The nature of loyalty in the public sphere
An attempt to understand loyalty or 忠 (zhong) as a public value in a comparative perspective

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1. Introduction

Everyone knows loyalty is an important value for civil servants. They may even swear as to their loyalty to the state, the public interest, the constitution, to the political regime, and the like. Isn’t loyalty even at the heart of the much discussed call for public service motivation? Values, such as loyalty, are important as they are positive or negative qualitative statements that give direction to people’s thoughts and actions (Rutgers, 2014).

This paper has a dual purpose: first, to discuss a particular value ‘loyalty’ in order to better grasp what this value means, and, second, whilst doing so, we intend to better understand how to study and analyse values in the light of the fuzziness of the relation between terms or words and concepts, such as values. The relevance of the first goal, analysing the concept of loyalty, has already been indicated, and will be elaborated on in the next section. The second one, better conceptualizing what values are, has relevance for studying public values. In studying values we are confronted with the familiar problem of a very weak relation between term (or word) and concept (i.e. value). Does it actually make sense to talk about a particular value (‘honesty’, ‘efficiency’, ‘integrity’, ‘loyalty’) if it is unsure if the terms we use may refer to a variety of meanings? And what does this mean for empirical research where it is unavoidable to ignore or bracket the fuzzy relation between words and concepts?
In the introduction some more observations will be made as on the possible importance of loyalty by looking how it figures in PA literature. Next we discuss the results form an empirical study comparing Chinese and Dutch civil servants perceptions of loyalty. The...

The ideal of the loyal bureaucrat

Although the link of loyalty to bureaucracy may seem self-evident to most students in public administration, it is interesting to note that Max Weber does not use the term loyalty at all in the context of bureaucracy and functionaries. Within a bureaucratic administration the principle of hierarchy of functions (‘ambtshierarchie’; Weber, 1985: 125) reigns, and it is a functionary’s duty to obey within this hierarchy (‘Ambtsplichten’ Weber, 1985: 126).¹In the translation of Weber’s work by Gerth and Wright Mills the term loyalty is, however, used in the observation: “Modern loyalty is devoted to impersonal and functional purposes” (Weber, 1946: 199). Duty, i.e., a formal duty to obey, is the core concept used by Weber, and it seems others have simply understood this as a matter of loyalty.

Loyalty figures in many theories, and usually is regarded a positive phenomenon in the study of public administration. For instance, Jorgenson regards loyalty (i.e. political loyalty) a serious, principled, tough values; “located at the top of the value hierarchy” (2006: 369). This is because loyalty to politics by public servants is regarded preeminent, especially in a democracy, and “political leaders need to secure the loyalty of their agencies” (Wagner, 2010: 145). In fact, loyalty is most often used in public administration research as referring primarily to political loyalty. This is in line with the classic topic of loyalty of civil servants or bureaucrats towards their political superiors. The ‘classic bureaucrat’ is therefore depicted as neutrality and political loyalty, but there is also the idea of an autonomous bureaucrat and of the bureaucrat as ‘citizens' advocate’ (Jacobsen, 1996: 45 & 46). The classic, Weberian bureaucrats (but see before) is obedient to superiors, and should be as career officials “be non-partisan in their loyalties.” (Putnam, 1973: 258). Trondal and Veggeland capture this as ‘political loyalty’ versus ‘being loyal to rules’ (2003: 59). The latter can in turn can be regarded an aspect of hierarchical governance (Andersen e.a., 2012: 720). Loyalty is therefore not to a person, thus an oath of office is to the function and to functionaries within the institutions hierarchy (cf. Jacobs, 1992: 69; Rutgers). Such self-evident expectations of loyalty seem to originate in the (feudal) loyalty of servants to the monarch and the state (cf. N.J. Cayer, 2007). Loyalty to the political superiors is regarded as core of the public ethos (Rohr, 2007: 213), as one of the ideals of public administration (Jorgenson, 2006: 371). However, whereas the loyalty of royal servants still perhaps to a person, it is stressed later on that loyalty of public servants is to abstract institutions and laws (Felten 2011: 222); i.e., to bureaucracy within a democracy (cf. Olsen, 2006: 8).

Whereas the more classic issue is the loyalty of bureaucrats as such, there are specific other concerns. Thus, secondly, there is a fair amount of research into comparing the loyalty of (classic) career bureaucrats, with political appointees in the bureaucracy. The former issue is primarily (but not solely) studied in the context of the US practice of having political appointees as a structural aspect in their system. In this context it is regarded obvious that politicians will prefer a loyal appointee (be it ideologically or personally loyal) above a ‘neutral’ professional or career bureaucrat (cf. Edwards, 2001; Resh, 2014). And in the

¹ For Weber the core of the functionary’s duty to obey is that he (or she) acts by making the content of the order his own, purely because of the formal relations of obedience and without taking into consideration one’s own ideas on the value of the order (Weber, 1985: 123).
Belgium context Dierickx concludes: “Getting a job from one’s minister and losing it when he steps down is indeed a very strong incentive to stay loyal” (2004: 330).

Third, there is the issue of loyalty of civil servants towards their own nation, versus the international organizations where they are stationed: “International organizations have long been aware of this problem and have dealt with it by defining specific rules of conduct (…), among them a duty of loyalty.” (Gravier, 2013: 830). This, “duty of loyalty makes it very clear that EU officials must be exclusively loyal to the European Commission/EU.” (p.831)

**Loyalty as organizational necessity**

Next to political loyalty, loyalty is more in general regarded as, “crucial for any organization” (Gravier, 2013: 830). Hirschman has explicitly pushed the term loyalty high on the agenda in our field in his book _Exit, Voice and, Loyalty_ (1970). For Hirschman the importance of voice is central as a means for an organization to stay healthy (“my advocacy of voice” Hirschman, 1980: 431). Loyalty is very important for survival of organization as it gives a reason to ‘speak out’, rather than leave. Although he points out that voice presupposes loyalty (to stay), loyalty is not a concept he is really delving into. It is a kind of background concept or phenomenon in expressions like: “I consider exit to be generally costless, except when loyalty is present…” (Hirschman, 1980: 431), and, “exit can imply considerable cost in purely economic market situations even in the absence of loyalty.” (Hirschman, 1980: 439).

