understanding of the subject. The topics of the analysis will be:

1. Definition and implications
2. Instinct and tendency
3. "Stickingness"
4. Mutuality and the exclusionary rule
5. Universal versus particular loyalty
6. Sentimental objects of loyalty and judgment
7. Value
8. Forfeiture
9. Vices associated with loyalty
10. Loyalty as a conservative virtue
11. Causation

The entry includes a working definition of loyalty that is necessary for the rest of the work:

As a working definition, loyalty can be characterized as a practical disposition to persist in an intrinsically valued (though not necessarily valuable) associational attachment, where that involves a potentially costly commitment to secure or at least not to jeopardize

the interests or well-being of the object of loyalty.

Again, this definition fits nicely within the common understanding. It exemplifies my own idea of the concept and will be quite sufficient as a definition to be used throughout the remainder of this work. It implies the following:

- (1) Loyalty is a disposition of character, or habit.
- (2) One must value the objects of loyalty, but those objects need not have any objective value (moral or otherwise).
- (3) One must hold some association with the objects of loyalty.
- (4) The interest of the object of loyalty is valued over the interest of the self.

The definition does not imply any requirement of practicality. Kleinig and I agree that individual loyalties may well have some practical value, but the general good character that drives one to be loyal does not have to have any rationally motivated cost-benefit analysis. In fact, there are many cases of loyalty in which the virtuous one is at an extreme disadvantage (for example, soldiers in war).

Kleinig introduces us to the position that loyalty is ultimately instinctual. The negative position (that loyalty is not a virtue) claims that loyalty is just an animal tendency born from the raw evolutionary genetics of the human social animal. This would put loyalty on par with smiling or laughing (though it is given a slightly stronger survival benefit in conversation). Although this naturalistic idea has some merit, it isn't very philosophical and neglects the moral underpinnings of the trait. Kleinig ultimately disagrees with the negative argument,³⁶ taking up a positive position:

³⁶ I will note that Kleinig disagrees with my later argument by saying that loyalty and a tendency toward loyalty are different, and that the virtue of loyalty is not the tendency. Since so much of the remainder of his entry (including the working definition) disagrees with this statement I conclude that this is not a concept he holds dearly.

Posing the issue as one of either “practical disposition” or “sentiment” is probably too stark. Some evolutionary biologists/psychologists see loyalty as a genetically transmitted adaptive mechanism, a felt attachment to others that has survival value. Given what is often seen as the self-sacrificial character of individual loyalty, such loyalty is taken to be directed primarily to group survival. But it is not clear what such an explanatory account shows. What “loyalty” may have begun as and what it has come to be for reflective beings need not be the same. Nor would it impugn what loyalty has come to be that it began as a survival mechanism.

In short, he sees that one’s tendency to be loyal is validated as something more than genetic. As the reader will see, individual loyalties are only the product of the virtue, so it can only be the tendency that is valid as a virtue.

Kleinig denies that emotional attachment alone can drive loyalty, since the cost of true loyalty can be quite high:

The test of loyalty is conduct rather than intensity of feeling, primarily a certain “stickingness” or perseverance — the loyal person acts for or stays with or remains committed to the object of loyalty even when it is likely to be disadvantageous or costly to the loyal person to do so.

The implication seems to be that emotional loyalty is not virtuous until some action has been taken on the behalf of the object, especially at the expense of the agent. This gives weight to loyalty-as-a-virtue, since excellence requires conflict to achieve maximum potential. Kleinig states:

...but even though expressions of loyalty are not maximizing (in cost-benefit terms), the decision to commit oneself loyally may be rational, for one need not (indeed, ought not to) enter into associations blindly, or — even when they are unavoidable (as with familial or national ones) — accept their demands unthinkingly.

The “stickingness,” in spite of adversity in a test of loyalty, then, is the success.³⁷

Kleinig goes on to argue that there is no doubt that the subjects of loyalty are also the objects of loyalty, a concept known as mutuality. He states:

Mutuality is a feature of many loyalties, and it is often an expectation of the loyal individual that the collectivity to which the individual is loyal will also be loyal in return.

³⁷ Success in this case is the attainment of a virtue.

Just as we personify organizations, regarding them as in some sense responsible agents, so we can attribute loyalty to them or—more often—bemoan their lack of loyalty to those who have been loyal to them.

Mutuality is denied (as it was in folk philosophy) by enumeration of the list by Konvitz,³⁸ who states that people can hold loyalties to “ideas, ideals, religions, ideologies, nations, governments, parties, leaders, families, friends, regions, racial groups.” In other words, loyalty can be shown to entities that “cannot” show mutuality (such as a cause). His claim that non-personified loyalties are not loyalties at all, but personal integrity, juxtaposes all of virtue theory with an entirely distinct virtue. Integrity is not only a separate virtue;³⁹ it is an idea with a wholly complete definition that maintains its validity as an aspect of character to be sought separately from loyalty.

The Kleinig entry argues against the exclusionary consideration of objects of loyalties. It is often argued that an object of loyalty must hold a particular antagonism for some other possible object. For example, loyalty to country X implicitly requires an enmity to country Y. Kleinig denies this argument because a great number of loyalties need not be tested in such an adversarial fashion (it would require only one instance). One can show loyalty to one’s brother by helping him move even if it means missing a Sunday football game played by one’s favorite team on TV. Conversely, one can show disloyalty to one’s country by showing hatred toward an opposing country. I do not imply that individual loyalties cannot lead to adversity; however, what is important for Kleinig is simply that loyalty still exists when “no third party is involved, but there will be a cost to A.”

³⁸ Konvitz, Milton, 1973, “Loyalty,” in Philip P. Wiener (ed), *Encyclopedia of the History of Ideas*, New York: Scribner’s, Vol. III, pp. 108-16.

³⁹ In later works, I will argue for integrity as a virtue. The virtue of integrity is quite different from loyalty and has nothing to do with making allegiances.

Kleinig would like to think that loyalty is inherently particular. He states that loyalties are, by nature, inherently separate and distinct, making the virtuousness of each loyalty testable.⁴⁰ Kleinig argues that one who has a universal loyalty would be unable to resolve conflicts due to an inability to choose between loyalties.⁴¹

Kleinig includes Andrew Oldenquist's⁴² argument that tribal morality defines our loyalties. Oldenquist states, "...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." Needless to say, there is contention in regarding loyalty (or any virtue) as a universal, and for the idea to hold weight for Kleinig would require significant evidence.

When one looks at objects of loyalty, commitments of choice are more telling than commitments born from sentimentality. Sentimental loyalties are those individual loyalties born from *sentimental loyalty*.⁴³ That is not to say that fidelity and friendship are better than patriotism or familial bonds, just more indicative of loyalty as a trait of character. When one chooses a friend, one's choice is an integral part of building the loyalty. This is not true of familial bonds. The familial bond is usually already in place by the time a rational agent begins to reflect on the objects of loyalty. It can be difficult to

⁴⁰ Kleinig does not give us much on what it means to test a loyalty, but I provide a theory on how one would go about the testing of particular loyalties in Part III

⁴¹ I find this to be wrong, since there should be no reason why any virtue must be absolute, or worse, why any person would be so utterly under the control of some external entity that their ability to make rational decisions is hampered by that external entity. This would be the willful forfeiture of one's free will, which implicitly denies the ability of one to be virtuous in the first place.

⁴² Loyalties, Andrew Oldenquist, *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (Apr., 1982), pp. 173-193, Published by: Journal of Philosophy, Inc.

⁴³ Sentimental loyalty will be fully defined in Part III

justify abandoning a loyalty when such a long-term bond is already in place and so heavily relied upon.

Loyalties can only exist as they apply to the individual. That is not to say that one cannot have conflicting loyalties; only that one must be able to identify with the loyalties in question. As Kleinig states, “my loyalties are to *my* friends, *my* family, *my* profession, or *our* country, not yours, unless yours are also mine.” This allows loyal people to tie their fates to that of their loyalties.

