Virtue or Vice: the nature of loyalty

Mark R. Rutgers & Liijng Yang

Introduction

Loyalty is an important value in public administration, and generally regarded as a positive phenomenon. De Graaf even states: there cannot be too much of it (loyalty) (2010, p. 288). Authors again and again have pointed at loyalty as a core part of the public ethos; a most important value that should be regarded as an ideal for public administration (Rohr, 2007, p. 213; Wagner, 2010, p. 145; Beck Jørgensen, 2006, p. 369). This is symbolized by the oath of office that (usually) amounts to swearing loyalty to the public interest, the constitution, or the political regime. Nevertheless, it is not self-evident what loyalty for civil servants amounts to: what does 'loyal' mean? To what or whom refers loyalty? And is loyalty actually a value as such?

What is important to note that loyalty is closely linked with other key concept and values in public administration. Thus it has a bearing on the ancient politics and administration dichotomy and the associated notions of civil servant's loyalty to politics. More generally, it concerns matter such trust, promising, and the oath of office, and issues such as whistle blowing or, what O'Leary (2014) calls, guerrilla government. Loyalty can be regarded a powerful basic social phenomenon, closely associated with trust and promising, and as such constitutive for social life (cf. Ladd, 1972, p. 98). In brief, it touches upon a range of topics that are part of

'ethics for the civil service', and from that perspective integrity and public service motivation, accountability, and so on. It is not the aim to unravle all these possible links and relations, but attention is primarily focused on the concept of 'loyalty': as often used as it is unclear what it possibly amounts to. The aim is to provide some context as to its meaning and well as to outline its complexity.

In public administration, loyalty is almost immediately associated with the classic Weberian idea of a bureaucrat as obedient to superiors and the law (although only in the English translation the term loyalty surfaces in Weber's work; Weber, 1948, p. 199). This has been well debated in the past, this may result in a conflict between loyalty to political superiors and loyalty to the law (Andersen et al., 2012, p. 720; Trondal and Veggeland, 2003, p. 59). What is more, empirical studies indicate politicians do actually prefer a loyal appointee above a 'neutral' career bureaucrat with his/her dual loyalties (cf. Edwards, 2001; Resh, 2014; Dierickx 2004). In a very specific loyalty problem issue concerns international organisations, as captured in the notion of "a duty of loyalty" for European bureaucrats, aimed at blocking loyalty to one's country (Gravier, 2013, p. 831). In recent discussions this issue surfaces as multiple tensions between loyalties can be observed (cf. Reed, 2014). For instance, O'Learry's (2014) notion of guerrilla government is about civil servants being loyal to some ideals and thereby actively obstructing policies (for good or bad reasons). Studies on loyalty in public administration focus one way or another, on 'political loyalty', i.e. acting in line with the demands or even spirit of one's political superiors, or being loyal to other values, lines of action, or people. Loyalty to the one, implies disloyalty to the other, as in acting one chooses, i.e. is loyal to, some person, group, cause, or ideal to guides one's actions. In other words, there are 'divided loyalties and it is difficult to establish whether loyalty is to be praised or rejected. It is difficult to decide whether a civil servant's disloyalty to his/her organizations policy is a 'breath of fresh air' or the action of a 'single-issue fanatic' (O'Leary, 2014, p. 7)? Many have pointed at the specific

problem for civil servants of balancing loyalty to superiors with ethical conduct (Reed, 2014). In fact, the problem of divided loyalties is almost ingrained in the public service due to the presence of multiple accountability systems (Romzek & Dubnick, 1987, p. 227).

