

Patriotism as Bad Faith*

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Most people think that patriotism is a virtue. That, at least, is what is suggested by a quick glance at the political world and the popular media in this and similar countries.¹ Politicians constitute an extreme case—I think that many of them would rather be called cowardly or selfish or corrupt than unpatriotic—but their case is odd only for its extremity.² In everyday life, it seems as though you are usually offering a compliment when you call someone a patriot and as though patriotism is usually thought to be something that we should foster in our children and ourselves. Patriotism, in the popular imagination, may not quite rank alongside kindness, justice, temperance, and the like, but it is a virtue nonetheless; it is a character trait that the ideal person would possess.

Recent philosophical discussions of patriotism have usually been framed by the debate over universalism and communitarianism. Universalism—sometimes called “liberal universalism,” and closely related to cosmopolitanism—is the view that many of the most important ethical judgments are ideally made from an impartial, detached perspective,

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1. I am writing in the United States and thinking of other English-speaking countries with which I am familiar, such as Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. In some other parts of the world, I am told, the epithet “patriotic” is not so likely to be taken as a compliment.

2. In 2001, the U.S. Congress passed a bill called the USA PATRIOT Act. Even though “USA PATRIOT” is an acronym (for “Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism”), it was said that some members of Congress were reluctant to oppose the bill for fear of looking unpatriotic.

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free of particular allegiances.³ Universalists believe that it is possible and often desirable to form ethical judgments not as a member of a particular community but, rather, from the point of view of a neutral and unencumbered observer—simply as one human among many, perhaps, or as a bare rational agent.

Communitarians believe that ethical judgments are properly made from within a tradition, or a community, or a structure of social roles and allegiances.⁴ It is a mistake, on this way of looking at things, to expect us to ignore our membership in communities when making ethical judgments. A communitarian is likely to regard as perfectly natural and desirable those moral judgments that are essentially made as a member of this or that community.

The contemporary philosophical debate about patriotism can be represented by a cast of three. First, there is the *communitarian patriot*, whose view is classically presented in Alasdair MacIntyre's article, "Is Patriotism a Virtue?" and whose answer to that question is "Yes!" Someone who lacks a patriotic commitment to his country, says the communitarian patriot, is alienated from the embedded perspective that makes ethics possible and is hence ethically deficient; patriotism is not just a virtue, but a central virtue.

At the other extreme is the *hard universalist*, represented in articles

3. For a classic statement of liberal universalism, see part 1 of John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971). Cosmopolitanism is the view that humans' most morally salient characteristics are those connected with their shared humanity; within a cosmopolitan ethical outlook, distinctions are not drawn on the basis of nationality or country of origin. See A. John Simmons, "Human Rights and World Citizenship: The Universality of Human Rights in Kant and Locke," in *Justification and Legitimacy: Essays on Rights and Obligations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 179–96; Martha C. Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," published along with numerous replies in *For Love of Country?* (Boston: Beacon, 2002); and Catherine Lu, "The One and Many Faces of Cosmopolitanism," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8 (2000): 244–67.

4. The version of communitarianism sketched here follows that articulated by Alasdair MacIntyre in "Is Patriotism a Virtue?" the E. H. Lindley Lecture, University of Kansas, 1984, reprinted in *Patriotism*, ed. Igor Primoratz (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2002), 43–58 (future page references are to the Primoratz edition). See also Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). I should note that the label "communitarianism" may be a little problematic. For one thing, it seems to have gone out of fashion. For another, the relevant view that is of interest in debates about patriotism may be a little different from the view regarded as "communitarian" in other contexts. I am using the term mainly for dialectical purposes. So far as the debate over patriotism is concerned, the communitarian camp can be taken to include not only those explicitly engaged in communitarian political philosophy but also many others who take local identity and particularity to play an essential role in good ethical thought. For example, in Nussbaum, *For Love of Country?* see Robert Pinsky, "Eros against Esperanto" (85–90); and Hilary Putnam, "Must We Choose between Patriotism and Universal Reason?" (91–97).

like Paul Gomberg's "Patriotism Is Like Racism."⁵ The patriot favors one country and one group of people over others, and such favoritism, says the hard universalist, is abhorrent; no one is inherently more valuable than anyone else, just in virtue of being a citizen of one country rather than another.⁶ In the eyes of the hard universalist, patriotism is hence a vice.