The Kleinig entry claims that some believe that only socially valued loyalties can hold primacy for the individual. This is hardly an observed fact, since quiet loyalties abound. Anonymous donations, service to a group without need for compensation, or a willingness to fight against an established social norm are all examples of products of virtuous loyalty to an ideal that does not require social recognition, and may even negatively affect one’s social standing. Kleinig presents a few examples of negative and neutral associations as proof against the social normalcy of loyalty. That is not to say that a neutral association cannot occasionally have positive moral content, such as loyalty to a sports team that donates time and proceeds to the needy, or to a business that works within the community to improve quality of life. Both are more worthy of loyalty than a vitriol-filled personal relationship with one’s black sheep brother, showing that sentimental loyalties are less useful as indicators of loyalty as a virtue-of-judgment. Kleinig uses this stage as a jump-off for an idea that will show itself to be central to my position.

This raises the important question whether judgments about the worth of loyalty are reducible to judgments about the worth of associations to which loyalty is given or the legitimacy of what is done as a result of them. Does loyalty have any value independent

of the particular associational object with which it is connected or is its value bound up exclusively with the object of loyalty? There is disagreement on this (paralleling disagreements about the obligatoriness of promise keeping). Some would argue that loyalty is always virtuous, though overridden when associated with immoral conduct.

This musing introduces the idea that it is only when there is a tendency to create loyalties to objects that are inherently (morally) valuable (a deviation from the working definition) that the loyalty trait is virtuous. It also implies that one's actions are still morally accountable whether done under the auspice of loyalty or not (legitimacy).

Kleinig mentions Alvin Gewirth⁴⁴ who wrote that associations can be freely entered and left so long as they do not limit personal freedom. If the virtue of loyalty were so fluid, it would be meaningless. It is exactly the “freely entered, future obligated” concept that makes loyalty valuable. That said, the tendency to enter into good loyalties does not have to imply that individual loyalties must remain indefinitely intact. It is much wiser to say that loyalties remain intact until the object forfeits the right to the loyalty. This concept of forfeiture is important for loyalty-as-a-virtue because it allows loyalties to be correctable. Therefore, as one practices the virtue of loyalty, one learns how to choose loyalties wisely and when it is appropriate to disavow an object of loyalty that has forfeited its rights. For Kleinig, when and how one may go about forfeiture is important to the discussion of potentiality and propensity. Sentimental loyalty is not virtuous. Loyalty must be practiced toward objects deserving of one's loyalty. In order to judge an object worthy, one must be able to observe and understand the object in some manner, no matter how obscure or remote. For example, a great king that earns the loyalty of his citizens through policy and wisdom loses that worthiness should he reverse his good

⁴⁴ Gewirth, A. (n.d.). *Ethical universalism and particularism*. (Journal of Philosophy, 1988 85(6) pp. 283–302.) New York: Journal of Philosophy, Inc.

policies or show a lack of wisdom. This is not so easy, since one must be able to intuit at what point a transgression is significant enough to cause a reversal of judgment. The basis of this judgment is both qualitative and quantitative.⁴⁵ A king who has been kind his entire reign but then destroys a village to punish some small transgression loses access to his citizen's loyalty through a qualitative action. A king who frees the land's serfs but then taxes them into extreme poverty loses access to his subject's loyalty through a quantitative action. One who is loyal must be willing to forgive transgressions that do not trigger forfeiture; otherwise, one fails the test of loyalty. At the same time, one cannot continue in one's loyalties to an object that is no longer good if one also wants to remain good. Kleinig has it right:

Loyalty to a particular object is forfeited—that is, its claims for the protection and reinforcement of associative identity and commitment run out—when the object shows itself to be no longer capable of being a source of associational satisfaction or identity-giving significance. That is, the claims run out for the once-loyal associate.

Later in this work, this idea is a focal point for reflection on the objects of loyalty, the moral contents of loyalty, and the maintenance of character when associated with an evil object of loyalty.

Kleinig introduces a number of arguments for loyalty's associated vices that have the potential to deny its status as a virtue:

Mark Twain and Graham Greene (“the virtue of disloyalty”) notwithstanding, there is greater agreement that disloyalty is a vice than that loyalty is a virtue. Perhaps the frequency with which the demand for loyalty is used to “justify” engagement in unethical conduct has led to cynicism about its value. There is a certain resonance to the saying that “when an organization wants you to do right, it asks for your integrity; when it wants you to do wrong, it demands your loyalty.” What might it be about loyalty that makes it vulnerable to such uses?

⁴⁵ Qualitative: Relating to, measuring, or measured by the quality of something rather than its quantity; Quantitative: Relating to, measuring, or measured by its quantity.

It is difficult to find disagreement. Rhetoric being what it is, the abuse of the virtue of others has a long history. The discoveries made during the examination of folk loyalty are a perfect example of how loyalty is used as a judgment of others, and, further, used to exploit the hearts and minds of those that want to be good people. Kleinig agrees that “there are those who, on the basis of their particular theory of virtue, deny that loyalty could be a virtue.” The thinkers who deny loyalty as a virtue use the argument that one who is evil cannot have any virtue (because a virtue is a trait of good character), and a virtue that can be present in an evil person cannot be a virtue after all (since one who is evil, by definition is not good, therefore cannot have good traits).

Disloyalty is the best understood of the vices associated with loyalty, according to Kleinig. He claims that “disloyalty is more often associated with the self-serving or hypocritical abandonment of loyalty.” This gives disloyalty the willful air needed to make it truly vicious. The inherent malice in disloyalty makes non-vicious separations (forfeiture) or decisions (between competing loyalties) able to be considered without being morally apprehensible.

The second vice associated with loyalty is unreflective loyalty, or complaisance. Kleinig uses two phrases that are poignantly key to understanding the difference between reflective and unreflective loyalty.

But the well-established idea of a “loyal opposition” should give pause to the suggestion that loyalty requires complaisance or servility. Certainly, the loyal person does not normally address radical questions to the object of loyalty, but limits them instead to what is seen as compatible with that object’s interests. But the radical questions need not be foreclosed, even if a well-formulated challenge is needed to generate them. If the setting aside of good judgment is sought, there is nothing to stop a person—albeit with a heavy heart—from questioning whether the object of loyalty may have forfeited claims to it. The trust that tends to accompany loyalty need not encompass gullibility and credulity.

Therefore, complaisance is as equally vicious (though perhaps not as morally evil) as

disloyalty. To be clear, I mean by complaisance the willful neglect toward loyalty, allowing individual loyalties to persist without challenge out of a sense of servitude or laziness. Complaisance is a tendency, the reverse of loyalty-as-a-virtue, which shows a breach of character. This is not the same as an unexamined loyalty, which is simply an individual loyalty that has not yet been reflected on (perhaps because it has never faced adversity).

Complaisance is dangerously corrupt. Kleinig agrees that loyalty must have a degree of openness “to corrective criticism on the part of both the subject and object of loyalty.” Where I disagree is with the claim that opposition is impermissible throughout the course of the corrective action. This claim has dangerous ramifications, since the whole point of corrective action is to bring a loyalty back into line with one’s moral compass. Kleinig would deny revolution (taking a stand against a loyalty that has lost its worthiness), but it is exactly at the point at which one considers forfeiture of loyalty to an object that things have gotten so bad that a revolution is necessary.

Kleinig uses his discussion of vices as a staging point for discussing loyalty as either an executive virtue or a substantive virtue.⁴⁶ He argues that loyalty as an executive virtue has greater merit because virtues of the will are virtues “that assist us in carrying out our projects or what we may have a duty to do.” I agree with this assessment since loyalty-as-a-virtue is about making the right kinds of decisions about objects of loyalty and then using those decisions to guide dutiful action.

Since it is not uncommon to encounter arguments against loyalty that stress the conservative nature of the trait, it is important to reconcile in what ways this conservative

⁴⁶ According to the SEP, Executive virtues, “virtues of the will,” are those that assist us in carrying out our projects or what we may have a duty to do. Substantive virtues are based in the passions and are supposedly charged with moral content.

trait is positive and negative. The word “conservative” tends to conjure ideas of stuffiness and out-datedness, but there is a great deal of strength in having a conservative tendency.

Kleinig states:

It *is* conservative, though in a positive sense of that word: it involves a commitment to securing or preserving the interests of its object, an object that is or has come to be valued for its own sake (whatever else it may be valued for).

I take this to mean that to Kleinig, once an agent has committed to a loyalty, the object of the loyalty takes on a greater value for that agent.