Although loyalty is regarded, as Gravier (2013, p. 830) states, fundamental for all organizations, what loyalty amounts often remains vague. For instance, Hirschman's influential book *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (1970) discusses exit ('leaving') and voice ('protesting') extensively, but loyalty is hardly discussed at all, as if a self-explanatory phenomenon. However, as indicated, a 'classic' problem is the tension a plurality of possible conflicting objects of loyalty: to the political leaders, the bureaucratic hierarchy, but also the public interest, the constitution, and so on. Waldo actually identified twelve possible sources of loyalty a civil servant should take into account ranging from obligation to: the constitution, the law, the nation or country, democracy, organizational-bureaucracy, profession and professionalism, family and friends, self, middle-range collectives, the public interest or general welfare, humanity or the world, religion or god (Waldo 1980, see also O'Leary, 2014, p.11 xx). This indicates loyalty is relative to values that constitute the object of loyalty.

Before delving further into this, the next section concerns the definition of loyalty. The different objects of loyalty will be taken into consideration and a distinction will be made between three kinds of loyalty: selfish, social, and principled. This is followed by a discussion of the nature of loyalty as either rational or emotional, and as a virtue or a vice. In order to broaden the scope form the English, more general Western, context, the meaning of the Chinese value *zhong* (忠) will be presented. This indicates that the concept of loyalty, on the one hand, does have universal characteristics, as well as important cultural connotations. It is concluded that loyalty is not a substantial, but an instrumental value, put differently, loyalty as such has no intrinsic value, but derives praise or blame from its object. Arguably, loyalty in the public

sphere is a matter of 'principled loyalty', with the 'general interest' or 'common good' as its object.

The Definition of loyalty

The word loyalty is Latin in origin and is etymologically associated with law (French: *loi*) and legality; i.e. 'what is due' as Ladd (1972, p. 98) calls it. Many equivalent terms to the English term loyalty can be found in the Western context, such as *loyalité* (French), *Loyalität* (German), and *loyaliteit* (Dutch). Interestingly, there is no such equivalent in classical Greek, so Aristotle discusses friendship, rather than loyalty (Aristotle, 1980, book 8 and 9). Clearly, friendship may include loyalty, but what does the term loyalty refer to? The so-called connotation of a concept consists of the characteristics, i.e. other concepts or values, that together capture the meaning of a word or term, i.e. the characteristics used to determine that an act fits the concept of loyalty. A brief literature review was undertaken by collecting article specifically focussing on loyalty (see the literature list). This fairly straightforward analysis resulted in no less than 32 different terms being used as characteristic of loyalty (see table 1).

[Table 1 here]

On the one hand, it shows that loyalty is linked with wide range of other concepts and/or values, but it is difficult to extract a coherent meaning or definition from it. The briefest 'definition' is obviously posing another term as a synonym. Thus, loyalty, is frequently equated with duty or obedience, or loyalty is regarded an instance of these, for instance as 'limitless obedience'. The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides a more substantial definition: "Faithful adherence to one's promise, oath, word of honour, etc." and "Faithful adherence to the sovereign or lawful government". Here, 'faithful adherence' points at the kind of behaviour involved, with

'promises' and the 'political regime' as the specific object. To this should be added, the group to which someone belongs as a possible object of loyalty (Levinson et al, 2013, p. 3-4).

A more elaborate, as well as specific definition that influenced many authors is by Royce: "A man is loyal when, first, he has some *cause* to which he is loyal; when, secondly, he *willingly* and *thoroughly* devotes himself to this cause; and when, thirdly, he expresses his devotion in some *sustained and practical way*, by acting steadily in the service of this cause" (1924, p. 16-17). More concisely loyalty is the through going devotion of a person to a cause. Royce adds that the cause in question is something personally valued (p. 18-19). Ladd's (1972) definition is very similar, and De Graaf simply exchanges 'cause' by 'object' (2010, p. 289). Finally, Gert (2013, p. 18) defines loyalty as the special consideration given to a person or a group in order to avoid or prevent harm to them that does not encompass others. Note that Gert limits loyalty here specifically to people. Nevertheless, loyalty is sometimes attributed to animal, such as a dog, and, in rare cases, even to inanimate objects ('the loyal church bell').