Clearly, a loyal person stays, may ‘voice’, but doesn’t (easily) leave. As Witt argues, there is, however, no direct link between loyalty and voice: “it [loyalty] … effectively suppresses tendencies for both exit and voice” (Witt, 2011: 240/1). All that is claimed is that, “loyalty makes exit less likely” (Hirschman 1970, 77). Whitford and Lee claim that: “exit and voice are alternatives to loyalty” (2014: 373), but this doesn’t conceptually seem correct (see also later on ‘loyal dissent’, which is a variant of ‘voice’). The focus in Hirschman’s theory is on exit and voice: loyalty functions as an unexplained background phenomenon. Bennington thus points at: “the trust-based networks and loyalty-based associations supposedly characteristic of civil society.” (Bennington, 2009: 243).

Generally speaking, loyalty appears as a very powerful social phenomenon: “If we could not count on the loyalty of others or give them our loyalty, social life would be not only bleak but also impossible” (Ladd, 1972: 98). As Gert states: “How powerful loyalty is can be seen by the overwhelmingly negative attitude toward whistle-blowers held by members of the affected group even when it is absolutely clear that blowing the whistle on the immoral actions of others in that group was the morally right thing to do” (Gert, 2013: 20). “Without some reasonable expectation of loyalty where loyalty is due, there can be no trust, no friendship, no love.” (Felten 2011: 269). In brief, loyalty binds people together and posed as a prime coordination mechanism to create and ensure social cohesion. It is both cause and effect of social interaction: “Loyalty can also result from sharing common religious beliefs, from being citizens of the same country, or from belonging to the same race or ethnic group. People can even feel loyalty to the company for which they work.” (Gert, 2013: 7)

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2 For instance, Boven captures the different objects of responsibility in terms of ‘loyalty’. Thus hierarchical responsibility is characterized as “strict loyalty to superiors” (Bovens, 1998: 149). The term or concept of loyalty is used as unproblematic and not a matter of reflection, contrary to responsibility.
Finally, next to loyalty as a social phenomenon, a fair number of authors point at loyalty as a prime moral value (almost in contract to Gert’s remark): “loyalty as a central principle of the moral life.” (Royce, 1924: 13). But, this presupposes that loyalty by definition has as its object some good (cf. Levinson, 2013: ix).

Loyalty and its issues

Although some authors regard loyalty almost by definition a positive phenomenon (“there cannot be too much of it” De Graaf, 2010: 288) this does not imply it is without problems, for it is well recognized that there is a plurality of loyalties. To start with within a public organization, as captured in the ‘classical problem’ of an inherent conflict between political loyalty and professional autonomy in public organizations autonomy (Trondal & Veggeland, 2003: 59; Olsen, 2006: 9). But there are many more possible conflicts between loyalties, as authors point at a range of possible object of loyalty including next to the political leaders and the bureaucratic hierarchy, also ‘the public interest’, ‘the constitution’, ‘neutrality’, ‘conscience’, and many more. Not only can these be mutually conflicting, but is suggest that perhaps the very concept of loyalty is fuzzy. So what meaning does loyalty have? More in general, how does loyalty actually relate to many seemingly similar values such as obedience, duty, neutrality; are they linked, can they be understood independently at all?

2. An empirical study of loyalty

Before moving forward to the discussion on the meaning of loyalty, we would like to present some ideas of civil servants who prescribed how they understood the value of ‘loyalty’. Yang (2015) has conducted a comparative study on the perception of public values by Chinese and Dutch civil servants. The study started with a survey using a questionnaire that was distributed to 520 Chinese and 230 Dutch civil servants. The respondents were asked to rank the five most important values for being a good civil servant, both ideal-type and real-life values, from 25 values in a value set (which was based on previous literature study and a small survey). The value rankings in both countries were analysed and compared. In a second research phase the quantitative results were complemented by interviews to discover how respondents interpreted the meanings of five specific values. One of the value that figured prominently in both parts of the study is ‘loyalty.’

Quantitative survey

To start with, it is striking to see that, on the one hand, the civil servant in China and the Netherlands both rank loyalty fairly low when they are asked how important loyalty as an ideal in the civil service: respectively 19th and 20th (in a list of 25 values). In a word, loyalty was considered not very important as an ideal value for the civil service by both Chinese and Dutch respondents. What is more, in both countries loyalty ranks substantial higher when asked about the importance of values in their daily practice. On the other hand, in the real-life experience there is a also a striking difference in the ranking: respectively 14th in China and even as high as 5th in the Netherlands (only to be preceded by expertise, lawfulness, effectiveness, and efficiency).
What is presupposed in these rankings, is that the concept of loyalty has a similar meaning to all the respondents (even in translation!). However, the meaning of ‘loyalty’, might well “differ from person to person, from case to case, or/and from culture to culture” (Yang, 2015). Although values are social phenomena, and as such an individual is not free to make up its meaning entirely free, it matters very much how civil servants interpret a value. In particular as we are dealing with a comparison of perceptions of people living and working in very different cultural contexts.

**Qualitative interview**

The analysis of the interviews with civil servants in China and the Netherlands showed that six different general interpretations of loyalty could be distinguished. This categorization is primarily the result of the different object of loyalty that were central to the respondents statements in the interviews. Interestingly all categories can be found amongst Chinese and Dutch respondents: no culture specific category was needed in the analysis. At the same time, there are differences in the occurrence of the categories, showing that there appear to be fairly substantial differences (see table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category (with the most characteristic quotes)</th>
<th>Number of statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CN (n=22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Loyalty to the country, to the political party, or to the laws and regulations</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Loyalty to the job (function, position, responsibility, career)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Loyalty to the superior (boss, leader)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Loyalty to the people (the public, the citizen, the clients)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Loyalty to the organization (government, department) and colleagues</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Related to personal morals and other values, such as righteousness, serviceability, integrity and justice, etc.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: CN = Chinese respondents; NL = Dutch respondents; n= number of respondents

The largest group of statements from Chinese respondents explained loyalty as being loyal to the state or the political party (the state and the party means fundamentally the same in Chinese context), as quote, “the government is under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, and I am a Party member so I must be loyal to the Party first”, while the biggest category of statements of Dutch respondents valued loyalty to the organization and colleagues more than other objects.