Between the communitarian patriot and the hard universalist lies the *soft universalist*.⁷ Soft universalism is perhaps the most popular view among philosophers; it is given very clear expression in Marcia Baron's "Patriotism and 'Liberal' Morality."⁸ The soft universalist's claim is that a good universalist can also be a patriot, in some attenuated sense at least. Patriotic loyalty, on this way of seeing things, can be consistent with the ethical judgments that are correctly made from the neutral point of view; perhaps individuals are able, in the right circumstances, to have special loyalties to their own countries while still meeting the broader obligations that are evident from the neutral point of view. While the soft universalist might be reluctant to classify patriotism as a virtue, he at least thinks that it is not a vice. You might not be obliged to be a patriot, says the soft universalist, but it is allowed.⁹

One reason why the debate over patriotism is a site for the debate between universalists and communitarians is that it is taken to be an illuminating case study, displaying the differing approaches taken by universalists and communitarians to loyalties in general. Some think that it is wrong to try to save your mother rather than a stranger from drowning, when the chances of saving the stranger are slightly higher, but most think that a preference for your mother in such a circumstance is justifiable, even required. But if it is wrong to favor someone just

5. Paul Gomberg, "Patriotism Is Like Racism," *Ethics* 101 (1990): 144–50.

6. As Nussbaum puts it, "What is it about the national boundary that magically converts people toward whom we are both incurious and indifferent into people to whom we have duties of mutual respect?" ("Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," 14).

7. My distinction between the communitarian patriot and the soft universalist is similar to David McCabe's distinction between the "hard patriot" and the "soft patriot." See McCabe, "Patriotic Gore, Again," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 35 (1997): 203–23.

8. Marcia Baron, "Patriotism and 'Liberal' Morality," in *Mind, Value and Culture: Essays in Honor of E. M. Adams*, ed. David Weissbord (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 1989), 269–300. Reprinted with modifications in Primoratz, *Patriotism*, 59–86 (future page references are to the Primoratz edition). See also Stephen Nathanson, *Patriotism, Morality and Peace* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993).

9. For a nice statement of this last point, see Igor Primoratz, "Patriotism: Morally Allowed, Required, or Valuable?" in *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict: Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Nenad Miscevic (Chicago: Open Court, 2000), 101–13, reprinted in Primoratz, *Patriotism*, 187–99. See also Igor Primoratz, "Patriotism: Mundane and Ethical," *Croatian Journal of Philosophy* 4 (2004): 83–100; and the postscript to Baron's "Patriotism and 'Liberal' Morality."

because she is your compatriot, is it not also wrong to favor someone just because she is your mother? If we cannot place patriotism on solid philosophical ground, then won't we have to regard loyalties to family, romantic partners, and friends as equally problematic? That is certainly what many philosophers seem to think. The hard universalist is thought to face embarrassment, or at least the need to bite some bullets, when it comes to loyalty in general. The fate of soft universalism is thought to bear heavily upon the question of whether it is possible to be a universalist without disparaging special moral relationships of all sorts.

It is worth giving further emphasis to the closeness of the analogy that philosophers see between patriotism and other loyalties. MacIntyre treats patriotism as "one of a class of loyalty-exhibiting virtues (that is, if it is a virtue at all), other members of which are marital fidelity, the love of one's own family and kin, friendship, and loyalty to such institutions as schools and cricket or baseball clubs."¹⁰ Andrew Oldenquist uses the image of the person sitting at the center of a number of concentric circles, each of which represents a domain of individuals to whom the person feels a loyalty; close to her is a circle representing loyalty to family, much further out is a circle representing loyalty to species, and somewhere in between is a circle representing patriotic loyalty to country.¹¹ Baron's defense of universalist patriotism is embedded in a general theory about how universalism can be squared with a person's favoritism for her own family and friends.¹² And so on.¹³ While it is often admitted that there are more and less extreme forms of patriotism, it is generally accepted that patriotism is an attitude of essentially the same type as our loyalties to family, friends, and the rest, just with a different object.