To conclude, a brief definition of loyalty is: an enduring commitment to a cause, or object. More elaborate: loyalty is the faithful adherence, or devotion to a cause or object that endures over time, also in case of adversary, and treats other causes or objects as inferior or unequal. Loyalty refers to a situation where someone might be expected to have acted differently, as there are other values one might expect to have been the guide for action. In case of 'divided loyalties', there is a dilemma as it appears impossibility to give preference of one cause or object (or value) another one is (also) devoted to.

Rational versus emotional

Faithfulness and devotion seem to suggest a subjective, and emotional attachment. Several authors point out that loyalty is indeed emotional, rather than rational: we 'feel loyal' and do

not reason it (Felten, 2011, p. 44); it is affective and not so much rational (Shklar, 1993, p. 184); or as Muirhead (2013, p. 241) puts it, loyalty has a non-rational part as people stay loyal, even if it is not rational to do so. Ladd (1972, p. 98) also points to the strong emotional aspects of loyalty. Loyalty in this sense defines who we are: our 'personal commitment' or even our identity (Felten, 2011, p. 185; Muirhead, 2013, p. 241; Shklar, 1993, p. 184). This also brings with it a danger: loyalty may limit or even block our (rational) thinking.

This does not imply that loyalty is an unreasoned phenomenon. Most authors even object to blind loyalty as a perversion of loyalty (Ladd, 1972, p. 98). Unthinking loyalty is not loyalty, but simply obedience (such as the loyalty of a dog[8]). Blind loyalty is 'closed loyalty'; it cuts the links between loyalty and responsibility (Lodge, 2010, p. 111). A major cause for loyalty becoming 'blind' is what Muirhead (2013, p. 241) calls 'epistemic closure': although loyalty presupposes partiality ('epistemic partiality'), this does not imply ignoring negative information altogether. Thus as the Roman orator Publilius Syrus stated: "Admonish your friends in private; praise them in public" (in: Felten, 2011, p. 177). In other words, people are, or should be, pretty rational about their loyalties. This makes it all the more important to take it very serious when confronted with apparent loyal dissent, divided loyalties, and/or disloyalty, for first impressions may deceive, just as much as apparent loyalty may actually be misguided.

The objects of loyalty

The definition of loyalty raises the question as to the nature of the causes or objects of loyalty: to what is the faithful devotion directed? Many different possible objects of loyalty can be identified, even if attention is limited to public administration: citizens, the common good, hierarchy, laws, politics, the leader or boss, to ideology, humanity, the nation, the profession, and many more. Three broad kinds of objects of loyalty can be discerned that can aid understanding:

Loyalty I: selfish loyalty

In its most simple usage, loyalty refers to a recurring or unchanging pattern of behaviour without any moral context. This encompasses 'brand loyalty' and 'customer loyalty', topics of much concern in marketing and business literature, where 'loyalty strategies' are discussed to ensure recurring purchases and enhance customers satisfaction (Olivier, 1999, p. 34; Reichheld, 2000, p. 113). The lack of moral connotation and the orientation on a person's satisfaction of wants in this use of loyalty makes hat authors give it a very low regard, hardly deserving to be called loyalty at all, if not a 'parasitic' use of the term (Muirhead, 2013, p. 239; Felten, 2011, p.182; Gert, 2013, p. 4).

Central to loyalty I is the fact that it is linked to some gain or reward that induces repetitive behaviour: it is a self-interested or selfish loyalty, linking loyalty to an immediate personal reward. This is also present in public administration literature, as exemplified by Wagner (2010, p. 149), who argues that a proper reward should aid to ensure public official's loyalty. The underlying rational is the self-interested individual. Selfish loyalty hardly has any specific meaning. It is vulnerable to Ladd's criticism of individualism, which robs loyalty of a specific content and reduces it at best to obedience and honesty (1972, p. 97). However, as Akerlof argues (1983, p. 57) people are perhaps not just selfish, but their loyalty may be towards other values or ideals. The line between selfish loyalty and 'real' loyalty, as involving some kind of serious commitment or faithfulness, may seem gradual, for fans and employees can be dedicated to their cause, even to the point of making sacrifices. The term loyalty is often used in this sense, but to most authors this is not loyalty in a moral or normative sense.

