Loyalty and Two Heroines: Antigone and St. Joan of Arc

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Introduction: Josiah Royce maintained an interest in the Greek tragic heroine Antigone throughout his career, viewing her as an exemplar of the loyalty that became the hallmark of his ethical philosophy. 12 years before Royce's Philosophy of Loyalty was published, Mark Twain issued a bestselling, lightly fictionalized biography of Joan of Arc, who also epitomized loyal martyrdom. It is interesting, that despite Joan's outstanding and recently popularized example of loyalty, Royce does not appear to have commented on her. This paper will compare and contrast the two women, Antigone as portrayed in Sophocles' *Antigone* and *Oedipus at Colonus* and Joan as depicted by Twain, using Royce's Philosophy of Loyalty as an interpretive lens. In particular, it will examine how each fared in regard to Royce's loyalty to loyalty principle, dealt with fear and the temptation to betray their principles and loyally met their deaths. Additionally, it will explore to what extent the notion of fate which dominated Antigone's pagan culture, and the infused virtues granted a Catholic saint complicate a Roycean analysis of the two women who differed so greatly from his Protestant perspective. Finally, the paper will wonder whether in not considering Joan, Royce might not have missed an opportunity.

In 1908, Josiah Royce published his *Philosophy of Loyalty*, which was the centerpiece of his ethical philosophy. He developed this philosophy in later works prior to his death in 1916, among which was *The Problem of Christianity*. In his initial work, Royce gave two definitions of loyalty, the first tentative, but easily comprehensible, the second dealing more with idealistic and religious concerns. Royce initially defined loyalty as" the willing and practical and thoroughgoing devotion of a person to a cause." Later in the work, after painstaking development, he indicated that "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 recognized the limitations of such definitions in that not all causes are good and that loyalty in itself, due to its particularity, has often produced wars and other human misery. To qualify as ethics, loyalty would need to be elevated by some universalizing factor. Thus, he completed his philosophy with the prescription that our loyalties, by the choice of our causes, should increase the general loyalty among mankind . He termed this loyalty to loyalty. In particular, the loyal person, when exercising loyalty to loyalty, should appreciate the loyalties of others, including his own enemies.. By this elevation, the person demonstrating loyalty to loyalty joins a metaphysical community of the loyal, which he variously called the Universal or Beloved Community.

Among the examples of loyalty that Royce admired most is Antigone, the heroine of Sophoclean tragedy, befitting his early study of and lifelong interest in the classics. He eulogized her in his college commencement address and again in his final course on ethics the year before his death. He wrote in his youth, " The tragedy of Antigone, is founded upon a sister's consciousness of loyalty towards the obligations which require her, despite the command of a king, to celebrate the rights of her slain brother. The majesty of the fraternal tie is nowhere more deeply felt and expressed than in Antigone's famous words with regard to what the gods of the underworld have required of her as an expression, both of her duty and of her love towards, her brother. She willingly goes to death, because these commands of the gods of the underworld, as she says: "are not an affair of today or of yesterday, and no man knows whence they came." Forty years later he proclaimed, "Antigone, in her realm of tragedy, suggests to us the ideal human being- that being who is neither man alone nor woman alone, and still less a neutral being devoid of sex, but a being of angelic rank."

Antigone is a princess of the royal house of Thebes, daughter of King Oedipus

and Queen Jocasta. She has a sister, Ismene, and two brothers, Polyneices and Eteocles. Her father, who arrives a stranger to the city, becomes king after banishing the Sphinx by answering its riddle. He marries the recently widowed Queen and many years later learns that the Queen is actually his mother and that the man he killed in a roadside confrontation is King Laius, his father. This fulfills an earlier prophecy. On learning this, Jocasta hangs herself. Oedipus gouges out his eyes and is banished from the kingdom, and Antigone, the loyal daughter, guides her blind father by the hand into exile. The kingdom falls apart as the two sons quarrel and Polyneices enlists a foreign army to attack Thebes and seize the throne from his brother.

In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus reaches a grove by a small hamlet near Athens and finds the spot where he is destined to be buried. King Theseus of Athens gives Oedipus leave to remain there despite his tarnished reputation. An oracle indicates blessing to the city where Oedipus would be buried. Thus, Oedipus' brother-in -law, Creon, brings an armed guard to escort Oedipus back to Thebes to be buried there. When Oedipus refuses, Creon kidnaps Antigone and Ismene and tries to compel Oedipus. Theseus arrives to rescue the young women and Creon retreats in disgrace back to Thebes. Oedipus dies and is buried at a secret location. Antigone and Ismene return to Thebes.