In the first part of this article, I will dispute that analogy. I will lay out some ways in which loyalties differ and give reasons to think that patriotism is in certain ways unlike other familiar kinds of loyalty. In the second part of the article, I will try to show that the differences between patriotism and other loyalties are of ethical consequence. More precisely, I will argue that patriotism, properly understood, involves a disposition to fall into a kind of bad faith and that this is a reason to think that patriotism is certainly not a virtue and is probably a vice. If I am right, then it is possible to demonstrate the undesirability of patriotism without taking a stand in the debate between universalists and

10. MacIntyre, "Is Patriotism a Virtue?" 44, italics MacIntyre's.

11. Andrew Oldenquist, "Loyalties," *Journal of Philosophy* 79 (1982): 173–93 (see 179–80).

12. Baron, "Patriotism and 'Liberal' Morality," 70.

13. See also Sissela Bok, "From Part to Whole" (38–44), and Michael C. McConnell, "Don't Neglect the Little Platoons" (78–84), both in Nussbaum, *For Love of Country?*

communitarians and without implying anything implausible about the ethical status of other loyalties and allegiances.

I. WHAT IS PATRIOTISM?

A. *The Question*

A patriot loves, and is loyal to, his own country.¹⁴ In this first part of the article, I am going to make some claims about how the kinds of love and loyalty involved in patriotism differ from other forms of love and loyalty. It cannot be doubted, though, that patriotism can mean different things to people of different times, places, and political inclinations.¹⁵ So what is the point, we might ask, in trying to defend some single account of what patriotism really is? Well, it is not my intention just to stipulate a meaning for "patriotism" or to fight over the use of a word. I aim rather to articulate a conception of patriotism that most of us recognize and share, one that captures the notion of patriotism that dominates in public discourse nowadays. (And it is worth noting that most all of what I say by way of characterizing our ordinary notion of patriotism would be accepted by most philosophers who have written about it.) While I think that the story I am about to tell reflects ordinary thought closely enough to be regarded as the correct story about patriotism *simpliciter*, I am not trying to rule out the possibility that there are other ways in which the term can be and has been understood, nor the possibility that it would really be better if we started using it in some different way.¹⁶ In any case, I think that disagreements over the exact meaning of "patriotism" will not have much of a bearing on the basic argument to come. I will have more to say about this later.

B. *Choice*

Understanding the nature of some kinds of loyalty involves understanding that the loyalty involved is given by choice and could be transferred to some other object should the subject so decide. Consider, for example, the loyalty that you might have for a political candidate, where you support him not because he grew up on your block or for his raw sexual magnetism, but for his political platform. Typically, in such a case

14. Without really meaning anything by it, I am going to use the terms "love" and "loyalty" almost interchangeably. My real interest is in loyalty; I am not going to talk about cases in which you can love something (like a pop star or a teacher or a piece of art) without showing it loyalty.

15. See Mary G. Dietz, "Patriotism: A Brief History of the Term," in Primoratz, *Patriotism*, 201–15; and sec. 1 of Pauline Kleingeld, "Kantian Patriotism," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 29 (2000): 313–41.

16. So I have no objection to philosophers (like Kleingeld in "Kantian Patriotism" or Oldenquist in sec. 4 of "Loyalties") who, to ethical or political or analytic ends, advocate various ways of refining or clarifying our ordinary notion.

you have a number of candidates to whom you could give your support, and you find a way of deciding between them. Should you judge that your candidate has changed or failed, or should there be a change in your own political opinions, then you have the option of shifting your loyalty to a different candidate.

Other forms of loyalty, like the loyalty that people characteristically have for their parents, are not in this respect subject to choice. This is not to say that you have no option but to be loyal to your parents but, rather, that you cannot choose who is to be the object of your filial loyalty, if anyone is. The only people to whom you can show filial loyalty are your parents (or those who play that institutional role), and you do not, exceptional cases aside, get to decide which people are your parents (or play that role).

In this regard, patriotism is similar to filial loyalty and different from loyalty to a political candidate, because you cannot, in standard cases, decide which country is your own. There might be exceptions. Perhaps when Robert E. Lee was deciding whether to take command of the Union army or the Confederate army, he was deciding whether to be a Northern or a Southern patriot; perhaps someone who has a certain sort of upbringing can find herself able to decide whether to be (say) French or American; and perhaps it is possible for (say) an American to take steps—immigration, naturalization, enculturation—that will eventually lead to her becoming the sort of person who could be (say) a French patriot. Such cases, though, are not representative. An individual who asks herself, “Should I be a patriot?” does not typically face the further question, “If so, then of which country?”¹⁷

C. Loyalties Derived and Nonderived

Some loyalties are derived from different, more fundamental loyalties. Your loyalty to a political candidate might be derived from a more fundamental loyalty to certain values and principles, or from a more fundamental loyalty to the candidate’s party. You might be loyal to a particular brand of toothpaste because of your deeper loyalty to your hometown, which is where the toothpaste is made. You might maintain your loyalty to the Red Sox out of loyalty to your father, with whom you used to go to the games.