Loyalty II: Social loyalty

Whereas loyalty I takes as its typical objects goods, products, and services; some reward. loyalty II concerns humans: family, friends, a political group, fellow professionals, etc. In other words, it is fundamentally social. For Ladd (1972, p. 97), the object of loyalty is always a specific person or group; i.e. it concerns particular people. Contrary to selfish loyalty, it does not involve an immediate focus on some gain: social loyalty is not conditional on an expected possible future reward (Gert, 2013, p. 7). Loyalty is seen as ingrained in someone's behaviour, a character trait that is independent of its being observed by others. This negates a self-interested interpretation of loyalty, fits the Aristotelian notion of virtue, and concerns primarily a relationship between people. Thus Felten points out that social loyalty is also 'fundamentally reciprocal' (2011, p. 30). What is more, loyalty thus presupposes membership of a specific group, as well as differentiation within that group (Ladd, 1972, p. 97), and regards those within the group as more deserving and consideration as those not (Gert, 2013, p. 4). In other words, social loyalty results in discriminates between people one is prepared to make sacrifices for, support, and/or protect, be it actively or passively. As a social value, loyalty is thus not universal, but, on the contrary, selective or discriminatory in nature. Finally, it should be noted that social loyalty can be directed to an individual (superior, colleague) as well as to the more abstract group or institution (Yang, 2015).

Loyalty III: Principled loyalty

It is common to refer to loyalty in relation to ideas and ideals. Loyalty can concern abstract and even universal objects, such as the constitution, democracy, justice, etc. (i.e. values and principles). Such values have a social origin, but there is no reciprocity involved, as argued by Felten. What is more, even loyalty to non-human objects seems possible. Perhaps an extreme proponent of this usage is Royce (1924), who regards 'loyalty to loyalty' as the highest moral value: it is 'super personal' and 'an eternal reality'. It should be noted that his definition of

loyalty is most often referred to in recent literature. Nevertheless, Ladd explicitly excludes principled loyalty: "It is conceptually impossible to be loyal to people in general (to humanity) or to a general principle, such as justice or democracy" (1972, p. 97).

Although people obviously do talk about being loyal to principles, Ladd's stance provides clarity here. In the case of democracy, bureaucracy, the general interest, freedom, and justice, there is no reciprocity between person and object. This can perhaps be avoided by understanding loyalty to some ideal as shorthand for loyalty to a group that shares a principle (such as justice) as its cause. Similarly, loyalty to hierarchy can simply be regarded as synonymous to loyalty to superiors. Contrary to Ladd, loyalty to abstract ideas and principles does make sense. Although many, if not most, authors link loyalty primarily to a relationship between people, observations are nevertheless often included that do not fit this to exclude principled loyalty. To the opposite of Ladd, Levinson even poses that loyalty is perhaps always linked to some 'universal good' (2013, p. ix).

The three outlined interpretations of loyalty are characterised by different ideas about the possible object of loyalty; i.e. to what or whom a loyal subject is loyal. It should be noted, however, that there are no watertight distinctions. Selfish loyalty has as its real object an individual him/herself, and loyalty is instrumental for individual reward. This does not, however, seem to be a meaning of loyalty relevant to public administration. Loyalty to one's integrity or some self-proclaimed cause will usually be accepted as 'being loyal to one's principles', turning it into principled loyalty. Social loyalty has other humans as its object, be it individuals or collectives, whereas principled loyalty concerns abstract values. As noted, abstract principle can be constructed as a kind of 'group value', making social loyalty the 'hard core' of the meaning of loyalty.