Kleinig closes his exposition on loyalty by discussing the movement of loyalties from people to ideals. The claim is that within every loyalty is an implicit judgment that the object of that loyalty corresponds with some personally identifiable ideal. One has two options: either one chooses one’s associations based on one’s ideals, or one chooses one’s ideals based on one’s associations. Causal links such as this can be difficult to determine. The bulk of the ingenious work by David Hume⁴⁷ is directly concerned with discovery of causal relations and the significance of such. It does not matter whether one practices one’s virtue in order to be good, or one is good because one practices one’s virtue. The status of virtue stands either way. Also, the objects of virtue are equally personified or ideal, making it unimportant whether one personifies one’s objects of virtue or not.

Section 2: R. E. Ewin and *Loyalty and Virtues*

Like the previous section, Sections 2 and 3 will be expository analyses of the literature indicated. Ewin will be the spokesperson for the side of the fence that claims loyalty is not a virtue. His work in *The Philosophical Quarterly* is a prominent display of

⁴⁷ Hume, D. (1896). *A Treatise of Human Nature*. (L. A. Selby-Bigge, Ed.) Oxford: Clarendon Press.

many of the charges commonly leveled against loyalty. He starts his work by identifying that loyalty has fallen out of fashion within the philosophical community:

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, [...], is difficult to discern, and that is at least partly because the role that judgment 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? [...] This puzzle is deepened by the fact that to some extent, at least, loyalty requires us to suspend our own independent judgments 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.

Part of the reason that loyalty fell out of favor is that the civilized world is moving in the direction of individualism. Loyalty, by its nature, implies that one cannot make one's own decisions. There is a feeling of powerlessness and lack of reflectiveness, especially in archaic concepts, when one hears the word.

Ewin follows the arguments of John Ladd, an advocate of loyalty as a virtue, in order to begin building his case. His quotation from Ladd sets up a scenario in which loyalty flows from the object to the agent. Ewin sees Ladd setting up the villain, but finds the argument moves too quickly:

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.

Ewin denies this claim on the grounds that there can easily be imagined a disloyal Nazi, so the loyal Nazi cannot be contradictory. The claim provides Ewin with fuel for his arguments on loyalty's status as a tendency that does not qualify as a virtue.

Ewin's conception of disloyalty is perhaps stronger than that of loyalty. It can be assumed that disloyalty is a vice, regardless of loyalty's status in the end. The conditions for disloyalty for Ewin revolve around selfishness. There seems to be an implication that

one is only disloyal (1) willfully, (2) selfishly, and (3) at the expense of the object. I am sympathetic to this argument. These are important distinctions, because there is a difference between loyalty, disloyalty, and forfeiture, as we will see.

Ewin wishes to deny that loyalty is a kind of dutifulness. Indeed, even the folk do not make this error very often. Loyalty and dutifulness may be present in the same person toward the same object, but the two traits are distinct. It is very easy to imagine cases where one is dutiful but shows no loyalty (though I find the reverse a bit harder). Loyalty may imply dutifulness, but a lazy person can be apathetically loyal in the sense that they never work *against* the object of loyalty. In this way, the lazy one is not being disloyal *per se*.

Ewin makes a distinction between good and bad loyalty. His example for the good is friendship, in that one's friends expect us to be loyal, and when one is loyal, the friend thinks that is a good thing. Jingoism is the bad loyalty. This is an interesting case, since the object of jingoism is the same as the object of patriotism. In this case, it is the strength of the loyalty (or extremity, if you will) that is problematic. Needless to say, it is still not the tendency toward loyalty that is the problem. We see Aristotle's influence in Ewin's discussion of the courage analogy: Ewin ties loyalty to courage, then uses the example of foolhardiness to lead us towards jingoism (which is easily translated into any other particular loyalty). The mean of patriotism between jingoism (or its equivalent) and treason is exactly like the mean of loyalty between complaisance and disloyalty.

Ewin implies that, in order for one to hold a loyalty to an object, one must be "convinced of the truth of all its doctrines." This is an excellent introduction to *requirement*. The conditions necessary for a person to hold a loyalty toward an object are

the requirements for that loyalty. Ewin also believes, along with the folk, that loyalty is a kind of reputation.

Ewin does not believe that the judgment of loyalty can include the worthiness of the object. His argument is that, when one begins to place judgment on one's established loyalties, they are not loyalties at all. Despite Ewin's view that one must consider and be convinced of the doctrines of an object in order to offer it loyalty, he believes that, once established, judgment has no place in the maintenance of that loyalty. This implies that loyalties require a certain kind of blindness, and this is possibly the point of greatest divergence between his and the folk view. Although there are certainly loyalties into which one may be born, or which one may acquire through no effort or willfulness, the worthiness of the loyalty is still open to reflection. To say that we must "shut off" our judgment in regard to loyalties sets the trait up to immediately fail as a virtue. In effect, he is defining the virtue out of loyalty.

The idea that loyalties are developed either by chance or slowly over time has some relevance. It can be difficult to see negative moral content in an object that has, over time, grown on a person. If one has ever had a "bad friend," then it can be easy to imagine that sometimes loyalties develop before reflection or judgment applies, or so slowly that the loyalty is practically habitual. This is a categorical error, in that one's tendency is not what's in question; but, to be charitable,⁴⁸ I will say that there is definitely room for the argument that one can develop loyalties in such a way that bypasses judgment. This is not a negative argument, but does set up the premise that complaisance is the norm.

⁴⁸ <http://onlinephilosophyclub.com/the-principle-of-charity.php>

Ewin would like to make it very clear that loyalty is not currency. This argument is interesting when one considers what an object can do or be that will attract others to be loyal to it. The act of attracting loyalty from others by offering something in exchange would turn loyalty into a transaction.⁴⁹

Ewin opens up a door for my later arguments by discussing the expectations of one who is loyal. In his example, he uses a father who must choose between covering for his son and turning him over to the police after some reprehensible action.

...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 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*.⁵⁰

This case allows us to consider two aspects of loyalty: first, that there are cases in which one may feel like an action with negative moral content is justifiable in support of an object of loyalty; second, that there is a point at which judgment can relieve one of the burdens of maintaining a bad loyalty. This is forfeiture, and is an important component of loyalty-as-a-virtue. Unfortunately, it is in direct conflict with Ewin's earlier statement that judgment has no place in loyalty.

⁴⁹ Of course, we have examples of markets that attempt this all the time, but I would argue that these are not true loyalties when transactionary. In other words, if I use my favored credit card simply because I earn rewards, that is different than if I always buy the same brand of soap because the quality is good or the company's policies align with my own.

⁵⁰ The concept of regret during forfeiture is extremely important. One must be willing to accept the consequences of forfeiture, to include guilt.

I return now to Wilhelm. Wilhelm, as the loyal Nazi, is considered a possibility by Ewin, but Ewin would use Wilhelm to deny loyalty-as-a-virtue. As I argue in Part III, Ewin moves too quickly against Wilhelm. He denies loyalty entry into the list of virtues simply because it is possessed by an evil person.

Ewin's short discussion on virtues is valuable, because it makes it easier to see the mistakes he makes in the dismissal of cases such as Wilhelm's. He allows that there can be times in which a virtue can be used toward bad ends. Analogously, courage is a common example of such a virtue, since one can be courageous in conducting the most evil actions, but it is easy to find examples of other common virtues used the same way. A wealthy person who shows great generosity to the KKK is no less generous because the target of his generosity is evil. In fact, one could possess many acknowledged virtues and still be rotten to the core. Whether this is the case with Wilhelm remains to be seen.

Ewin once again opens the door for my arguments for loyalty-as-a-virtue with the following passage:

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. [...] as a settled quality of character, it is invariably a better thing to have it than not to have it.

So it can be agreed by Ewin and me that it is the *tendency* toward loyalty, not the object of loyalty, which is virtuous.

Another idea that Ewin sets up is how loyalty can assist in moral decision making (either good or bad). Ewin uses the analogy of justice to focus his argument. He states, "Loyalty can affect the way my sense of justice operates, too, because it is a matter of the group with which I identify; it affects whom I see as being in the game of getting shares."

In other words, Ewin claims that we use virtues to make moral decisions through a propensity toward good judgment.

Ewin considers loyalty to be always a trait of exclusivity: “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.” Ewin works to stack the deck by showing that there are cases where conflicting loyalties could cause moral quandary. This would imply that loyalty is more of a problem than a solution in moral decision making.