Other loyalties are what we might call nonderived or “first-level”

17. Kleingeld distinguishes three types of patriotism. The one that she is most interested in defending is “civic patriotism”—a state’s citizens’ “love of their shared political freedom and the institutions that sustain it”—and she says that a person could, in principle, transfer his civic patriotism from one state to another (“Kantian Patriotism,” 317). I think that love of this sort falls short of what we would ordinarily regard as patriotic love, in part just because it is so easily transferable.

loyalties, or loyalties “in the first instance,” meaning that that there are no deeper loyalties of which they can informatively be regarded as manifestations. Loyalties to moral principles might be nonderived loyalties. Often, the loyalties of fans to sports teams are nonderived. My love for the Geelong Football Club is not an expression of my deeper love for something else and does not depend essentially on any value or principle that the club represents; I just find myself loving and caring about the club for its own sake. And filial loyalty, again, is an obvious case of a loyalty that tends to be nonderived. There is just no answer to the question, “In virtue of which more fundamental loyalty do you love your mother?” So far as a hierarchy of loyalties is concerned, this is a place where explanation bottoms out.

Love of country could be derived. Your love of Nepal may stem from your love of climbing, your love of Switzerland from your love of cheese, your love of America from your love of freedom. As philosophers have often pointed out, however, something important about patriotism is missing from loves like these.¹⁸ What is missing is the importance of the patriot’s country being *her* country. Anyone who loves cheese, whether a Swiss native or not, can love Switzerland for its cheese. And being Swiss, loving cheese, and recognizing that Switzerland has great cheeses is not enough to make you a Swiss patriot.¹⁹ It is not as though the patriot has some preexisting set of values—endorsed from a perspective that is free of allegiances to this country or that—and then determines that these values are, fortunately enough, manifested or represented by her own country. Patriotic love for country—unlike some other forms of love for country, including some forms of love for your own country—is not just a manifestation of loyalty to an independently endorsed ideal. To some extent, the patriot’s loyalty to her country is grounded in its being *her* country. A patriot is loyal to her country in the first instance, not in virtue of a deeper loyalty to something else.

D. Seriousness

There is a kind of seriousness that is involved in some loyalties but not others. If a loyalty of yours is serious, as I will use the word, then it can demand that you make significant sacrifices for the sake of its object; that you show its object a genuine, nonironic reverence; and that you allow that loyalty to have some force when making some morally weighty

18. See, e.g., MacIntyre, “Is Patriotism a Virtue?” 44; and Igor Primoratz’s “Introduction” to *Patriotism*, 10–12. Kleingeld might have a contrasting view. One of the types of patriotism that she discusses, “trait-based patriotism,” does appear to be, in the relevant sense, derived (“Kantian Patriotism,” 320–22).

19. Note that the point here is not to do with whether or not Switzerland is the only country with good cheeses to offer. Even if it were, a love of Switzerland that was derived from a love of cheese would not be patriotic love.

decisions. Some examples, by now familiar, might make the distinction clearer.

I am, as I say, a lover of the Geelong Football Club. My loyalty to the club is passionate, and I allow it to have a significant impact upon my life. The money I spend on club membership and going to the games, the time I spend following news of the club, the impact that the club's performance has upon my mood, are considerable. But my loyalty to Geelong is not serious, in the sense in question. I am not about to insist upon standing to attention during the playing of the club song, I am not going to compromise friendships for the sake of the club, and I do not think that my loyalty to the club could ever require me to commit acts of violence or enormous self-sacrifice.²⁰

Loyalty to a parent, however, is often serious. You might make enormous sacrifices for your parents, take your obligations to them to have a serious moral dimension (you might tell lies or break rules to keep them out of trouble), and show them a reverence that—without extending to singing an anthem or saluting a flag—is certainly not ironic or self-conscious. And all of this may be true even though your non-serious loyalty to a football club is in a sense more passionate and takes up more of your energy than your filial loyalty. The kind of seriousness of loyalties that I am trying to bring out here does not necessarily go along with intensity.