The previous reflections show that the term loyalty may be used in different contexts and has different implications or meanings. The different usages do have consequences for the the appraisal of the (positive or negative) meaning of being loyal.

Virtue or vice

So far, loyalty has been presented primarily as a positive value. Loyalty keeps people committed, even against their own interests: "Real loyalty shows itself in adversity…" (Felten, 2011, p. 182). This is central to Hirschman's theory. What is more, loyalty is sometimes posed as a moral virtue (Gert, 2013, p. 8,10) and regarded as a core value (cf. Fritzsche, 1995, p. 911), even as the highest moral good (cf. Ladd, 1972, p. 98). As we have seen, Royce made loyalty *the* prime moral value. However, this entirely neglects strong arguments about the dangers of loyalty. In fact, loyalty is probably as mush an applauded, as a suspect value. Gert (2013, p. 3), for instance, points at both close links between morality and loyalty, as well as incompatibilities. There are three main reasons to regard loyalty as suspect: First, loyalty requires preferences and prejudices, which are regarded as unethical; second, loyalty tells us nothing about the morality of the object of loyalty.; and, third, there is no such thing as 'one' loyalty, as loyalties can clash with each other and other values.

To start with the discriminatory nature of loyalty is at odds with all ethical theories that regard universality as being central to morality. This results from an ethical stance, rejecting any preconceived ground for discrimination or inequality. It particularly applies to Kantian consequential ethics, which has impartiality and universality at its heart (cf. Gert, 2013, p. 9), while Ghandi for instance pointed to the threat to morality of close friendships (Felten, 2011, p. 169). Ladd argues, however, that we cannot do without loyalty in a moral system (1972, p. 97), and Gert considers it acceptable as long as no moral rules are violated (2013, p. 19). In such a 'non-moral' sense, Muirhead regards partisanship as essential for politics, since without

it political achievements are impossible. The very existence of political parties in a democracy is a matter of loyalty: only being loyal to one's own stances is according to Muirhead a "flight from politics" (2013, p. 232).

The second criticism implies that loyalty has limited or no substantial value as such. Loyalty has a 'kind of nobility', making people go beyond themselves (Muirhead, 2013, p. 241). This still makes it morally dangerous, as loyalty encourages one to lie and break the law (Felten, 2011, p. 179). It can also be a strong incentive to behave immoral (Gert, 2013, p. 19) and it proves difficult to combine with openness (Muirhead, 2013, p. 250). On the positive side, there is 'loyal dissent', which is as much the ultimate loyalty, as one tries to give as good advice as possible, even if not immediately appreciated. Reed regards loyal dissent therefor a matter of balancing loyalty to a superior with ethical conduct (2014, p. 5). This applies to Hirschman's notion of voice, and thus framed could even imply that whistleblowing is a matter of loyalty (Heumann et al., 2013, p. 28).

Whether loyalty is praiseworthy or not depends entirely on the object of loyalty: to whom or to which cause is a person loyal? Whether being loyal is regarded positive or negative is not dependent on the relationship, but on the object of loyalty. Thus Jacobs is keen to state that if the general value of the object of loyalty break down, loyalty may turn form a virtue into a vice, as without an object loyalty corrupts (1992, p. 72). If we link this to our earlier observations that loyalty has to be reasoned, it becomes clear that there is no such thing as a manifest or self-evident loyalty. As Gert states, "Learning the limits of loyalty is one of the most important lessons" (2013, p. 20).

This brings us to the third concern, which applies to all values: loyalties can conflict with other values, including other loyalties. Although Royce claims that the cause of loyalty forbids doubt (1924, p. 45), reality is different. Is someone loyal to the organisation, the boss, the profession, family, or the general interest? Loyalties may also conflict with other values,

obligations, commitments, or allegiances (cf. Shklar, 1993, p. 186). As loyalty is rife with possible conflicts (Felten, 2011, p. 52), one may wonder if it is a virtue at all.