The same number of statements in both countries regarded loyalty as being loyal to leaders or superiors. However, they interpreted this in different ways. The Chinese interviewees tended to explain it as ‘obedience’, particularly in practice, for civil servants’ evaluation and promotion are generally up to their bosses. The Dutch respondents, on the other hand, tended to think of loyalty less in terms of the leader as a person but more about the function and authority given by the law, in a Weberian sense. For example, a Dutch respondent told that “The boss speaks for the organization, so I see it as pure loyalty to the organization, and [I] only do what is the best for my own organization”. Despite the differences, however, there was a shared view between the two groups of respondents in terms of loyalty to ‘the job’ that serves society and the people.
From the different interpretations of loyalty, we may see other values involved in the loyal subject-object relationship, such as obedience, political neutrality, serviceability and commitment to the people. Ideally, in accordant with Weberian loyalty, in Chinese context it is required to be loyal to the job and responsibility that civil servant should commitment to. As mentioned twice in Chinese Civil Servant Law, civil servants are only required to be loyal to their job and duty. Opposite to that, in practical work, Chinese civil servants associated loyalty largely to superior and Communist Party, which makes the cultural influence visible.

We will reflect on these findings and the interpretation of comparative empirical research on public values after our discussion of the ‘theory of loyalty’.

3. Definitions of loyalty

So far we have discussed and even empirically studied loyalty as if it is clear what loyalty is. In the previous section it became clear that different characteristics can be attributed to loyalty, and in particular the object of loyalty figured prominently in the qualitative analysis. But still we may wonder: what is loyalty actually? The customary approach is to look at the definition of loyalty.

To start with, in the Western context, the term (or word) loyalty is Latin in origin, and is etymologically associated with law (French: loi) and legality; i.e., what is due (Ladd, 1972: 98). Many equivalent terms can be found in Western languages (loyalty, loyalité, Loyalität, loyaliteit). But, what concept is being referred to with the term loyal?

To start with a few brief observations on definition are in place. Definitions are always specific to a purpose, as well as open to contestation. However, not providing a (useable) definition and leaving the meaning of some core concept open to a wide variety of interpretations will not do. If we discuss a specific concept or value, we should be able to provide some kind of fairly clear definition outlining its meaning, at least for the purpose at hand. It is simply sloppy to expect all readers to link a specific word to the same conceptualization, and understand the consequences of a particular (implicit) understanding of a term.

Traditionally, according to normative ‘definition theories’ A definition should be exhaustive in its description of the meaning of a terms, as well as, in doing so delineating it from other concepts; it should be ‘claire et distincte’ (cf. Rutgers, 1993: 185). This sounds (and is) very logic, but is in practice hard to achieve, if it is possible at all. However, we may expect an author to at least be able to disentangle the possible different uses of a term or word, and the possible different concepts they may denote. If words are used interchangeably, it may actually indicate some muddled if not chaotic conceptual universe. In other words, if terms like loyalty, obligation, duty, and the like are used, we should be able to indicate how they are different and relate to one another, if they are intended to clarify what the world is about (or should be about in the case of values).

A final observation is, that in definition theories it is common to distinguish between the denotation (or reference) and connotation (or sense, meaning) of a concept: The former concerns the things in reality a concept refers to, the second to other concept used to indicate

3 Interestingly, there is no such equivalent in classical Greek, so Aristotle does not consider the subject of loyalty in his ethical treatises, but in terms of friendship and what is due in friendship (Aristotle, 1980: book 8 and 9).
the characteristics or contents of the concept. For instance, ‘The Chief Executive’ and ‘The President’ in the US context both denote an office the same person holds, but the two concepts have different characteristics constituting their meaning. In case of a value, the denotation refers to the way people apply the value in question to reality. Thus, despite the empirical identity they cannot be used as synonyms in all circumstances; someone may not even be aware of the shared denotation of the two concepts. The connotation is constituted by the characteristics, i.e. other concepts or values that together describe its meaning. For instance, in the text about loyalty studied for this paper, we encountered 32 concepts somehow used to indicate some characteristic of loyalty an author wanted to stress:

Table 2 characteristics associated with loyalty in the literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allegiance</th>
<th>Loyalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bind</td>
<td>Morale/morality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadmindedness</td>
<td>Obedience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Obligation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constancy</td>
<td>Partiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Partisan(ship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty / dutyfull</td>
<td>Permanence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endure</td>
<td>Promise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity</td>
<td>Reliable/reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Role conceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honor</td>
<td>Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Self-respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>(Social) recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Trust(worthy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is only in rare cases that an author delineates the meaning of these terms. A rare example is Ladd (1972).

The briefest ‘definition’ that can be encountered is the provision of another term as synonym, i.e., indicating that both terms refer to the same concept and thus have an equivalent meaning. Thus loyalty is frequently equated with duty and obedience, or is described as a specific instance of another concept, for instance ‘limitless obedience’. This implies that the term loyalty does not have an exclusive contents (i.e., does not uniquely refer to a specific concept). In many discourse this is probably the case, as loyalty is easily transposed by other terms, and also in research the term may be totally absent (cf. Molina, 2015).

There are also specific descriptions and definitions around. To start with, in dictionaries, such as the Oxford English Dictionary. This dictionary provides a dual definition: “Faithful adherence to one’s promise, oath, word of honour, etc.” and “Faithful adherence to the sovereign or lawful government.” So here ‘faithful adherence’ is the core, and it has promises and the political regime as very specific object. As Levinson et al note, we should at least add to this “faithful adherence to any group of which one is a member” (2013: 3–4).

A definition that seems to have influenced many directly or indirectly is by Royce: “The willing and practical and through going devotion of a person to a cause.” (1924: 17);

“A man is loyal when, first, he has some cause to which he is loyal; when, secondly, he willingly an 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.” (Royce, 1924: 16-17)\(^4\)

Royce further adds that the cause in question is something ‘personally valued’ (p. 18/9). This definition resonates in for instance Ladd (1972), whilst De Graaf exchanges ‘cause’ for ‘object’: “the willing and practical dedication of a person to an object” (2010: 289). Gerth also starts with a similar definition (“faithful adherence to any group of which one is a member”, 2013: 4), but he brings this more down to earth: “Loyalty involves giving special consideration to a person or group of persons, avoiding or preventing harm to them that you would not avoid or prevent with regard to others not in that group” (Gert, 2013: 18).