Patriotism, as it is usually understood, characteristically presents itself as a serious loyalty. You can show your patriotism by standing during the national anthem, wearing your country's flag on your lapel or your backpack—in general, by showing an unironic reverence for your country. Patriotism is often cited (or appealed to) as a reason why you do (or should) make significant sacrifices for your country. Many people take patriotism to involve a preparedness, under extreme circumstances, to kill or die for your country; it is at any rate difficult to imagine someone who is a genuine patriot but takes her loyalty to country to generate no morally weighty reasons at all.²¹ Patriotism is a serious matter, in a way in which some other loyalties—my loyalty to Geelong, for example—are not.

20. Some loyalties to sports teams are serious, in the relevant sense. There are those who do insist on saluting the flags of their teams, and those who kill and die standing up for their football clubs. My own view is that these people are obviously, depressingly, taking things too far.

21. As Nathanson puts it, patriotic loyalty generates "a willingness to act on the country's behalf, even if this requires some sacrifice. . . . A person who merely professed these attitudes but was unwilling to act on them would be a hypocrite, not a patriot" (*Patriotism, Morality and Peace*, 35).

E. Justification

Sometimes we are asked to justify our loyalties or to give reasons why we love the things we do. Whether or not we are good at providing such justifications, there are many loyalties of which we tend to think it important that justifications are in principle available. Let me sketch three ways in which we might respond to a demand that a loyalty be justified and say something about the kinds of loyalties with regard to which each kind of response seems appropriate.

First, you might try to justify a loyalty to something by appealing to some of its characteristics, none of which has to do with its particular relationship to you. Asked to justify your allegiance to a presidential candidate, for example, it may be appropriate or required for you to try to cite features of the candidate that make him objectively the best candidate: not the best for you or the best from your perspective, but the just plain best.²² That is to say that you take there to be reasons why anyone, aligned or not, should support your candidate. To put it another way, you think that the force of the justification for your loyalty could be felt even from a perspective at which you were uninformed of your particular qualities and relations to others—from the neutral point of view.

Second, you might try to list characteristics whose value could be appreciated from the neutral point of view, without going so far as to say that their existence makes it true that everyone should share your loyalty. To hear the full story about why your loyalty is justified, we have to understand that its object has valuable features but also something about its particular relation to you.

Loyalties to friends are arguably of the type for which this second kind of justification is appropriate.²³ We like to be able to say what it is about our friends that makes them good people to have as friends; I might mention your sense of humor, your brutal honesty and your generosity, presenting these as characteristics that are attractive in themselves, not just because you happen to have them. But the suggestion is not that I would be friends with anyone who had those qualities or that everyone has good reason to be your friend. Part of what justifies my being your friend is the relationship in which we happen to stand.

22. I do not mean to suggest that this is the kind of justification that is always demanded of those who support political candidates. You might well be justified in supporting a candidate because she best represents the interests of your particular community or because she is your mother.

23. This is of course a tough and much-discussed philosophical topic, and I do not pretend to add anything to it here. But I think that the idea about explaining friendly loyalties is clear enough for illustrative purposes. A good place to look for more on this topic is in the papers in *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Neera Kapur Badhwar (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

Perhaps we share a certain history, or are similar in certain ways, or just happen to click. Such considerations work perfectly well as components of my justification, even though they would not be compelling from the neutral point of view.

Finally, the best justification for a loyalty may make no mention at all of characteristics that look valuable from the neutral point of view. If I ask you to justify your love for your father, there might be plenty of wonderful things about him that you could mention. Probably, though, none of those things is essential to your caring about him in the way that you do. You can love your father without holding him in high esteem, without believing him to be a particularly worthy person. Even if you think that your father is cruel or hopeless or pitiable, you can still love him and still be prepared to make enormous sacrifices for his sake. The most accurate justification of your love (or explanation of why there is no need for a justification) may be simply, "He's my father."

This explanation should not be taken to imply that you would love your father "no matter what." If you discovered that he was not the man you thought he was—that he was a pathological liar or Nazi collaborator or ax murderer—you might no longer love him. So your love might not be unconditional, exactly. Neither is it the case, however, that your love for your father is explained or justified by, or grounded in, his having characteristics like "not being an ax murderer." When it comes to understanding your loyalty, it is not very informative to cite properties like those. "He's my father" is about as informative and phenomenologically accurate as it gets.