The discussion closes with what Ewin calls a suggestion: that we consider loyalty’s capacity for excess and liken it to a trait similar to an “unwillingness to cause pain.” This unwillingness, while likely to result in a person not hurting others, is not based in good discriminating judgment and would certainly not be considered a virtue. Ewin claims that loyalty is not a virtue, no matter how much like one it may be.

Section 3: Josiah Royce and *The Philosophy of Loyalty*

While Professor Kleinig provides a number of positive arguments for loyalty as a virtue, it is the work of Royce that is recognized as the most significant in regard to loyalty in the twentieth century. Royce fully recognized that loyalty was not to be given without thought, and, once given; constant reflection was to be applied. Royce felt so strongly about loyalty that he embarked on the ambitious task of building an entire framework of morality around the idea.

In *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, Royce presents a definition of loyalty very different from the “sovereign” concept of earlier ages. According to Royce, loyalty is a virtue. Not only is it a virtue, but a master virtue, “the heart of all the virtues, the central duty

amongst all the duties.” Royce defines loyalty as the fundamental moral ideal from which all other social ideals can be derived. The abstract definition given is that loyalty is “the willing and practical and thoroughgoing devotion of a person to a cause.” Royce could be characterized as a “big picture” thinker, imagining the scale of human life far beyond the years one spends on Earth.

Human life taken merely as it flows, viewed merely as it passes by in time and is gone, is indeed a lost river of experience that plunges down the mountains of youth and sinks in the deserts of age. Its significance comes solely through its relations to the air and the ocean and the great deeps of universal experience. For by such poor figures I may, in passing, symbolize that really rational relation of our personal experience to universal conscious experience.

In order for a cause to be legitimate, it has to fulfill a number of criteria. The cause has to be *real* (objective). The cause has to be out in the world, observable and actionable by a community. Secondly, a cause can never exist for a single person; some manner of interaction is necessary. Royce claims that loyalty is freely given, not coerced. It is chosen after reflection, and is not something into which one is born. It is also actively practiced, and any passive elements have to be secondary to the more active ones. One does not simply express strong feeling about a cause—the cause must be fully acted upon. One can have sympathy for a cause without actively pursuing it, but this would exclude one from participating in that community, no matter how esteemed agent the cause is in the agent’s opinion. Loyalty is “thoroughgoing” in that it is not merely an interest but a commitment.

Royce’s moral framework is built on a conception of loyalty as a master virtue. His work represents a dramatic redefinition of the concept, and a healthy corrective to break the habit of claiming that loyalty is to king and country. I think that he may have felt that by liberating the word, he could liberate the minds of his fellows. The uneasy

task of trying to invent a term would have been burdensome, and “loyalty” was sufficient for the purpose. Therefore, the argument was made for loyalty to loyalty itself. To quote the Royce entry in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (SEP),⁵¹ “In other words, loyalty to such a cause enables, promotes, or otherwise furthers the abilities of other people to be loyal to their causes. A cause that destroys the object of someone else’s legitimate loyalty cannot be good. From this can be derived the virtues of truthfulness, justice, benevolence, and courtesy.”

Loyalty to loyalty was inspired by Royce’s commitment to helping people live meaningful good lives. This meaningfulness is expressed through the will, an idea Royce absorbed from his longstanding debates with William James. Contrary to the consequentialist position, it is more important that one actively pursue moral action through the will for its own sake than to conduct any kind of cost-benefit analysis. The active pursuit is expressed through one’s choices of particular loyalties, creating a path for the will to travel. With each cause, there is a community of others who feel that the cause is equally worthy. “Finally, a morally significant commitment to the cause and to the community develops. This commitment is ‘loyalty.’” Therefore, the ethics of a person can be observed and understood by considering the loyalties the person shows.

Moral value is determined by loyalty. An action that is used to progress a community toward a collective goal is good. Therefore, Royce would claim that moral validity was necessarily and sufficiently fulfilled by conducting oneself toward the goals of a good community. Royce’s definition of “true loyalty” denies loyalty to causes with a

⁵¹ Parker, Kelly A., “Josiah Royce,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/royce/>>.

negative moral content and to the communities that serve them. “Royce observes that the highest moral achievements throughout history have involved individuals’ loyalty to ideals that promote the formation and expansion of communities of loyalty.”⁵² Because evils committed under the auspice of loyalty do not promote the health of the universal community, the exclusion of morally evil causes is necessary. Therefore, only causes that allow the loyal person to exhibit the other virtues, in addition to loyalty, are virtuous. For this reason, Royce defines the difference between true loyalty and vicious or “predatory” loyalty:

...a cause is good, not only for me, but for mankind, in so far as it is essentially a loyalty to loyalty, that is, an aid and a furtherance of loyalty in my fellows. It is an evil cause in so far as, despite the loyalty that it arouses in me, it is destructive of loyalty in the world of my fellows.

Therefore a cause is, by definition, good. Anything not good was something else and anything that harmed the cause was vicious.

The concept of true loyalty is tied specifically to causes. Royce goes to some trouble to define a small number of causes, dubbing a few of them “universal.” Primary among these are the universal causes of truth and the “establishment of universal loyalty to loyalty itself.” This is accomplished through the individual expansion of moral and intellectual reflection. Royce believes that the flawed state of the human condition makes all communities capable of becoming morally bankrupt. Therefore, it is the responsibility of those within the community to continually revise the cause and improve upon the future aims of the cause. Disloyalty is the act (or lack thereof) of allowing a community to degenerate into evil.

⁵² Parker, Kelly A., “Josiah Royce,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/royce/>>.

Royce also believed that it is not the responsibility of the agent to create causes, though it is entirely possible for one to initiate a cause or complete one already in motion. The introspective self is not a cause. A cause of any value will present itself to a community, and it is the responsibility of the agents to take on the project. Notable among these projects are: the notion that we come to moral awareness in a world of established aims, that moral responsibility requires a self-conscious and deliberate individual choice to embrace particular causes, and that the highest forms of ethical conduct involve dedication and effort in service of a cause that offers no promise of final success. Royce maintains that the concepts of ultimate meaning and reality are powerful and legitimate forces in our lives which were incompatible with the Utilitarian views of the time.

Royce's "Absolute Voluntarism"⁵³ is a powerful system, and "loyalty to loyalty" allows him to build a complete ethic around a single core concept. His work includes several strong arguments for loyalty-as-a-virtue. Most notably are the ideas that loyalty to good objects is the only virtuous loyalty, and that such loyalty is self-consciously reflected upon and willful (in the Kantian sense). Royce's work strongly informs the closing arguments of this paper.

Part III: Arguments Examined

Section 1: Introduction by Author

Up to this point, I have kept most of my arguments unobtrusive in order to let the analysis flow smoothly. With my exposition of folk and philosopher viewpoints complete, I will now bring fully to bear my arguments in support of loyalty-as-a-virtue. I will also argue that loyalty (and its virtuous aspect, *loyalness*) is separate from any

⁵³ Basically the idea that one choose to act in a particular way freely of their own will.

individual loyalties, one being a trait of character, and the other being the benefit afforded an object to which one shows allegiance. I will begin by defining several key terms to focus the conversation and keep the arguments clean and concise.

The core of the conversation is centered on ‘loyalty’, a term that holds a significant amount of contention. Regardless of any moral claims, one must understand the subject of the conversation in order to make any decision of value. The working definition proposed by Kleinig, bracketed by the OED definition, is more than sufficient for the work to be done here. To wit, loyalty is a disposition to show firmness in an intrinsically valued associational allegiance that involves a commitment to secure the interests of the object.