The bearer or subject of loyalty is always an individual or group of individuals, in some cases loyalty is also attributed to animals, especially dogs, or in very rare (also) anthropomorphistic cases to inanimate object (‘the loyal church bell’). Much more problematic is the object of loyalty, i.e., to what is loyalty directed? Well, scanning through the literature the following 26 possible objects of loyalty were encountered:

Table 3 Objects of loyalty in the literature

| • Acquaintances | • Integrity |
| • Boss/chief | • Law & regulations |
| • Brand | • Nation/country |
| • Bureaucratic norms | • Organization |
| • Clients/consumers | • Party |
| • Colleagues | • Political Regime |
| • Constitution | • Principle |
| • Family (parents, partner, child) | • Profession |
| • Friends | • Public interest |
| • Function | • Religion |
| • General Interest | • Self |
| • Hierarchy | • Staff |
| • Humanity | • Subordinates |
| • Ideology | |

If we turn our attention from the Western (be it primarily English) to the Chinese context, there is one character available that has a meaning similar to loyalty: ‘忠’(zhong). There are, however, a number of terms (i.e. characters or combinations of characters) that can be regarded as referring to more or less equivalent concepts, as well as, a number of characters referring to similar or closely related concepts, i.e., pretty similar to the Western literature. Confucianism has a long-term influence in China, and loyalty is closely related to traditional Confucian values. For example *Xiao* (孝), filial piety - loyalty towards family members particularly parents, and *li* (礼), ritual propriety - maintaining allegiance to tradition (Higgins, 2013, pp. 22-23).

The character ‘忠’(zhong) appears together with other characters composing a word, such as ‘忠诚’(zhong-cheng) meaning honesty, ‘忠信’(zhong-xin) meaning faithfulness and promise-

\(^4\) For Royce loyalty is the key concept in morality to which all other values can be linked: “Loyalty is the will to manifest, so far as is possible, the Eternal, that is, the conscious and superhuman unity of life, in the form of the acts of an individual Self.” (Royce, 1924: 357)
keeping. Loyalty is usually explained as ‘敬’ (jing)\(^5\), literally meaning respect and prudence. Jing\(^4\) in turn can be described as su\(^3\), which implies earnestness and cautiousness. In turn, su\(^2\) refers to doing things with devotion and respectfulness, which brings us back to the linguistic meaning of loyalty.

From the morphological perspective, the character ‘忠’ (loyalty) has two components, marking the sound of ‘zhong’, and the meaning of ‘heart’\(^6\). Therefore, loyalty is interpreted as impartiality and integrity, as well as doing one’s best for the bigger good rather than personal interest, a value of high moral sense in short.\(^7\)

Central to Confucianism is the political ideal of “the rule of virtuous men” (Painter & Peters, 2010, p. 27). From this context, loyalty acquires a more extensive meaning as a political ethical value and (thus) a code of behaviour. As a political value, loyalty is not just a matter of personal morals, but encompasses loyalty to the emperor/monarch and submission to the state. This stance can be well illustrated by looking at so called Confucian admonistions: a traditional literature that records Chinese officials’ experiences and advices on how to be a good official. Loyalty was strongly emphasized in these texts as a relationship between an official and the Emperor. Loyalty was praised as a virtue that officials of great reputation shared in common.\(^8\) While the admonitions emphasize loyalty to the Emperor, they also reject flattery. What is more they explicitly state that a loyalty officials should be brave enough to admonish and reveal the improper behaviour of the Emperor (i.e., in modern jargon ‘speaking truth to power’, or ‘loyal dissent’). Loyalty also amounts to exposing those who claim loyalty to the Emperor but are actually not doing good for the people. It shows that, at least as a Confucian ideal, loyalty is not simply ‘absolute obedience’, but a moral quality of doing the best for the people and the state.

**Objects of loyalty**

The previous shows that in West and East there are many terms used and many values somehow closely related to loyalty. Roughly there seem to be three ways of understanding loyalty in recent (Western) discourse: first, in a very limited sense loyalty (I), such as brand loyalty, and loyalty as referring to ‘staying’ without further specification, i.e. there is some recurring or unchanging pattern of behaviour. Second, loyalty (II) can be regarded at specific to inter human relations; the cause or object of loyalty is a person or group. Thirdly, loyalty (III) can be interpreted including a relation to an object or cause, such as abstract idea or ideal. In the following these three interpretation will be elaborated upon.

**Loyalty I: selfish loyalty**

\(^5\) As written in the Shuowen Jiezi (说文解字), the first dictionary in China to analyse the structure of a character and explain its meaning, combining the shape and pronunciation together. 忠，敬也。敬，肃也。肃，持事振敬也。

\(^6\) 从心。中声。（as in Shuowen Jiezi）

\(^7\) We have to admit and it is hardly avoidable that some meaning is missing or distorting during the translation of terms from one language into another, due to the contextual, historical and cultural embeddedness of meaning (Rutgers, 2004).

\(^8\) Such as in Chengui (臣轨 The ways to behave as a minister), Zhongjing (忠经 The principles to be loyal), Mu Ling Shu (牧令书 Manual for State and County Magistrates), Congzhenglu (从政录 Key Points of Doing Administrative Work). Please see more admonitions in Liu (1997).
To begin with, loyalty in its most simple meaning. The prime factor that distinguishes it from the other two, is that the others are regarded as ‘true’ or ‘real’ loyalty versus more shallow or trifling uses of the term in the case of loyalty I. So, loyalty as just ‘not leaving’ or sticking around seems to be generally regarded as not really deserving the term. The same goes for ‘brand loyalty’ and ‘customer loyalty’ that are the topic of much concern in marketing and business literature, where terms such as ‘loyalty strategies’ are used to discuss to assure a “repeat purchasing frequency or relative volume of same-brand purchasing.” (Olivier, 1999: 34), and is about, “the delivery of a consistently superior customer experience” (Reichheld, 2000: 113).

The lack of faithfulness and dedication makes Muirhead remark that brand loyalty is “the lowest form of loyalty, since it is passive” (2013: 239), and Gert observes that it is “clearly a marginal and parasitic sense of ‘loyalty’” (2013: 4). Also Felten regards ‘loyalty marketing’ not concerned with real loyalty, as “Real loyalty shows itself in adversity…” (Felten 2011: 182).

Central to this use of loyalty is that loyalty is linked to some kind of gain or reward that induces someone to stay or repeat behaviour: it is self-interested loyalty. This applies to brand or customer loyalty, but also fits other context, such as Wagner’s (2006) idea that loyalty and rewards are closely linked: “In trying to induce officials to exhibit loyalty by rewarding them properly…” (Wagner, 2010: 149). The underlying rational of loyalty here is the self-interested individual. It seems loyalty I has hardly any specific meaning and fits into Ladd’s criticism of individualism or social atomism which, according to him, robs loyalty of a specific contents and reduces it to concepts such as obedience and honesty (Ladd, 1972: 97). The term loyalty here refers to a fairly empty concept that concerns some kind of recurring behaviour derived from satisfaction or reward people derive as consumer, client, and employee. It is certainly no intrinsic commitment to a cause.