To what extent, then, is a patriot's loyalty to country grounded in, or to be explained by, characteristics of the country that she regards as having value from the neutral point of view? To what extent does loyalty to country have to make reference to such characteristics, in order to count as patriotism?

F. Patriotism and the Qualities of a Country

There is a conception of patriotism according to which it necessarily involves the belief that your country is, objectively, the best or has features that make it superior to all others.²⁴ Baron recommends a way of thinking about patriotism that, she says, "certainly does not accord with the usual ways of thinking about it in our culture," because it does not

24. Consider the definition of patriotism commonly attributed to George Bernard Shaw (and probably intended more to annoy than to analyze): "Patriotism is your conviction that this country is superior to all other countries because you were born in it." (This version of the quotation is taken from Eugene E. Brussel, ed., *Webster's New World Dictionary of Quotable Definitions*, 2nd ed. [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1988].)

require that the patriot see her own country as superior.²⁵ There are some circles within which it seems to be thought that the way to express your patriotism is to say that yours is the greatest or freest or most beautiful country of all and that someone who said that some different country was a bit better than his would have his patriotism questioned.

We should step back, though, from the idea that being a patriot means taking your own country to be the one that everyone has most reason to admire or that looks most valuable from the neutral point of view. Someone who said, for example, "I don't think that my own country is by any means the best. There are others I could name that are more beautiful, have greater histories, and stand more resolutely for what is right. But there are many wonderful things about my country, and it's certainly on the whole a good country, so I'm proud to call it my own," could, surely, properly count himself a patriot.

Even the belief that your country is on the whole a good country, however, might not be a requirement of patriotism. There are dissidents who count themselves as patriotic, even while making broad condemnations of their own countries, and who indeed see themselves as expressing their patriotism through their very concern that their countries become better than they are. This is what we might call patriotic dissent, and it is not the same thing as just plain dissent. Distinctively patriotic dissent is made such by its appeal to qualities that the dissenter takes to be central to the identity of the country, but that she thinks it to be losing or ignoring or showing insufficient respect.

Where the (just plain) dissident might say, "This policy needs to be changed, because it does not respect the rule of law, and the rule of law should be respected," the patriotic dissident might add, "and what makes it especially important that we change the policy is that our country represents and is built upon respect for the rule of law. If we abandon that principle, then we abandon an aspect of our very identity; we cease to be the country that I recognize and love." Cicero and the patriotic dissidents of late Roman times, for example, attacked their country for failing to live up to its glorious past. Patriotic American dissidents in the sixties complained that America was not being true to the values of freedom and equal rights that lie at its heart. In counting patriotic dissidents as patriots, we are counting those who say things like, "There are some wonderful things about my country, but those things are being outweighed or overlooked in ways that make my country, on the whole, a pretty awful one at present. As one who understands what is truly valuable about this country, it is my patriotic duty to speak out against its present state."

While the patriotic dissident might be reluctant to say that her

25. Baron, "Patriotism and 'Liberal' Morality," 77.

country is on the whole a good one, her patriotism does make reference to characteristics of her country that she regards as genuinely, objectively valuable and as playing an important role in making that country what it is. And this, I want to suggest, is a necessary condition for patriotism. Truly patriotic loyalty is entangled with a conception of the beloved country as having certain valuable characteristics, characteristics that make it, in some minimal way at least, genuinely worthy of patriotic loyalty. Patriotism, on the common understanding of the notion, always takes itself to be grounded in the relevant country's possession of certain specified, reasonably determinate qualities that the patriot takes to be genuinely valuable and to make a nontrivial contribution to the country's identity.²⁶

One way of grasping this point is to think about how a patriot would respond to the invitation, "Describe your country for me. What is it like?" My suggestion is that when a patriot answers this question—when she expresses her characterization of her own country or her beliefs about what are its most central or defining characteristics—she must call upon some properties that she takes to be good properties for a country to possess. When the patriot thinks about what it is that she loves, or what it is that grounds her loyalty, she must have in mind something that she takes to have value from the neutral point of view. In this respect, patriotic love differs from the love that people characteristically have for their parents. It is missing the point to cite your parents' wonderful characteristics in explaining why you love them, because there are no particular features of your parents (of the type that count as having objective value) in which your love for them is essentially grounded. Not so, I claim, for patriotic love.