Loyalty in context: *Zhong*

The discussion so far is limited to the English context, but are there similar concepts and debates elsewhere? For the purpose here, only a brief comparison with a 'most different' setting will be undertaken based on earlier work by Yang (2015 & 2016). To start with, the empirical research on values showed similarities and differences in the interpretation of loyalty amongst Chinese and Dutch civil servants. For instance, The Chinese respondents primarily regarded loyalty as an obligation towards the state or the political party (the two being meaning fundamentally the same in the Chinese context). The most common position for Dutch respondents was to regard loyalty as constituting an obligation towards one's organisation and colleagues. Also, Chinese interviewees tended to explain loyalty to a superior in in terms of 'obedience', particularly in everyday practice, while Dutch respondents interpreted loyalty as functional, i.e. legal authority in a classic Weberian sense. Then again, both groups of interviewees shared the broad view that loyalty concerns 'the job' and 'serving the people'.

Returning to a more conceptual approach, there is in Chinese actually one character that has a meaning similar to loyalty: 忠 (*zhong*). To what extend is it indeed similar? The character has two components capturing its meaning: marking the sound of *zhong* and the meaning of 'heart'. This points at characteristics associated in Chinese with loyalty: impartiality, integrity, as well as doing one's best for the greater good (rather than for personal interest). As such, loyalty is a value with high moral meaning. The character *zhong* is used together with other characters providing some more characteristics. Thus, *zhong-cheng* (忠诚) can be translated as honesty, while *zhong-xin* (忠信) means faithfulness and promise-keeping. *Zhong* is also explained using the character 敬 (*jing*), which stands for respect and prudence, and in turn is

described as *su* (肅): earnestness and cautiousness. Interestingly, *su* (肅) also refers to 'doing things with devotion and respectfulness,' mirroring the 'faithfulness' as captured in the Oxford definition of loyalty. Nevertheless, *zhong* (忠) also appears to differ from loyalty. This becomes apparent when the broader context of Confucian tradition is taken into consideration involving notions such as *xiao* (孝) or filial piety, demanding loyalty towards family members, particularly parents, and *li* (礼), ritual propriety requiring allegiance to tradition (Higgins, 2013, p. 22-23).

As Ren (1996) has argued, loyalty in Confucianism can be approached as either interpersonal ethics or as political ethics. As interpersonal relationship, Confucius links loyalty to tolerance (*shu*, 恕) and integrity (*xin*, 信). The former does not seem to have a counterpart in the Western semantic field of loyalty, contrary to the latter. With regard to political ethics, loyalty becomes a requirement in institutionalised hierarchical relations, such as between father and son and emperor and minister. However, loyalty does not simply refer to unconditional submission (of a son or minister). Instead, the ethical aspect of loyalty appears as superior to political control in governance. Loyalty concerns mutual trust and reliance; referring to political loyalty, it means mutual responsibility rather than one-way control (Ren, 1996, p. 15).

Although Confucian loyalty is strongly emphasised and praised as a virtue that officials of great reputation shared (Yang, 2017), flattery is rejected: a loyal official should be brave enough to admonish and reveal the improper behaviour of his ruler or other public officials (in modern jargon, this would be 'speaking truth to power' or 'loyal dissent'). This brings us to a final characteristic of *zhong* as the moral quality of doing the best for the people and the state.

To conclude this comparison of loyalty and *zhong,* here are enough similarities to regard them synonymous for translation purposes, yet there are also clearly different associations involved. It is posed as a virtue in Confucianism, no considerations with regard possible negative effects or dilemmas were encountered. There are also significant different

connotations of its meaning, especially the link to specific social relations, implying to loyalty as both a personal and political value serves the continuation of social hierarchy and order. Confucianism stresses loyalty in both ethical and political contexts, and as a political norm, indicates 'good' and 'being good' through the way in which one treats people. Loyalty as a political value needs a moral reason to support its institutional force, and this philosophical reason lies in the unchangeable father-son relationship and the morality of filial piety. The discriminatory aspect of loyalty is therefore not problematic in the Confucian ideal; on the contrary, it is a virtue, as all morality starts with loyalty to family and friends.