According to Akerlof, it is well conceivable that people are not just selfish, but “loyal to other ideals.”(1983: 57). The line between loyalty I and ‘real’ loyalty, involving some kind of serious commitment or faithfulness may seem blurred, as supporters, fans and also employees can obviously be dedicated to their cause and even willing to make sacrifices. But that is no behaviour understandable in terms of a self-interested loyalty. This brings us to the more substantial interpretations.

Loyalty II: social loyalty

The second interpretation, takes as its core that loyalty concerns people: family, friends, a political group, fellow professionals. Loyalty I, takes as its typical objects goods, products, and services causing someone to be ‘loyal’. Ladd (1972), however, limits loyalty to a relation between individuals (master-servant, parent-child), i.e. the object of loyalty is always a person or group: “Loyalty is conceived as interpersonal, and it is also always specific; a man is loyal to his lord, his father, or his comrades. It is conceptually impossible to be loyal to people in general (to humanity) or to a general principle, such as justice or democracy.” (Ladd, 1972: 97). Loyalty is therefore not universal, but concerns a relation with or to particular people. Felten stipulates that this relation is “fundamentally reciprocal” (2011: p. 30). Gert, however, seems to deny the reciprocal nature of loyalty, when he states that “loyalty must not depend

9 And he adds that customer loyalty is always negative for the customer (Felten 2011: 183)
10 But here we are possibly touching upon an interpretation of loyalty form a ‘rational choice’ perspective, where the prime motivating force is rational self-interest.
upon beliefs about the consequences for oneself of showing loyalty” (2013: 7). Perhaps, this is more like a ‘test’ of pure loyalty as being ingrained in someone’s behaviour and/or of it being a virtue, i.e. a character trait that is independent of being observed by others. This primarily seems to functions as a denial of the ‘self-interested’ interpretation of loyalty, and rather fits an Aristotelian notion of virtue. However, this is clearly put forward as an ‘extreme’; first and foremost, loyalty constituting a relation between people: loyalty is social.

Loyalty as a social value is not a universal value, but, to the contrary, explicitly discriminatory. Thus Ladd poses two ‘necessary and sufficient’ conditions for loyalty: membership of a specific group and differentiation within that group, for loyalty is always to someone within a group (or a subgroup) (1972: 97). Furthermore, Gert points out that loyalty poses “members as warranting more consideration than people not in the group” (2013: 4). The loyal person discriminates between people he/she is prepared to make sacrifices for, support, and/or protect be it actively or passively.

_Loyalty III: principled loyalty_

Contrary to the previous, it seems pretty customary to refer to loyalty to values, ideas and ideals. Can the object of loyalty be non-human, i.e., not just some collective, such as a profession or organization, but refer to objects and causes such as the Constitution, love, justice; i.e. to some principle?11 Perhaps the most extreme in this respect is Royce (1924) who regards loyalty itself the prime value. To him ‘loyalty to loyalty’ is the highest moral stance; ‘superpersonal’ and ‘an eternal reality’. Such a metaphysical stance is rare, more common is to simply pose that people are loyal to their ideals, to democracy, and other values. Of course such values will have a social origin, but in this interpretation reciprocity between the object or cause to which one is loyal is absent. Interestingly, it seems that it is pretty common to regard loyalty non-human causes unproblematic, but authors reflecting on the meaning of loyalty in general limit its object to other persons.

The presented three interpretations are characterized by the different ideas about the possible object of loyalty, i.e., what or to whom a loyal subject is loyal. However, it should be noticed that there are perhaps no really strict boundaries between the three, in as far as, what may at first glance appear as an instance of one interpretation, may shift towards another. Loyalty I, labelled here as selfish loyalty has as its real object an individual him/herself, i.e., loyalty is purely instrumental and relying on perceived personal gain. To many this may not be regarded loyalty has any specific contents; just as they will tend to reduce altruism to a kind of self-interest (but then there is by definition simply is no other possibility once taking an individualistic starting point as an absolute). However, loyalty to one’s own integrity, or to some self-proclaimed cause will generally be accepted as ‘being loyal to one’s principles’, turning it actually into an instance of loyalty III.

Loyalty II has been named social loyalty for obviously any object of loyalty has to be another human being, or some collective. The boss, clients, staff, the nation, friends, all fit in here. Finally, loyalty III or principled loyalty adds to this the possibility in include objects such as ideas and ideals. The dividing line between II and III may sometimes be difficult, is ‘The Constitution’ or ‘democracy’ an abstract ideal, or should we reduce them to specific people as individualism would have it. But then we may end up with loyalty I of course. Ladd, for

11 Mote that we did so in the opening section
instance explicitly excludes this option: “It is conceptually impossible to be loyal to people in
general (to humanity) or to a general principle, such as justice or democracy.” (Ladd, 1972: 97).
Although obviously people do talk about being loyal to principles, Ladd’s stance provides clarity. In the case of democracy, bureaucracy, the general interests, freedom and justice there is no reciprocity between person and object. In fact, standing for a principle such as loyalty, may result in the very opposite for the individual in question. Loyalty can then be conceived as to a group that has some principle (‘justice’) as its cause, similarly, someone is not loyalty to ‘hierarchy’, but to a specific group of people. Although many, if not most authors link loyalty primarily to a relation between people, nevertheless often observations are included that do not seem to fit this understanding of loyalty at the same time, such as: “… the most basic question of whether one should ever be ‘loyal’ to anything other than a universal good” (Levinson, 2013: ix).

\textit{Rational versus emotional}

Next to the objects of loyalty, there is the matter of the nature (or perhaps psychology) of loyalty in terms of it having a rational or emotional origin: why are people loyal to begin with?