Let me say what this rules out. First, it rules out statements like this: "I am a true, genuine patriot, but there is nothing much that I like about my country; there is nothing important about my country for which I feel any affection." Someone who said such a thing would be speaking very strangely. That is not to say that it is impossible to be loyal to your own country without taking it to have certain kinds of valuable characteristics, just that such loyalty would not count as patriotism. Rian Malan's book *My Traitor's Heart* is an account of the apartheid years in

26. For a summary and endorsement of this criterion as presented in the philosophical literature, see Primoratz's "Introduction" to *Patriotism*, especially 10–12. Nathanson may disagree with this claim, though I am not sure. His "moderate patriotism" is defined as involving affection, identification, concern, and a willingness to make sacrifices; he doesn't specifically say that it must attribute any particular valuable qualities to the country (*Patriotism, Morality and Peace*, chap. 3). He does, however, think that moderate patriotism can be deserved or undeserved by a country, depending upon the country's moral characteristics, and that the moderate patriot takes his country to truly deserve patriotic loyalty (chap. 10).

South Africa, told by a white Afrikaner who has come to believe that his country is cruel, paranoid, and violent and that its national project is rotten to the core.²⁷ While Malan regards South Africa with a distaste that sometimes seems very much like hatred, he displays a deep personal concern for his country—a concern that he does not hold toward any but his own South Africa. Malan might even love South Africa, but it would be an odd use of language to call him a South African patriot. His feelings for his country are not patriotic feelings. His book could not have been called *My Patriotic Heart*.²⁸

I want to harp on this point a little. The classic appeal to Athenian patriotism in Pericles' funeral oration moves seamlessly between claims that Athens is ours and claims that Athens is great.²⁹ If I tell you that a children's book called *America: A Patriotic Primer* has recently been published, I have said enough for you to confidently infer that it does not comprise anguished acknowledgments of the poor treatment of Native Americans, black slaves, or Vietnamese villagers.³⁰ If I tell you that we are about to be treated to a patriotic discourse or to attend a patriotic event, then you know that what is to come will involve some praise of our country's qualities. The point is not, of course, that this is all that patriotism can be but, rather, that patriotism is a kind of love for country that makes reference to, or latches onto, aspects of a country that are taken to merit pride or approval or affection or reverence. Without that, you don't have patriotism.

The characterization of patriotism that I am offering also rules out the putative patriotism that latches onto features of a country that are, by the patriot's own admission, of only peripheral importance when it comes to understanding what the country really is. Someone who says, "When I think of what my country really is and what it really stands for, I feel only contempt or indifference—but it does have some very nice

27. Rian Malan, *My Traitor's Heart* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990).

28. Baron thinks it acceptable to have a "patriotism" that is characteristically expressed as "a greater (and qualitatively different) concern for the flourishing of one's own country than for that of any other" ("Patriotism and 'Liberal' Morality," 75). In describing that concern, Baron gives a convincing portrayal of a feeling that many of us—including, I think, Rian Malan—have for our own countries, and which I take to be in many ways analogous to the concern that we have for our parents. But it is not, as Baron herself suggests on 76–77, the feeling that people normally have in mind when they speak of patriotism. See also chap. 15 of Nathanson's *Patriotism, Morality and Peace*. I return to this issue at the end of Sec. II.D.

29. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, bk. 2.

30. Lynne Cheney, *America: A Patriotic Primer* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002).

lakes, for which I feel genuine affection," is a lover of his country's lakes, not a patriot.³¹

Also ruled out is the possibility of a patriot who takes his country to have valuable characteristics but has no particular beliefs about what they are. This is an odd case, but what I have in mind is someone who says this: "I love my country, and I take it to be characterized by qualities that merit my pride and affection. I cannot say what they are, but there must surely be some; at the heart of every country there are *some* valuable characteristics. My patriotism is grounded in the valuable defining features of my country, whatever they are." And my claim rules out the possibility of a patriot whose patriotism is grounded not in his country's having positive characteristics, but in its lacking negative ones. Here, I am thinking of someone who is speaking literally when she says something like, "The things I love about my country are these. It wasn't the aggressor in World War II, it has never dropped a nuclear bomb, and isn't home to any poisonous spiders."

The reason why it is difficult to see the people we just met as patriots is that they betray no determinate conception of their countries as ones that merit loyalty; none betrays a special conception of what his country is. Patriotism is tied up with a fairly well articulated picture of the beloved country, one that includes its having specified valuable features.