Prior to the beginning of the *Antigone*, tragedy again batters the house of Laius. Polyneices and his army attack at the seven gates of Thebes, but the offensive fails when Polyneices and Eteocles kill each other in single combat. The foreign army withdraws, and Creon becomes King. He decrees that Eteocles will be buried with full honors, but that Polyneices be left to the dogs and vultures on penalty of death. In the opening scene of the play, Antigone attempts to enlist the support of Ismene in burying their brother, even though it means disobeying Creon and risking their lives. Ismene demurs, Antigone spurns her and buries him. She is arrested and defiantly confesses the deed. Ismene attempts to share responsibility, but Antigone exonerates her by

rebuking her. Antigone is buried alive in a large chamber and eventually hangs herself. Creon's son, and also Antigone's fiancé, Haemon, excoriates his father for the cruelty he showed Antigone and falls on his sword in the chamber clinging to her. Creon's wife, Eurydice, curses him and runs herself through with a sword. Bereft of family, scorned by his subjects, Creon laments his folly.

Joan of Arc arose from a much humbler background than Theban royalty. She was born in the poor village of Domremy in France in 1412, during the 100 Years' War, three years before the disaster at Agincourt. Domremy was filled with French patriots at a time when it seemed France would cease to be a going concern. Joan was a pious, earnest girl with a strong sense of justice. Despite her youth and lack of standing, she displayed loving concern for a mentally ill man who inspired fear and avoidance among her fellow villagers and convinced them to welcome a stranger they were prepared to shun. In her teens, she began to have visions of St. Michael the Archangel , St. Catherine and St. Marguerite preparing her for a special mission, liberating France from the English and the Burgundian traitors who supported them. At 16, she presented herself to a local nobleman, requesting troops to escort her to the Dauphin, Charles VII, so she could take command of his army and route the British. After multiple attempts she convinced him to give her the escort. Fighting several battles and using a deception that evoked a sense of guilt, she reached Chinon where the royal court was located.

Joan struggled to gain acceptance of her mission. The Dauphin disguised himself in a crowd of courtiers and put an impostor in his place, but she recognized him immediately. She confided her knowledge of his greatest fear to him which astounded him. But the Dauphin's inner circle opposed her, which led to her being examined by a tribunal of theologians. Though illiterate, she passed the exam. This finally convinced the Dauphin to give her command of his army (she was three years younger than Alexander the Great

when he took command). To the amazement of all, she lifted the British siege at Orleans, giving France its first significant victory in memory. She followed this triumph with a string of victories, which gave the Dauphin the confidence to have himself crowned King of France. She urged the King to let her attack Paris, but he delayed at the advice of his inner circle causing the French to lose momentum. Captured outside the walls of Compiegne, The Burgundians sold her to the British, though Charles could have easily ransomed her according to custom. A horrible ordeal and mockery of a trial followed where she displayed boundless loyalty.

Joan's captivity was cruel, particularly after she attempted to escape and was recaptured outside the gates at Rouen. Bishop Cauchon, who led the trial against her, was a ruthless and ambitious man who served British interests. She was interrogated by a group of theologians from the University of Paris, and once again astounded her interlocutors with her theological knowledge. Alone, and under duress to recant her visions after several months of mistreatment, she submitted to sign a document she couldn't read but later publicly disavowed the signature maintaining loyalty to her mission. It was not enough to save her, and she achieved her martyrdom by being burnt at the stake, after forgiving one of the priests who had persecuted her and had heard her confession while Bishop Cauchon secretly listened.

Several years after her death, Charles VII having found better advisors and some courage, took Paris from the British and their allies. In 1456, at Charles' behest, her conviction was investigated by the Church, overturned, and she was rehabilitated. In 1909, she was beatified and in 1920 canonized as a Saint.

Both Antigone and Joan demonstrated loyalty to loyalty in that both inspired loyalty in others. Antigone certainly had that effect on Royce as the quotes

above demonstrate. Arguably she served as a muse of loyalty to him, along with the Civil War, one of the things that most greatly inspired his philosophy of loyalty. Joan inspired an entire nation, as the heroine of France. Unfortunately, she didn't appear to have inspired loyalty in Charles. Twain attributed Charles' launching her rehabilitation to noting the impropriety of his being crowned by someone executed for heresy and sorcery. Although it took half a millennium, she inspired loyalty in the Church to not only admit the grave error of her trial and execution, but also to recognize that she was indeed a saint.

Although Royce did not recognize it, Antigone fell short in some aspects of loyalty to loyalty. She was cruel to Ismene both at the beginning of the play by harshly criticizing her for not taking part in the burial and by refusing to accept her later attempt at solidarity. Even had she not permitted Ismene to lie about having helped bury Polyneices, she could have said something to comfort her sister who had finally come around. Likewise, she failed to appreciate Creon's misguided loyalty toward Thebes, which he loved beyond all else. Her hatred of Creon blinded her to the possibility of compromise. Perhaps she could have begged for her brother and suggested a penalty of exile for herself. She could have asked her fiancé to intervene. By openly defying Creon, she gave him little choice.

Joan fared better overall in this regard. She treated prisoners well and the Churchmen who tormented her with more respect than Antigone showed Creon without compromising her mission. Notably, she was loyal to Charles even though he did not deserve it. She obviously knew he was a coward, but God wanted this coward to be King of France and France to be free. She also greatly inspired loyalty in Mark Twain, who found her to be "by far the most extraordinary person the human race has ever produced." He thus devoted years of his life to the cause of studying her life, trying to understand what made her so different, and telling her story to millions.