Some authors immediately point out that loyalty is not (primarily) rational, but emotional; we ‘feel loyal’ and do not reason loyalty (Felten 2011: 44), or, as Muirhead puts it: loyalty has a non-rational part: people stay loyal, even if it is not rational to do so (2013: 241). Shklar puts it even stronger: “loyalty … is deeply affective and not primarily rational” (1993: 184). Ladd also points at strong emotional aspects of loyalty: “it implies an attitude, perhaps an affection or sentiment, toward such persons [i.e. the object]” (Ladd, 1972: 98). This links well with the earlier discussed meaning of the Chinese character ‘忠’ (loyalty) as referring to ‘heart’; i.e., loyalty is from the heart. Loyalty in this sense is very much a part of who we are, it defines us as a ‘personal commitment’ and even our identity (Felten 2011: 185; Muirhead, 2013: 241): “loyalty is motivated by the entire personality of an agent” (Shklar, 1993: 184). This also brings with it a possible danger, as our loyalties may as a result limit or block our (rational) thinking. However, even for Felten, who actually argues that loyalty supplants rational decision-making (Felten 2011: 174), the emotional, or non-rational dimension of loyalty does not imply it is an unreflected, unreasonable phenomenon: “when it is disjointed from judgement.” (Muirhead, 2013:241). Authors do (often strongly) object to ‘blind loyalty’ that simply does whatever the object of loyalty pleases, as a “perversion of loyalty” (Ladd, 1972: 98). In brief, there may be a (strong) emotional component involved in loyalty, unthinking or unreflected loyalty is not regarded true loyalty (but simply obedience, such as the loyalty of a dog\textsuperscript{12}). Blind loyalty is ‘closed loyalty, it cuts the links between loyalty and responsibility’ (Lodge, 2010: 111): This ‘closing’ is according to Muirhead due to the effect of what he calls ‘epistemic closure’ (2013: 241). Loyalty presupposed someone not to immediately accept any negative information about the object of loyalty, but to have a little prejudice toward the facts presented (Muirhead: ‘epistemic partiality’). This, however, does not imply to accept anything, i.e., to be blind with regard to available knowledge. Felten points at the Roman orator Publilius Syrus: “Admonish your friends in private; praise them in public.” (Felten 2011: 177). In other words, people are in fact to be pretty rational about their loyalties. But, at the same time, the strong nature of loyalty, even constituting peoples identity, and the dangers of ‘blind loyalty’, bring us to a more worrying aspect of loyalty.

\textsuperscript{12} Here fits perhaps Ladd’s distinction between loyalty and fidelity (Ladd, 1972: 98).
Loyalty: Virtue of Vice?

Up to now, loyalty has been presented as a positive phenomenon (cf. De Graaf 2010: 288; Graham & Keeley, 1992: 191). We have seen it as being hailed as important for any social organization, and it is generally accepted that loyal employees are very valuable to achieve any organizations goals. It is loyalty that keeps people committed, even against their own interests\(^\text{13}\): “Real loyalty shows itself in adversity…” (Felten 2011: 182). This is central to Hirschman’s theory. What is more, loyalty is sometimes actually regarded a moral virtue (Gert, 2013: 8 & 10), and associated with other raised values: “the three values England associated with an ethical orientation, trust, honor and loyalty” (Fritzsche, 1995: 911).

According to Ladd, in particular idealists are prone to pose loyalty as the highest moral good (Ladd, 1972: 98). He points at Royce, who indeed made loyalty the prima moral value in his ethical theory: “Loyalty, then, is a good for all men.” (Royce, 1924: 125), and ‘loyalty to loyalty’ as a universal loyalty to all fellow men, and to the good (p. 129/130).

But, whether it is a ‘virtue or vice’ is certainly not agreed upon by everyone. Not only blind loyalty has been criticised, but more in general loyalty is regarded a suspect value. Gert roughly distinguishes three views on the link between morality and loyalty: congruent, incompatible, and “sometimes incompatible” (Gert, 2013: 3). Not just limiting the view here to the relation with morality, there are three main reasons to regard loyalty a suspect value, if not a vice\(^\text{14}\): (1) loyalty requires preferences which is regarded unethical, (2) loyalty as such tells nothing about the morality of the object of loyalty (the persons or goal), and (3) there is no such thing as one loyalty, i.e. loyalty or loyalties can clash with each other and other values.

Regarding the first, the discriminatory aspect of loyalty is at odds with all ethical theories that regard universality a central characteristic of any moral value. This particularly applies to Kantian, consequential ethics that poses that acting morally implies to act impartial (cf. Gert, 2013: 9). Felten also points at for instance, Ghandi, who pointed at the danger of close friendships to morality (2011: 169). In other words, for many an ethicist, loyalty is suspect and not in line with the general demand of morality to act in a way that is non-discriminatory. Ladd argues that we cannot do without loyalty in a moral system (1972: 97), and Gert considers it acceptable as long as, “acting loyalty does not involve unjustifiably violating a moral rule; impartiality is required when one is violating a moral rule” (Gert, 2013: 19). In such an ‘non-moral’ sense Muirhead regards partisanship essential for politics, as without it political achievements are impossible: independence as a ‘loyalty to just your own opinion’ is a ‘flight from politics; (Muirhead, 2013: 232). The very existence of political parties in a democracy is a matter of loyalty. So, even if loyalty is regarded morally suspect, there is still a place for it normatively.

The second criticism implies that loyalty as such has limited or no substantial value as such. However, loyalty has a ‘kind of nobility’, making people go beyond themselves (Muirhead, 2013: 241). This makes it morally dangerous. Thus, Felten (2011: 179) states that loyalty encourages to lie, break the law, and Gert argues that: “loyalty sometimes provides the most

\(^{13}\) Undoubtedly why ‘consumer loyalty’ is so valued.

\(^{14}\) There may also simply be a negative association with historical phenomena such as the so called ‘Loyalty Programme’ instituted in the USA by President Truman in 1946, which is at the heart of the infamous McCarthy era in the USA. As Roosenbloom (2007, p.673) states; the ‘loyalty-security measures’ severely harmed the rights of federal employees.
powerful motive for immoral behavior” (2013: 19). In line with the previous remarks on blind loyalty; loyalty proves difficult to combine loyalty and openness (Muirhead, 2013: 250). Here also fits Reed’s discussion on ‘loyal dissent’ as, “the problem of balancing loyalty to superiors with ethical conduct.” (Reed, 2014: 5). Ranging from (internal) ‘voice’ or whistleblowing, it can all be depicted as “an exercise of … ‘loyalty’” (Heumann e.a., 2013: 28), but it is certainly not an easy option in practice. It will be regarded a kind of treason, even if it is morally the right thing to do (cf. Reed, 2014: 6).