Loyalty is the root tendency and is morally neutral (and to keep everything straight, I will call this “base loyalty” from this point forward). Base loyalty, by itself, is not a virtue, but instead more of a whole trait of character composed of distinct aspects (much like any other character trait). There are four specific, morally charged tendencies for which base loyalty is the root. These tendencies each occupy the same abstract “location,” meaning that, although one may modify one’s habits, only one of the four tendencies will exist in a particular person at a given time. On the one extreme, there is *complaisance*, which is defined as the tendency to accept the obligations of base loyalty regardless of moral content. The opposite of this is *disloyalty*, which is the tendency toward willful deception or abandonment of objects of loyalty for malicious purposes, and without willingness to accept the negative consequences of the action.⁵⁴ *Sentimental loyalty* is the tendency toward making loyalties unreflectively, based on emotional appeal

⁵⁴ This will be shown to be quite different from forfeiture due to its malice and deception.

or felt obligation. Sentimental loyalty is different from complaisance in that sentimental loyalty is the failure⁵⁵ to reflect on one's loyalties, whereas complaisance is when one reflects on one's loyalties but chooses to ignore moral implications based on a sense of obligation. Sentimental loyalty is not vicious.⁵⁶ *Loyalness* is defined in Webster's Third New International Unabridged Dictionary⁵⁷ as "the quality or state of being loyal, the tendency toward loyalty." This fits neatly into the position I will present, so I will appropriate the term *loyalness* to refer to loyalty-as-a-virtue. For this discussion, *loyalness* has the following properties. *Loyalness* is a virtue derived from reason⁵⁸ that, if properly incorporated, will lead to excellence. *Loyalness* is a trait of character that is the tendency, or habit, of making allegiances with worthy objects of positive moral content.⁵⁹ Through this tendency, the virtuous person is able to make decisions about morally ambiguous circumstances, or to add value to objects of loyalty. In addition, in the event of negative moral circumstances, a good loyalty can be used to direct a rational agent's decisions in a consistent way while maintaining the agent's good character and providing comfort to those whom associates with. There is the danger of falling into a tautology in regard to any virtue but that is avoided here by understanding that to be good one must

⁵⁵ What I mean here is not that one *must* refuse out of spite or whatnot, but that there has simply been no systematic call for the loyalty to be questioned. It can be a carelessness of refusal as well, but those are not required.

⁵⁶ This is a non-virtuous, but not unvirtuous (vicious) state of character. The vast majority of all character traits contain no moral content and are truly neutral, such as being in the habit of sleeping on one's side, or saying "uh" too much while speaking.

⁵⁷ G & C Merriam Company. (1981). *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged: With Seven Language Dictionary, Part 1*. Merriam-Webster.

⁵⁸ A "virtue derived from reason" is one in which conscious effort has been made to secure the virtue. This is opposed to the possibility that there are some who have the good fortune to have acquired some virtues through birth and upbringing (good instincts and a natural propensity for a particular virtue). Since such virtues are rare, it is important to recognize that there are some virtues which can be acquired through practice and reflection, such as loyalty, and there are some proposed virtues for which no amount of practice can assist (such as facial symmetry).

⁵⁹ What specifically constitutes a negative or positive moral value is beyond the scope of this work. Suffice it to say that barring specific arguments for a few specific moral concepts, it is easy enough to conceptualize the difference between a "good" and a "bad" for the purposes presented here.

seek virtue, which is not saying that to be good one must be good.

Loyalness is a way of making one larger than the finite limits of the self. Through good associations, one shares in the successes and defeats of the objects of loyalty. The idea of expanding one's greatness through loyalty is worth discussing. This idea can be seen foreshadowed in the Wikipedia account of Humanistic loyalty tendencies and the master loyalty of Royce. As social animals, the human race survives through the combined effort of the group. Allegiances are like cellular organisms that are only able to accomplish the greater purpose through the combination of the mass. Humans naturally have this intuition about making allegiances, but to be virtuous, one must make allegiances that contribute to one's good character. By default, allegiances of this kind are significantly more likely to contribute to the success of the object and therefore there is a reward in working for the object of one's allegiance's best interests. Namely, the ability to attain a status larger than life by attributing to causes that span across lifetimes.

An individual loyalty is a particular instance of loyalty granted to an object. It is different from the character trait in that it is the particular *product* granted to an object via the tendencies of base loyalty. One can have innumerable loyalties, but whether one has the trait or not is defined by character. One can also have loyalties of multiple types—one may have several good loyalties, a collection of unreflected loyalties, and a couple bad loyalties. To be clear, base loyalty's aspect of *loyalness* does not need to imply that one builds that tendency without error. One who is striving for excellence is still allowed to make a few mistakes. Since the virtue of a person is reliant on the tendency and not the particular objects, this does not affect one's excellence unless one is called on to do evil. In this case, it isn't the loyalty trait that taints one's excellence, but whatever evil action

was undertaken, regardless of why the action was taken.

“The unexamined life is not worth living,”⁶⁰ said Socrates, and that applies to every virtue, not just loyalty. Loyalties must be tested, both through critical reflection and adversity. If one has the trait of *loyalness*, then one will occasionally bring a *sentimental loyalty* into the occurrent thought. This is most likely to occur when a particular loyalty is called into question (but not always). When under this reflective scrutiny, one will test the moral content of the object. If the object proves to be worthy of one’s allegiance, then the second test comes into play. In the face of adversity, at some sacrifice to oneself (no matter how small), one shows the necessary “firmness” or “stickingness” required to work in the best interest of the object. Virtue does not assume that a particular loyalty need be costly, but it does imply that, should a loyalty become costly, the loyal person will commit to the best interest of the object, even at a disadvantage to oneself. As has been previously mentioned, one need not ask radical questions when not called for, but if an action sparks one’s moral mind’s eye, then it is the obligation of the agent to challenge the loyalty, whether it still be sentimental or previously reflected on. Adversity is any circumstance in which one is called on to work toward the ends of the object at some cost to oneself—the greater the sacrifice, the stronger the test. Through adversity, the object relies on the agent more strongly, providing the agent more interaction with the object.⁶¹ When these tests have been passed, then one can say that a particular loyalty has been derived from reason and now contributes to one’s virtue. If this practice is done consistently, then one can introspectively say that they are virtuously loyal.

⁶⁰ <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1656>

⁶¹ The value of closer bonds should be fairly intuitive, but, for clarity, the closer one’s bonds to an allegiance are, the greater one’s control and integration with the success of the object. This strengthens the identity toward an object and increases the object’s value for the agent.

A concept important for any conversation on loyalty is the instrumental practicality of the concept. If looked at quite coldly, one might conclude that loyalty is not valuable for the one who is loyal, except perhaps as a social reputation, and therefore loyalty (in any of its aspects) is not valuable. A deeper look reveals that there are instrumental, intangible, non-transactionary, benefits to loyalty-as-a-virtue beyond simple reputation. The following concepts are properties of the instrumentality of base loyalty. A loyal agent shares a sense of identity with objects of the agent's loyalty. This identity-building provides bulwarks to the flood of identity-dissolving forces (the general socio-psychological tendency toward *normalcy*, which once again forces one to balance one's traits⁶²). In addition, the successes and failures of the object now become the successes and failures of the agent, which is significantly empowering even if the failures are common and devastating. Sharing the emotions of failure with the object lessens the blow, while sharing success seems to have a grossly cumulative feel. The ability to be grander and greater than one could be alone is a powerful society-building tool and provides base loyalty with the motive force necessary to bring people together and enforce the social contract.

Loyalties created through *loyalness* give good people (or at least those people trying to be good) a moral compass when facing adversity by allowing them to side with an allied (good) entity even when the situation is dire. The particular loyalty imparts the virtuous person with a greater sense of accomplishment, even beyond the person's own lifetime. One of the *products* of this tendency is that one will fulfill the much-prized

⁶² While certainly worthy of further discussion, *normalcy* is not so necessary a concept for this work as to spend too much time dwelling on it. Suffice it to say that human beings actively work toward trying to be the same, which hurts their individual identity, yet seek to be unique, requiring some identity-repairing/building activity.

virtue-of-judgment imposed by the folk and one's reputation with associates will be one of reliability and consistency. One with *loyalness* has a character trait; one who is loyal is acting on that character trait.

For example, a virtuous person comes upon a blazing fire in which are trapped a good friend, a young child, the neighborhood grocer, and Wilhelm the loyal Nazi.⁶³ The fire is such that the person can save only one victim. If a decision is not made immediately, they all will die. This is a moral quandary with no satisfactory outcome, since in all cases one must choose one life over three others. Therefore, the virtuous person must make a decision with only negative moral content.

In this experiment, I assume the child to be innocent; the friend to be close and mutually loyal; the grocer to be likeable, useful, and kind to all; and Wilhelm to be a villain who provides no benefit to anyone of worth (but who shows exemplary loyalty to his party).

This moral quandary can be solved through virtue ethics that involve *loyalness*. A good person, if forced to choose, would save the child first. This is because the moral content of saving the child greatly exceeds the moral content of saving anyone else. *Loyalness* does not come into play, only a good enough character to know that the child is the best choice for saving.