Both women suffered greatly for their loyalty to their causes. Antigone, although her fate was sealed by her bold and unrepentant confession to Creon, later in the play expresses regret for the loss of the marriage bed and motherhood. She goes as far as to say that she would not have done the same thing for a husband or child because she could always marry again or have another child. But because her parents were dead, she would never have another brother. She hangs herself in the chamber. Was this an expression of despair or defiance? It's not possible to say. Ancient Greek attitudes toward suicide varied. Certainly, she didn't plead for her life-thus her loyalty to her cause, in the end, remained intact.

Joan also suffered horribly during her captivity and her trial. After her escape she was caged and chained. She underwent four separate trials being grilled day after day by learned but dishonest men, amazing them with her answers. Bishop Cauchon threatened her with the rack and excommunication from the church. Her requests for an appeal to the Pope were ignored. She had no counsel to assist her in front of as many as 50 questioners. Her trial was such a sham that years later at her rehabilitation, the testimony of some of the judges who had condemned her did not impede her vindication.

Royce lived in a very different cultural and historical period from that in which Sophocles wrote his plays and in which Joan lived. Royce lived in a highly individualistic, largely Protestant society in which the bonds of family were beginning to loosen and ambitious people sought to make their own destinies. Sophocles wrote about a cursed family, fated for disaster. Joan sought to do God's will to free France as a faithful Catholic fighting against other Catholics. She would have believed herself to be technically free to disregard her mission but would have been horrified at the thought of doing so. One can reasonably ask whether applying a Roycean loyalty analysis makes sense in circumstances so different from which he inhabited.

In regard to Antigone, one first has to understand what is meant by fate as the ancient Greeks understood it. Classics scholar E. R. Dodds argues that the notion of fate does not imply that people are puppets or robots, but applies to the overall trajectory of their lives, not necessarily to single acts. The Greek mind of that time saw no contradiction between free will and being fated to a destiny one cannot avoid. In a sense, this stance bears partial similarity to the idea of single predestination in Catholicism where God who exists outside of time and has access to all times simultaneously knows the free choices people will make without dictating them.

Thus, Antigone, although part of a doomed lineage, acts as a free moral agent in deciding to risk her life by burying her brother. Likewise, Creon, Jocasta, Haemon, and Oedipus himself. Though fated, her loyalty was real. Grown from the little girl who led her blind father by the hand, she could have but would do nothing else, so intense was her loyalty. A Roycean analysis fits well here.

Although her recognition was delayed, Joan was a Catholic saint who received extraordinary graces to carry out her mission. Royce has an unusual doctrine of grace. For him, grace is power one receives to be loyal from the Beloved Community of loyalty. The graces Joan received enabled her to display astonishing virtues that amazed a die-hard cynic like Twain. Catholicism teaches that there are ordinary virtues that people can exhibit naturally, and a second, higher level of virtues called the theological virtues that require God's assistance . By the aid of grace, even the natural virtues are transformed in the Christian, termed infused virtues that have salvation as their end, not ordinary human goodness. This enables the saint to do things for God that an ordinary person would be unable to even consider. Joan was one such person as evidenced by her complete devotion, rather voluntary absorption into the cause God had given her.

Royce's ethics of loyalty comprised two levels, the individual and the higher communal level which could lend itself to an analysis of someone like Joan. Royce allows that someone might show loyalty to a community that has badly lost its way by rebelling against it. But Joan exceeded this by not rebelling against a community that had lost its way, but by demonstrating martyrdom not by her Church's enemies, but by errant officials of the Church itself. In her victimhood, she modeled Christ in his maltreatment by religious leaders of his age.

Given the incredible witness to loyalty Joan gave and her increased renown during Royce's lifetime, one wonders why Royce didn't comment on her. One suspects it was a bridge too far. Royce's view of Christianity was a bit off center. He idolized the Pauline Churches and Paul's development of Christian doctrine, but, as Professor Clendenning notes, never reconciled himself to 1 Corinthians 15. Paul was always an intensely loyal person, both as a Pharisee and as a Christian. He was happy and unconflicted persecuting Christians until an encounter with the risen Christ rocked his world. Paul would have been the first to tell Royce that if Christ had not physically risen, loyalty to the Church would have been ridiculous. But acceptance of the physical, historical resurrection was something about which Royce hedged.

If the resurrection of a Jewish carpenter 1900 years previously was too much for Royce, the appearance of an angel and saints to a French farm girl who commanded a nation's army at 17 only 500 years before was likely much too much. (One wonders if Royce had lived another two years what he would have made of Fatima.) It was easier to idolize a mythical figure than deal with a flesh and blood saint. But if Royce blinked, we shouldn't be too hard on him. The Church blinked too for half a millennium.

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