Whether loyalty is praiseworthy or not very much depends on the object of loyalty: to whom, or to which cause is a person loyal, and, more importantly, is that cause to be praised or reviled. It is a bit like efficiency, a relational value, with strong instrumental connotations (Rutgers & Van der Meer, 2010): there is a relation being posed, but whether it is regarded positive or negative is not dependent on the relation (‘being efficient’ or ‘being loyal’), but on the consequences: the object or cause of loyalty in this case. Thus Jane Jacobs is keen to state that if the general values break down, “then loyalty converts from virtue to vice.” “Without direction …., loyalty corrupts. It is a two-edged sword” (Jacobs, 1992: 72). In order to assess whether loyalty is good or bad, the object of loyalty has to be taken into consideration: “We must ask what loyalty demands of a person” (Ladd, 1972: 98), i.e., what is its object (and thus the cause loyalty is aimed at). If we link this to the earlier observations that loyalty, though emotionally grounded, has to be complemented by reason and reflection, it becomes clear that there is no such thing as a manifest or self-evident loyalty ever. As Gert states, “Learning the limits of loyalty is one of the most important lessons” (Gert, 2013: 20).

This brings us, finally, to the third concern that applies to any value: loyalties can conflicts as people will have multiple loyalties to deal with. Although Royce claims that the cause of loyalty forbids to doubt (Royce, 1924: 45), the reality seems different. As before concerning voice and whistleblowing: is someone loyal to the organization, the boss, the profession, the general interest? If not between loyalties, there will be conflicts “between obligations, commitments, loyalties, fidelities, and allegiances. (Shklar, 1993: 186); loyalty “a virtue rife with conflicts.” (Felten 2011: 52), which makes one wonder if it can be regarded a virtue at all! Sometimes it is a duty to disobey “such as when a wrong is committed” (Reed, 2014: 6).

Discussion

*What’s loyalty for civil servants?*

To start with, what are the consequences of the previous considerations for loyalty in the public sphere, in particular for civil servants? Is it an important value? Does loyalty matter?

To start with the last question: yes it does. Following other authors loyalty can be regarded an important *descriptive* concept: it is used to indicate an emotionally grounded, strong attachment between people. It is a kind of glue that ensures a certain or huge commitment between people, enabling them to trust mutual support and effort will be provided in a social undertaking and seen through. But just like ‘communication’ is important, this tells us nothing about it being a positive or negative phenomenon as such: loyalty in this sense is very much part of social reality. If totally absent, perhaps anarchy, or at least a totally individualistic society – a contradiction in terminus - would possibly be the result. If public administration is
a coordination mechanism (institution) for society, no coordination is possible, for lack of loyalty to any other person and/or social norms and causes is like ‘herding cats.’ The normatively meaning of loyalty is a very different matter. It is common to ascertain that civil servants should be loyal, though it seems strange to put it on a par with ‘expertise’, ‘integrity’, ‘humanity’, ‘in the public interest’, and other values attributed to ‘the good civil servant’. Nevertheless, we want them to be loyal, but it should be obvious that the big question is loyal to whom or what? Only a very few will regard loyalty as something morally positive as such. It sounds a bit similar to ‘working’, it can be good or bad, depending on the work that is being done. It fits with the question whether ‘efficiency’ is morally right or wrong: it depends on what is being done efficiently. So, the emotional commitment authors associate with loyalty, does not imply loyalty is without reason. In fact, it is the reflectivity also included in loyalty that stands out in the rejection of ‘blind loyalty’. Blind loyalty amounts to supporting a person or cause without taking into consideration whether something is morally right or wrong. Normatively, loyalty should be accompanied by reflection, i.e. rational consideration. Blind loyalty is not loyalty, as it is missing reflectivity. It is similar to ‘partially honest’, which in the end can be considered ‘not honest.’ There has to be awareness of loyalties limits, applicability, and positive and negative consequences. It indicates that it is questionable to regard loyalty a virtue as such, as both commanding and discarding loyalty depends on other values. On the other hand, if loyalty is a virtue, and not just amoral (i.e. as not being moral in itself), it includes reflection; a conscious orientation on ‘the good’ (this is where Royce wants us to be). Perhaps it is best to regard loyalty a relational value (linking subject and object), or more common an instrumental value. This makes it fit in the same category as efficiency. This, in turn shows where we deviate from Royce; his interpretation makes loyalty by definition always focussed on ‘the good’. His stance, does remind that any value or virtue demands that it is ‘form the heart’, ‘faithful’, and carried through. What is more, it also indicates that a value, in particular a moral value, is never just an external, heteronomous obligation; as Kant fervently stressed.

When a moral value is instrumental, but becomes regarded as an ultimate value – “modes of behavior” (Rokeach, 1974, p. 222), this may seriously hamper the focus on the ends or ‘good’ loyalty is originally instrumental to. So if loyalty becomes an overarching value for civil servants, this can endanger the other values for which a committed constancy and preference is required in the first place: a good civil servant or good government. This is actually entirely applicable to other instrumental values such as efficiency.

This bring us to the actual stressing of loyalty of civil servants as being (just) political loyalty, understood as loyalty not to the political regime in abstract, but to the actual political leaders in power. The latter is specific for the very phenomenon of political appointees within a Western bureaucracy (in opposite to the career bureaucrats that are supposed to be loyal to the regime, democracy, the general interest, and the like, which requires them to act politically neutral). It is, however, of more general interest to Communist China, where political loyalty in this sense is a necessary, sometimes even a sufficient condition to become a civil servant. As discussed by Dickson (2014), Party membership in China is a determinant that is required more to enter jobs “involving higher skills and/or political authority” than “jobs at the low end

\[15\text{ Cats are pretty social however, but this is how the saying goes (c.f. Hobbes ‘homo homini lupus’ doing injustice to the highly social life of wolfs).}\]

\[16\text{ In a sense, this is at the heart of the case of Eichmann trying to make train transport as efficient as possible (according to him perhaps to minimize suffering), thus making Nazi genocide more efficient.}\]

\[17\text{ Next to moral and its opposite immoral (cf. rational, irrational and arational).}\]

\[18\text{ Although efficiency also can have a more substantial meaning (Rutgers & Van der Meer, 2010).}\]
of the social hierarchy, such as agriculture and blue-collar jobs” (p.51). The party-state requires and mobilizes political loyalty of members, who have to show their loyalty by participating in political and civic activities, even though what maintain their loyalty are just the benefits “from access to the most prestigious and high-paying jobs, as well as the social status” (ibid, p.55). More interesting, high loyalty to the Party does not produce significantly higher political support among party members than non-members, especially at the local state administration (ibid, pp. 61-62).