Looking at the meanings of *zhong*, there is a value almost identical to loyalty, as someone willingly acting in according with the interests of someone else. However, it is not always possible to regard the two identical, especially if the strong normative context of Confucianism is taken into consideration. The referred to empirical findings stress that in the everyday meaning of loyalty people will have different expectations as to its consequences for action. So, not only is care needed in translation and/or an international context, but as loyalty is commonly interpreted in a normative context, it may just as much result in different opinion within the Western tradition(s).

Discussion: loyalty for civil servants

Loyalty can be regarded as an important *descriptive* concept: it is used to indicate an emotionally grounded, strong attachment between people. It is a kind of glue that ensures commitment between people, enabling them to trust that mutual support and effort will be provided in a social undertaking and that it will be seen through, also in case of adversity. This also applies to civil servants with regard to loyalty to their organisation ('bureau'), to their political leaders, and/or to the common good or the like. It implies a specific partiality, giving

priority to some individuals or groups over others. Similarly, the partiality of civil servants is traditionally, in the Weberian sense, linked to bureaucrats' neutrality. In this case, this means a partiality to the law, also to their hierarchical leaders, and not to others such as citizens (specific persons or groups in society).

Not only is this brief characterisation full of possible tensions between different objects of loyalty, but it also indicates that it is unclear whether loyalty is good or bad, i.e., the *normative* meaning of loyalty. It is common to assume that civil servants should be loyal; the big question is loyal to whom or what? Loyalty is an instrumental value, and thus its moral meaning is relative to its object; just like efficiency is morally right or wrong depending on what is being done efficiently (Rutgers & Van der Meer, 2010). This is why blind loyalty should be rejected, since it amounts to ignoring the moral question concerning the justness of its object. If loyalty is to be a virtue, it has to include a conscious orientation towards its object, which in turn will determine its moral merits. There has to be awareness of loyalty's instrumental nature and 'emptiness' as a value: it is thus questionable whether one can regard loyalty as a virtue as such. Royce's idea of loyalty as an overarching super value certainly is unwarranted. Like so many values, here is matter of 'too much', or in the case of loyalty, of being too loyal and overlooking the need to connect loyalty with other values. Also, the problem of divided loyalties, is as such not unique, as dilemmas are common in moral settings. This is perhaps why discussion on loyalty, especially also of civil servants, do lack a clear guideline how to act, unless an author takes a specific starting point to be used as an overarching value. For instance, taking someone's role as civil servant within a democratic system as a guide still may result in overlooking that as a human being someone also has to take into account loyalty to family, group, and the like. No oath of office can absolve someone from his or her other moral obligations: 'dirty hands' (Walzer, 1973) are almost unavoidable.

Finally, if loyalty is regarded as a prime value for civil servants, this can not only endanger awareness of other important values related to good government, but more importantly, it may obscure the core question of to what or whom loyalty is directed. This brings us to the suggestion of limiting the loyalty of civil servants to political loyalty, as 'obedience' to political leaders and/or ideology. This is specific for political appointees within a Western bureaucracy, and a necessary, even a sufficient, condition for civil servants in Communist China, making political neutrality institutionally impossible. As discussed by Dickson (2014), membership of the Communist Party in China is a requirement for entering many jobs. The Party state requires and mobilises the political loyalty of its members who have to show their loyalty by participating in political and civic activities, even though what maintains their loyalty are simply the rewards, such as "… access to the most prestigious and high-paying jobs, as well as the social status" (ibid, p. 55). It deserves further comparative study to determine whether the impact of the Chinese demand for loyalty and political appointees in public administration in the Western context results in similar problems. It may even be conjectured that the Western tension between politically loyal and more career-oriented civil servants will also show itself in China.