Now, I will change the scenario: there is now time to save three of the four in the fire. In this case, the child is guaranteed safety, so the first choice is uncontentious. The second and third choices are morally equivalent (the friend and the grocer). They

⁶³ There are several possibly contentious assumptions here. Regardless, let us assume that the moral worth of an innocent is greater than that of a mature person, that our friends are good people, that we hold a fairly traditional moral code, and that we will act in morally ambiguous situations in a rational manner.

represent morally neutral considerations. In this case, choosing to save Wilhelm does not provide any moral value over the others, and can be abandoned with regret, but abandoned nonetheless. One can once again ignore any *loyalness*.

The third scenario is where we find the first difficulty in which *loyalness* serves as guidance. We can now only save two victims. The child is secured and we can regretfully discount poor Wilhelm. Now one must face the decision of whether to save one man or the other. It is our tendency to create allegiances that allow situations like this to be navigated at all. It is through our good loyalty to our friend that one is able to make a morally justifiable decision on whom to save. The grocer, though a fine person, must be abandoned (with all the moral consequences of that choice suffered). The good loyalty felt toward one's friend is the tipping point for the balance of moral content. This example can be applied to any object of loyalty. For instance: your country and a neighbor have entered a war. The moral content of war is equally negative, but it is the obligation of the patriot to fight for their own country.

In order to relate my new definition to the folk and philosopher, I must first reconcile the two viewpoints (to include the positions of each). By critiquing the arguments made by each side, I will distill out the common argument. Following this, I will provide a deeper understanding of virtue theory itself through the examination of how base loyalty can apply the Golden Mean. Next, a statement on individual loyalties and judging objects of loyalty for moral content will be followed by a discussion on the vices associated with loyalty. Finally, I will discuss the requirements necessary for forfeiture and the importance that forfeiture plays in maintaining one's virtuous state. I will conclude with a few closing arguments and present a few open questions of interest

for future research.

Section 2: Reconciling the Folk and the Philosopher

The folk define the brackets for any discussion on virtue. Any ethical theory must fit into a traditional, broadly understood moral center. Simply trying to define a philosophy without considering folk concepts is an immediate failure. As such, I will examine the positive and negative premises of the folk argument that loyalty is a good thing.

First and foremost, the greatest strength of the folk concept of loyalty is that it acknowledges the all-important difference between the tendency to be loyal and an individual loyalty. In literature and conversation, it is recognized often that one's will toward being good is considerably more valuable than a malice that might benefit the world through serendipity. The folk enjoy the romantic elements of loyalty while recognizing the tragedy of the "torn hero," the sacrifice of the brothers in arms, and the success of the servile but chivalrous knight. The folk also show more charity in cases of loyalty, influencing lawmakers and rulers to side with one who shows loyalty to some end, rather than with a treacherous knave.

The folk also recognize that testing is inherently necessary for an individual loyalty to be classified as such. Claims or feelings of loyalty are insufficient, and the "fair-weather friend" is chided as vile. One must face adversity and sacrifice, even if in some very small way, for the good of the object; only then will a reputation for loyalty elevate one in the eyes of society.

The most obvious mistake of the folk is valuing loyalty as a trait of their associates without introspection on their own traits. I call this the virtue-of-judgment

problem. In making this mistake, the status of loyalty is elevated because it is so heavily desired in others. The problem has the following effects:

- (1) Loyalty is considered a grander virtue than it might otherwise be.
- (2) A person's "goodness" is evaluated externally (reputed) and thus changes based on the values of the external judge.
- (3) One is not presented a path to one's own excellence.

The solution to this problem is to ask the conversant about their own loyalties. When presented in such a way, the dialectic will steer the evaluator into a less extreme position. Commonly, it will be agreed that loyalty is still a virtue, but will also be observed that it is not as absolute as it was considered before (Effect 1). This provides the dialectic the power to inspire introspection, in turn fueling the motivation of the conversant to be better themselves and less concerned with others. Furthermore, the moral compass of the agent becomes much more important. The external judge is no longer an issue. Also, any errors of treating reputation as virtue are corrected without negating the value of reputation in one's social environment.

The problem originates from the condition that it is rarely observed. One spends much more time in the day-to-day in contact with others, so it is quite natural to consider the traits of the people one must deal with every day while ignoring the introspective self that one has become inured to. Virtues are an easy way to frame one's observations about one's associates, and the judgments of those observations soon follow. When conducted in this unreflective way, ascribing virtues does not usually involve a judgment of the self (as it should). And, since folk virtues are commonly traits sought in others, people cannot be virtuous until judged (this was the difficulty Solon discovered when considering what

it meant to be happy⁶⁴).

Following the folk definition of loyalty as primarily a virtue-of-judgment, the expectation of loyalty can be used to judge others, without it necessarily being indicative of the judge's moral worth. We see the beginning and end of the folk argument with the case of Wilhelm. Wilhelm, with his reputation being the product of the trait as it is observed, may be universally applauded for his deep abiding loyalty, but no one (except maybe other Nazis) would consider him to be a good person. Another interesting aspect of the expectation of loyalty is that it is almost always judged from the judge's perspective (Effect 2). If one is judging an agent who was loyal to their institution, but disloyal to the institution to which the judge belongs, then the judge is likely to think the person disloyal (or at least not virtuous). We are left with a dilemma. To be virtuous in the eyes of the folk, one must have passed a test as loyal to the *judge's* objects or causes. Therefore, one's virtue (of-judgment) will change from moment to moment and person to person. This cannot be true virtue.

Although the folk intuitively recognize that loyalty is virtuous, the virtue-of-judgment problem can cause trouble for those who hope to achieve their own excellence (Effect 3). If one seeks to travel a path of excellence in life, the mistaken realization that virtue requires reputation could jade the traveler and sour any future attempt to improve. Seeking reputation does not strike the intuition as a grand virtue, and having the wind taken out of one's sails upon discovering that one must rely on others for one's own excellence could serve to turn one in exactly the wrong direction.

⁶⁴ "Must no one at all, then, be called happy while he lives; must we, as Solon says, see the end? Even if we are to lay down this doctrine, is it also the case that a man is happy when he is dead? Or is not this quite absurd, especially for us who say that happiness is an activity?" (<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.1.i.html>)

The folk, in conversation, are intuitively aware of the importance that loyalty has in one's character; however, unfortunately, the Wikipedia article gets stuck between intuition and the technical literature. The careful referencing and multiple-contributor model allow both experts and folk to make entries, but this means that continuity is sacrificed for dry accuracy. Overall, the definition on the website does not fit into common parlance or modern philosophical debate. It is still quite useful for introducing oneself to the many views on the concept.

In short, I find that the strength of the folk view lies in the intuition that loyalty is virtuous and resides in the character. There is also pleasure to be had in experiencing the romantic conception and literature that revolves around loyalty is often interesting, intuitive, and emotionally provocative. The folk view's weakness lies in the virtue-of-judgment problem and the often careless tendency to elevate loyalty to the rank of a grand virtue. There is also a loss for those who seek a path toward excellence and find the path blocked by distaste for the prospect of being subjectively judged by others.

Kleinig provides a thorough introduction to loyalty as a philosophical concept and presents a definition that is modern, coherent, workable, and well bracketed within the folk conception. All the other works examined for this task were unable to achieve such a standard. In the discussion that follows, I enumerate the flaws that I have found in the treatments of loyalty by Kleinig, Ewin, Royce, and others, explaining how their errors can be resolved in my definition of *loyalness* as a virtue. First, though, I will discuss in what ways the philosophers and I agree.

The issue of loyalty being a trait of sentiment rather than reason is a strong charge by critics of virtuous loyalty. While our emotions can play a powerful role in building

and habituating virtues, they should not be the sole source. This problem can be defined away fairly easily. I have already stated that *loyalness* must be tested, and that complacency is a vice. A loyalty that is purely sentimental in nature has not been properly tested through critical reason, and is therefore not yet a virtue. It is only after reflection that a loyalty becomes good.

The view that loyalty requires exclusivity is a mistake. If I sit in my chair and consider to what objects I show loyalty, I have difficulty recollecting them all. Yet, in all of those loyalties, I have no immediate conflict. There are aspects of those loyalties that have never come into conflict with any other loyalty. Loyalties need not have such a contest. The true contest is simply properly reflecting on the moral content of the object and deciding if it is worthy of loyalty, and thereafter caring for the good of the object of loyalty.