As loyalty is an instrumental value, there is also the question of multiple values that require loyalty. A civil servant perhaps has to show political loyalty (as to a specific political ideology, or to the political regime: as indicated this makes a vast difference). Burt, there is more, the career civil servant is also supposed to be loyal to his profession, to the general interest, to the citizens, and so on. It is too simple to argue that these all ‘ultimately’ refer to the same thing (‘the public good’) or so. As Reed argues:

“Well-meaning followers face conflicting values as they balance their own sense of right and wrong with the desires of leaders and the best interests of the organizations they ultimately serve. Such tensions may well be inherent in public service, where loyalty to the public can conflict with loyalty to superiors.” (Reed, 2014: 16).

In the case of civil servants, we may conclude is that the commitment to their job, such as responsibility, obligation, duty do not coincide with loyalty. Loyalty does imply a feeling of obligation, the notion that it is one’s duty to stay in the job, and so on, but loyalty is more. As a value, loyalty involves emotional commitment and sticking to the moral sense of ‘good’ as it relates to being a civil servant. Perhaps we can call it principled loyalty. Loyalty implies a priority of some group over others, thus being loyal to a public function, may imply being disloyal to family and friends. Loyalty to the function, in turn, suggests that the object of loyalty is indeed the function. This suggests that specifically political loyalty as a demand for civil servants does not have a specific political stance or political party as its object, but the political regime as it is constituted and supposed to represent the general interest. That is a main difference between politicians and the public servants.

From definition to axiological sphere

At the end of this paper the reader may expect a clear and distinct definition of loyalty, or at least a working definition, but the best we can do is to provide a number of characteristics of loyalty based on the previous considerations. Whether they add up to a coherent definition is another matter.

Undoubtedly a specific definition of loyalty is possible, but as a social science that will not do away with the many different connotations and interpretations the term loyalty will carry with it. For instance, based on the previous discussion loyalty can be captured as a kind of ‘self-obligation’, i.e., as not just a duty or obligation that is externally established (demand loyalty), but loyal because a person him/herself, wants commit to have a preference, or prejudice towards other people and/or their cause. It also seems to include in this way that it will be a kind of emotional attachment, yet as it is an autonomous act it has a reflective, rational component as well. However, we immediately run into the difficulty of having to be clear about how our concept of ‘loyalty’ then differs from the others used to characterize it. Shklar

19 As is in line with Weber’s position: it is a moral act to accept a function, i.e.. although a demand is as such heterogeneously, accepting it is an autonomous act.
point at this and demands “to make clear the distinctions between obligation, commitment, loyalty, allegiance, and fidelity” (1993: 183). Thus, if we concisely define loyalty as, let’s say, ‘a voluntary obligation’ we still need to be relatively clear about a shared interpretation of obligation. Of course, this is not specific for loyalty, but applies to all concepts. Yet, although in everyday life ‘bureaucracy’ has a much more negative and normative meaning as in scholarly studies, we can well define bureaucracy. Loyalty seems more difficult, as there are many similar concepts that make it much more difficult to be precise in our language. What is more, just as Weber’s ideal type is often confused with a normative stance. Such confusion may actually also have crept into the discussion about the importance of loyalty: pointing out that loyalty is an important social phenomenon doesn’t make it also a wanted phenomenon, let alone a value or virtue. As we have seen before, loyalty may actually induce crime and immoral behaviour. The empirical and normative use of loyalty has to be well distinguished, for too quickly the two uses will mingle and confuse. Loyalty may actually be treated as a so-called ‘thick concept’ in everyday practice, i.e., a concept that has simultaneously descriptive and evaluative (normative) meanings. The prime example in literature is ‘cruel’ (Putnam, 2002, p. 35). The ease with which loyalty is exchanged by other evaluative concepts, such as duty and obligation, and the usually fuzzy, unreflected similarities and differences is worrying and suggest that loyalty is used (probably unaware) to this purpose, i.e. to mix descriptive and normative observations.

This brings us to a final topic. It can be observed that loyalty is often presented as closely linked with many other concepts; sometimes as a synonym, for instance, obligation. As Jacobs states, there are “specific precepts we repeatedly associated with specific others: loyalty with obedience and respect for hierarchy...”(Jacobs, 1992: 27). Other examples are “loyalty, trust and honor” (Fritzsche, 1995: 910); “reciprocity, trust, and loyalty” (Benington, 2009: 243); “political loyalty, and neutrality” (Jørgensen & Vrangbæk, 2011: 488), and Molina names thirty ‘vital values’, “considered most important by administrators” (2015: 371), but interestingly loyalty is not included (contrary to dedication, honesty, obedience, and reliability). As indicated earlier, any definition must (by definition20) use other concepts, so perhaps we should take a different stance towards values such as loyalty in attempting to understand their meaning and try and fix the meaning by means of a (single) definition. For inspiration we can look at Torben Beck-Jørgensen and Barry Bozeman (2006) as they group values into ‘constellations’ with ‘nodal values’. The latter are values central in a network of values, but neither are they necessarily the most important values, nor is their meaning better defined. The tentative nature of the constellations is stressed by rejecting a fixed order or priority amongst the values. So, nodal values are not specific core values, but terms denoting a set of possibly related values. Both Rothstein and Putnam indicate that the ‘conceptual context’ or semantic field is always relevant to understanding specific concepts and thus also values. The conceptual context is the result of linking, contrasting, specification, and the like of concepts over time.

Such sets or networks of values are very similar to what are called semantic fields in linguistic theory (cf. Richter, 1986). We can thus refer to a field or field of values - an axiological sphere - for instance on ‘integrity’, that will include honesty, sincerity, morality, loyalty, and the like (cf Rutgers, 2015: 31). The term integrity, here can refer to both a value as such, and to the axiological sphere as a whole. In this sense, perhaps the whole set of values named in table 2, captures the axiological sphere of loyalty. It seems likely that more than one such an axiological sphere can be (re)constructed, and also that differences will depend on the

20 The only example being an ostentive definition: defining by pointing something out: ‘that is an office’

17
perspective form which it is constructed. Again, as in linguistics (specific translation theory), there will be similarities between axiological spheres in different cultures, but it is unavoidable to discuss the similarities and differences in a meta-language (even if that is one of the languages under consideration.

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