There is also the question of multiple and possibly conflicting values for civil servants: between loyalty to politics, their profession, the general interest, citizens, and so on. It seems too simple to suppose that they can all be reconciled by some encompassing value such as 'the public good'. This brings us back to the different kinds of loyalty: we have to deal with social loyalty and principled loyalty, and these two will clash. A civil servant is not loyal to a specific individual, but he/she is loyal to groups, including most obviously fellow civil servants, the organisation as a whole (and thus also functional leaders within the bureaucracy), his/her profession, citizens, etc. These may clash, but more profound are probably the clashes with principles: justice, democracy, the common good, and the like. An example of the kind of

tensions that provide the notion of loyal dissent, as pointed out earlier, is worth reiterating here: loyalty to one's superior may require a civil servant to dissent, i.e. to disagree with a request or order as an act of loyalty. This will be most strongly felt if a civil servant regards his/her object of loyalty primarily as a principle, such as justice or the common good. That is why, for instance, O'Leary notices that then problems are so tense, and why Reed when providing a list of steps to be taken in case of 'loyal dissent', starts with the observation that an organization goals have to be 'true' and ends with 'exit' as options (2014, p. 14), i.e., a checklist full of choices and normative assessments prone to disagreement and multiple interpretations: the best is a procedure or heuristic, but with little contents to actually make decisions: stuck 'between a rock and a hard place' as Reed notices. Simplistic solution will not help, for whether loyalty, or disloyalty is a good thing or a bad, ultimately depends on the question whether the object or cause is good or bad.

In the case of civil servants, we may conclude that from a normative perspective loyalty implies an obligation; but it is more. Loyalty involves an emotional commitment and a reference to a moral sense of good, such as the public good. Arguably, this suggests that civil servants' loyalty has the political regime as its object. Loyalty has as its (in)direct object the aim of sustaining the political system. However, a civil servant's loyalty can just as well have as its object the common good, thus transcending a specific hierarchical or political leader, or even a political regime. This interpretation does further delineate what civil service loyalty amounts to. However, it does not resolve tension between different loyalties a person will have to balance.

Conclusion

Loyalty can have positive and negative consequences: it is as such virtue nor vice, as its moral meaning depends entirely on the ends it serves. Loyalty appears as an instrumental value; not

praiseworthy as such, but always in relation to some other value. In light of the instrumental nature of loyalty, traditional interpretations of loyalty, ranging from Weberian to Confucian, all bring with them a load of assumptions and values that seem to hide the very construction of the object of loyalty. Loyalty for civil servants is not just a commitment to duty, responsibility, and/or obligation, nor is simple allegiance to a political party. It refers as much to loyalty to the public or the public interest, as represented by the political regime or the common good. It has to be expected that there will always be tensions in the public service (Reed, 2014, p. 16), and loyalty is very much part of it, if not because loyalty is expected loyal dissent is needed, and divided loyalties are to be expected. What is more, the topic of loyalty is intertwined with a widen array of other difficult ethical issues, such as whistle blowing, bureau-politics, neutrality, politics versus administration, public service motivation, and public integrity in general. It is therefore of preeminent importance to determine the object of loyalty, and to reflect on its merits in comparison with other possible diverging objects of loyalty. To neglect this is to risk a descent into blind loyalty, and that is certainly unwanted.

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Table 1: Characteristics associated with loyalty

• Allegiance	• Loyalty
• Attachment	• Morals / morality
• Broadmindedness	• Obedience
• Commitment	• Obligation
• Constancy	• Partiality
• Courage	• Partisanship
• Duty / dutifulness	• Permanence
• Endurance	• Promise
• Ethics	• Reciprocity
• Fidelity	• Reliability
• Friendship	• Responsibility
• Honesty	• Role conceptions
• Honour	• Security
• Identity	• Self-respect
• Integrity	• (Social) recognition
• Love	• Trust(worthiness)