The problem of choice sneaks into the loyalty discussion when one considers the severity of obligations imposed on an agent. I will call this the “choosing your friends” dilemma. The mistake is to assume that the loyalty is the driver, rather than good reason. Good loyalty is an assistant, but one must make one’s own decisions in the end. If a moral quandary arises, it is through both good loyalty and good judgment that one can navigate one’s way toward a solution. If a problem arises that must be solved by *loyalness*, then the virtuous person will have already applied judgment to the particular loyalty, and the choice is clear.

It is a mistake to take loyalty as a substantive virtue. It is, at its core, an executive

virtue.⁶⁵ It is a navigator through the moral quandaries faced on a daily basis by the virtuous person. It allows for one to achieve excellence by habitually making good allegiances.

Section 3: Virtue Theory

The common argument for loyalty from both the folk and the philosopher is that it is ultimately a virtuous trait. What does that mean, exactly? A short explanation of virtue theory will give valuable evidence for the status of loyalty as a virtue.

Virtue is like a map. The map leads to an abstract ideal that is difficult to articulate. Philosophy has followed Aristotle for 2,500 years, and there is still a conversation regarding *eudaimonia*. Truly knowing the nature of *eudaimonia* is less important than getting there. The assumption is that it is a fine thing, but one need not be concerned. For ease, it can be characterized as the best excellence—perfection of the entity known as the self. It is the maximum potential a rational agent can achieve. *Eudaimonia* is not the consequential target of virtue, but it does provide one with an idea of what the target might look like.

The assumption is that, for one to be excellent, one has to do so through some effort of one's own. The effort is the rational cultivation of good traits into habits. There has been much philosophy on what those traits are. No list is universally agreed to be the best, but in every list there is a trait or traits that cannot be absent—these are the master

⁶⁵ An executive virtue is a virtue of the will that requires some effort on the part of the agent. A substantive virtue is such that one has a certain natural effortless propensity for the trait. Since there is the requirement that a *sentimental loyalty* be brought into the occurrent mind, it is willful. If one is very lucky, then one's loyalty trait will be such that one sees that the loyalties one has chosen are usually good and that one has a tendency to make good allegiances, but this does not absolve one from having to look over those allegiances from time to time.

virtues, which act not only as virtues themselves, but as binders for lesser virtues.⁶⁶ Plato introduced the concept of a binding virtue in the *Republic*⁶⁷ with his theory of justice (this one trait calmed and ordered the other traits, which aligned the soul with the ideal good), and dozens of other master virtues have been proposed through the millennia, Royce's *loyalty* among them.

Virtue theory is powerful to those who feel that they are in control of their fate. There is no reliance on other people, nor is there anything more important than being a good person. If one can find a master virtue, then the task is all the easier, since one can concentrate on the master and the others will fall into place.

Contrary to Royce's good efforts, I do not believe loyalty is a master virtue. One must realize that being loyal does not make one good. It is quite possible to be good without *loyalness*, so long as the proper master virtue is in place and the person seeks to have good character. This is true of other commonly accepted virtues as well. Brutes can be courageous. Masterminds can be clever. Even the serial killer can be contemplative. These are not good people, but the virtues maintain their status.

A theory within virtue ethics to which I am particularly sympathetic is the concept of the ethical mean.⁶⁸ The idea is that, in order to be a typical virtue, a trait must have extremes that are not virtuous. Master virtues tend to be exempt, because there is no limit to how extreme a master virtue can be. With all other virtues, the mean is used to evaluate the virtue for oneself and provide brackets for how to act.

⁶⁶ The master virtues are also widely debated. So much so that there are some virtue theorists that do not accept the concept at all.

⁶⁷ Plato, B. Jowett, and L. R. In Loomis (1942). *Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Symposium, Republic*. New York: Published for the Classics club by W. J. Black.

⁶⁸ Introduced as Aristotle's Golden Mean earlier.

With regard to base loyalty, we find two equally dangerous extremes. The presence of these vices can destroy one's hopes for good character. For loyalty, the vices are complaisance and disloyalty. Each vice merits further definition:

- (1) Complaisance: This is the aspect tendency for one to build allegiances and not seek forfeiture in the proper circumstances. In other words, allowing bad loyalty to stand when the object has given the agent enough evidence to prove that it should be abandoned. Complaisance is an act of willful negligence, over-burdened obligation (servility), or laziness. Therefore, it is a vicious act (or more correctly, lack of action). This is why it is a vice of extremity, because one who makes allegiances, tests them, and does not forfeit those objects with negative moral value has shown themselves incapable of choosing and allows the objects of loyalty dictate the character of the agent.
- (2) Disloyalty: This is the deliberate, habitual betrayal of objects of loyalty usually for personal gain. Betrayal is to disloyalty what an individual loyalty is to base loyalty. In other words, disloyalty is a tendency; betrayal is a single act of disloyalty toward a particular object. One who is disloyal is one who has a trait of character that is self-serving and malicious. Betrayal is not unique to disloyalty. A virtuous person can betray an object, and a vicious person can hold good loyalties, but, depending on the object, a betrayal can be devastating to one's character.

Loyalness sits between these two vices in a way that requires care on the part of the agent. The practice of virtues is a defining characteristic of their existence in any one person. It takes care and exertion to maintain a balance between vices. One is either too

loyal to such an extent that one freely gives up one's decency to a cause unworthy of such attention, or not loyal enough in that one freely abandons good loyalties for selfish reasons. The ethical mean is a useful tool for evaluating virtues of character. A vice can be a former virtue that has degraded toward an extreme, or one could simply be so skewed that sight of the metaphysical mean has never been achieved.

Let us return to Wilhelm. The folk and the philosopher both agree that Wilhelm is evil. Wilhelm knowingly joined the Nazi party and participated in the mass genocide of a culture out of a horrifying sense of being superior. Wilhelm joined the Nazis knowing full well that he would be asked to commit atrocities, and was sufficiently unhinged to feel these acts justified. He conducted his missions willfully. Why do I even consider Wilhelm in a discussion about virtue?

There are significant mistakes made with regard to Wilhelm. The loyal Nazi is the stereotypical negative argument against loyalty-as-a-virtue. The idea is that, if someone with this virtue can be so evil, then it is quite obviously not a virtue. Wilhelm is so evil, he ruins virtue theory for those unable to wrap their minds around Wilhelm's mix of positive and negative moral content.

Wilhelm teaches us a valuable lesson regarding the virtues. Virtues alone do not make a person good. Being good makes a person good. Virtues represent a method of achieving the good through an excellent character. They provide a moral compass by which the virtuous person can navigate the world of moral quandary. It is this striving toward the goal that makes the victory sweet.

Virtue theory espouses that there is a goal, a path, and an agent. The goal is excellence (or *eudaimonia*), the path is through good character, and the agent is a rational

being able to use the virtues to forge a path to the goal. The mistake is assuming that we can skip steps.

Wilhelm may be a rational agent, but he is not good. The virtues can be present in totality (minus the all-important master virtue), but if the character isn't correctly forged, then the virtues contribute nothing to the moral content of the agent.

To put it another way, Wilhelm is strong, intelligent, courageous, generous, kind to animals, loyal, and helps the neighbor lady take out her garbage. Wilhelm's existence does not extinguish these virtues from the list of traits of good character.

Wilhelm has two aspects that deny him access to *eudaimonia*. The first is that Wilhelm willingly commits evil actions. This alone is damning and removes Wilhelm from the possibility of being good. In addition, Wilhelm suffers from bad judgment. His inability to choose the right kind of objects for his virtues thoroughly undermines his ability to attain excellence. Wilhelm is not virtuous, but the virtues do not suffer for him.

Section 4: Objects of Loyalty and Moral Content

Loyalty is a propensity for properly assessing objects for their worthiness to receive one's allegiance and then making the allegiance and sticking with it. Therefore, it is fundamentally important that one who seeks to be virtuous understands how to evaluate an object for moral value. Since particular loyalties tend to shape one's identity, choosing the priority of loyalties is equally important to self-understanding.

The most significant worry that one must absolutely avoid when reflecting on loyalty is the categorical error of confusing loyalty (in any of its aspects) with the object of loyalty or the act of being loyal. It cannot be stressed enough that the character trait, the habit, the virtue of loyalty is *not* defined by the object. This categorical error is the

most common difficulty for advocates of loyalty-as-a-virtue and can frustrate any conversation regarding the trait's status.

Loyalties of pre-reflection tend to be stronger for virtuous people whereas loyalties of sentiment tend to be stronger for less reflective people. Neither is necessarily a good loyalty right away. Regardless of how the loyalty was formed, there is an obligation to act consistently on the loyalty. We must assume that a loyalty that has been formed motivates a degree of obligation to act on the object's behalf. Loyalties, to a degree, are freely entered, future obligated. This means that correctly and wisely choosing the objects of one's loyalty has a significant impact on how one perceives one's own character, even if the objects are not the virtue itself. The objects of loyalty are usually the only observable indicator of a person's *loyalness*. What an individual loyalty should not do is take away from one's character. This can happen in two ways: through extremes, resulting in viciousness, and through ignorance, resulting in loss of access to the virtue.

What entities can function as objects of loyalty is contentious, but that doesn't affect loyalty's status as a virtue. There are only a very small number of objects to which one truly must be loyal if one wants to be good. One must absolutely be loyal to oneself and one must be loyal to the cause of seeking virtue. The *self* as an object of loyalty is difficult to imagine intuitively. How does one act in the best interest of an object such that one is not acting in one's own best interest when the object in question is one's own self? The answer is that one is not being selfish when one seeks to cultivate one's own character. It is exactly this act that allows for an agent to be virtuous in the first place and is the one thing over which one has the most control. Therefore one must be loyal to the

self in the sense that one must seek to be good and follow that path rigorously, even when doing so might be extremely difficult or costly.

There are some objects of loyalty that tend to be readily acknowledged and commonly named. In fact, loyalty derives its name from a particular loyalty to the law. Some of the most common loyalties are to family, country, tribe, and community. These are lumped together into a group sometimes called “tribal” loyalties. Patriotism, familial loyalty, and cultural loyalty are all distinct loyalties not to be confused with the virtue itself. Each carries its own set of connotations and body of work. The important idea to take away is that such concepts as nationalism and political affiliation must not be mistaken for loyalty as a whole.⁶⁹ One must reflect on these loyalties; if the object is worthy; committing oneself to its greater good is a wise decision, regardless of the sentimental connotation of the object.

An object’s moral content is the object’s tendency toward “goodness” or “badness.” Determining moral content is well beyond the scope of this work, but it is a necessary skill if one wishes to achieve excellence. Loyalty is not alone among virtues in requiring the evaluation of objects. One who is to be virtuously courageous must be courageous in actions that are good. Being a courageous villain may make you a better villain, but it does not make you good.

A good loyalty has criteria that must be met in full. One must ask oneself about the object’s moral content and find that it is good, one must believe the loyalty is worthy, one must have some knowledge about the object, and one must want to be loyal (for

⁶⁹ This is especially true since any talk of a particular loyalty, regardless of the object, is a categorical error when discussing loyalty-as-a-virtue.

whatever reason, including a brute cost-benefit motive). One does not necessarily have to believe in the doctrines and ideals of an object of loyalty, but one must believe those things to be good. Once the decision has been made to accept a loyalty, one now has an obligation to stick with it. That is, one must stick until the object is no longer worthy of loyalty and all efforts have been made to mold the entity into the worthy object one would like it to be.

Section 6: Forfeiture

To preserve one's character, one must test every loyalty. This is not a one-time requirement, lest one become complacent in a base loyalty gone bad. The act of testing has two requirements, one of reflection and one of practice. The first is to validate the worthiness of the loyalty; the second is to ensure consistency of action in the object's best interest. These tests ensure that one's *loyalness* is well placed and that the product of reputation for reliability is established.

Occasionally a loyalty must be quit. This need can occur with a sentimental loyalty that has been tested for the first time or with a good loyalty that has lost its moral worthiness. An example might be that one's brother has resorted to acts of murder. The loyalty of blood must be overcome lest one become tainted by the other's deeds.

The act of quitting a loyalty is known as forfeiture. It is not an action to be taken lightly. The process is difficult, as it should be, and one must be willing to sacrifice to make it happen.

One must undergo every effort to correct the loss of moral content. An example of this attempt might be coaching one's wayward friend to get clean and sober. If one is powerless to achieve such an end, one should enlist any assistance one needs to bring the

object of loyalty in line, for example, by acting as corporate whistleblower when one has a loyalty to a company where one has worked for years and in which one has a personal nonmonetary investment, yet which has suffered a degradation of moral content. The whistleblowing is not a betrayal in this example, since there is no personal gain and the whistleblower is willing to accept the consequences of their actions.

If one fails at reforming the object of a loyalty, then one is obligated to forfeit the loyalty if one wishes to stay on the path toward excellence. The act must be apparent to the object, lest it be seen as a betrayal. To forfeit a loyalty, one must still follow the edict to work in the object's best interest up to the very last moment. The object should already be aware of the impending forfeiture, since efforts had been made to reform the object first. One must be prepared to face any consequences of forfeiture, including a loss of reputation. The willingness to face the object and accept the consequences of forfeiture is the sacrificial final act that validates a clean forfeiture. This act can be especially difficult in cases where one is reliant on mutuality.⁷⁰

Forfeiture is not vicious and has no connection with disloyalty. The most important reason for this distinction is the lack of malice on the part of the forfeiter and the moral character of the object. Even in the case of a forfeiter causing great harm to the object through the forfeiture, and even when the object is truly no longer worthy, the agent must face the difficult road of regret and shame.

⁷⁰ Mutuality is not required for loyalty, but it does exist epiphenomenally in many cases, especially in cases of friends or family.

The consequences of forfeiture do not have to be sought, but they cannot be avoided. The forfeiture must convey a message to the object that there is at least one human being that can no longer abide by its actions.

Section 7: Conclusion

This thesis examines the concept of loyalty. The purpose was to discover the positions (regarding loyalty) of the folk and of those trained in the critical art of philosophy. Through careful analysis of the sources, I have found that loyalty is burdened with many connotations. The connotations cause errors by both the folk and the philosopher. To repair these errors, I reinterpreted the concept to more carefully denote its virtuous nature. This treatment allowed the conversation to continue in a constructive and critical way, eventually leading to the conclusion that *loyalness* as an aspect of base loyalty is indeed a virtue, therefore conferring that status on loyalty as a whole entity.

The folk use intuition and observation to define virtue, with literature providing many stories of loyal agents conducting themselves loyally. The intuition of the folk is powerful and should act as a basis for any initial analysis. Eventually, one must transcend the intuition and seek carefully studied and well-argued dialectic to shed light on the inquiry. By providing the folk a place in this work, the folk concept is validated as a viable option and primary staging point. I found that, by doing this, I discovered that the intuition of the folk is worth a dozen textbooks.

Bibliography

- Aristotle. (1999). *Nicomachean Ethics* (2nd ed.). (T. Irwin, Trans.) Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
- Audi, R. (Ed.). (1995). *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Chisholm, H. (Ed.). (1911). Loyalty. *Encyclopædia Britannica* .
- Ewin, R. (1992). Loyalty and Virtues. *The Philosophical Quarterly* , 403-419.
- G & C Merriam Company. (1981). *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged: With Seven Language Dictionary, Part 1*. Merriam-Webster.
- Hume, D. (1896). *A Treatise of Human Nature*. (L. A. Selby-Bigge, Ed.) Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Jollimore, T. (2012). *On Loyalty*. New York: Routledge.
- Kleinig, J. (2008). *Loyalty*. (E. N. Zalta, Editor) Retrieved July 25, 2012, from Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/loyalty/>
- Konvitz, M. R. (1973). Loyalty. In P. P. Wiener (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the History of Ideas* (Vol. III, p. 108). New York: Scribner's Press.
- Nathanson, S. (1993). *Patriotism, Morality, and Peace*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Plato. (1942). *Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Symposium, Republic*. (B. Jowett, Trans.) New York: Published for the Classics club by W.J. Black.
- Royce, J. (1908). *The Philosophy of Loyalty*. New York: The Macmillan Co.
- Simpson, J. A., & Weiner, E. S. (2002). *The Oxford English dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Waith, E. M. (1971). *Ideas of Greatness*. New York: Barnes & Noble.
- Wikipedia. (2010). *Loyalty*. Retrieved 08 06, 2012, from Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loyalty>