G. My Country, Right or Wrong?

I think that my claim about how a patriot must view his own country accords with our ordinary understanding of the notion and with most of what philosophers have said about it. It may appear, however, to be out of line with one popular expression of patriotism: the slogan, "My country, right or wrong!" From my experience of talking to people about this slogan, there is a good deal less agreement about its meaning than you would initially expect. I will quickly mention some of the ways in which the slogan might be understood and say how I think they each relate to the attitudes constitutive of patriotism.

Sometimes the slogan is taken to mean, "I'll support what my country does, whether I think it's right or wrong." Sometimes, it is taken to mean, "Right and wrong are not my concerns, I'm just concerned with standing up for my country." Either of these statements is consistent

31. The same is true of someone whose loyalty is not really to a country, but to a city or region. You might think that London is wonderful, but Britain is not; that is not love of country but love of city. This case, however, needs to be contrasted in turn with a love of country that is expressed through a love of a city or region. Someone who loves London (because she takes it to be wonderful in particular respects) and believes furthermore that London (so characterized) encapsulates all the great things about Britain, or represents the real Britain, could thereby be a patriot. She is attributing valuable qualities to Britain, not just to London.

with (though not, of course, required by) patriotism as I have painted it. It is indeed overwhelmingly likely that someone who made either of these statements would be able to say just what it is about his country that makes it merit such devotion; this would involve pointing to certain valuable characteristics of the country, even if not characteristics like "always being right."

Sometimes the slogan is taken to have the meaning it takes when placed in the context of the famous remark of Carl Schurz: "My country right or wrong; if right, to be kept right; and if wrong, to be set right." (Note that this is evidently not where the shorter slogan originates. Schurz was responding to a senator from Wisconsin, who was apparently taunting him by saying, "My country, right or wrong.")³² This version of the slogan expresses an intention to support the moral flourishing of a country, regardless of its starting point. If the speaker's reason for making such a commitment is that she sees valuable features of her country that make its flourishing particularly worth striving for, then she could well be expressing her patriotism through the slogan, on my account. And I think it most likely that someone who utters the slogan with this meaning would indeed have such considerations in mind; even if the country concerned needs setting right rather than keeping right, there is a feeling of hopefulness and enthusiasm in the slogan that suggests that there is something about the country that makes it capable and worthy of redemption. (The mood of *My Traitor's Heart* is not one in which the slogan would likely be uttered.)

Still, there might be cases under which someone would endorse the slogan simply in light of the country's being her country. This is consistent with her being thoroughly disgusted with and ashamed of her country, with her thinking that there is nothing important to recommend it at all. And that, for reasons I have discussed, just doesn't sound like patriotism. So I am happy to accept that some imaginable exclamations of, "My country, right or wrong" might not be expressions of patriotism—though most of them are.

H. What Is Patriotism?

Patriotism, I have been trying to show, is not just a loyalty like any other. To be a patriot is to have a serious loyalty to country, one that is not characterized by the phenomenology of choice, is essentially grounded in the country's being yours, and involves reference to (what are taken to be) valuable defining qualities of the country. In one way or another, the features of patriotism just mentioned set it apart from some familiar forms of loyalty to, for example, political candidates, parents, and foot-

32. See Hans L. Trefousse, *Carl Schurz: A Biography* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 180.

ball clubs. Whether patriotism is thereby set apart from all familiar forms of loyalty is a question to which I will return. (It isn't.) But we have at least opened up the space for an argument against the desirability of patriotism that cannot be translated into an attack upon loyalty in general.

II. AGAINST PATRIOTISM

A. Confessions

When I am watching Geelong play football and the umpire makes a controversial decision, I very quickly form a judgment about whether the decision is right or wrong. If the decision goes the way of the other team, then even though the umpire is right there on the scene and I am a long way away in the stands, I will probably believe that it is the wrong decision. Only when the conclusion is absolutely unavoidable will I believe that the opposing team has been the victim of a bad umpiring decision, and in such cases I will probably still point out that it was about time we got one back. When a fight breaks out or a game turns ugly, I am unlikely to think that a Geelong player is to blame. When I am sitting around talking about football with my friends, I will defend the sorts of views that you would expect a Geelong supporter to defend. If the discussion is about who is the greatest footballer in history, I will put the case for one of Geelong's great players. I will do my best to marshal facts in favor of my claim, and I will sometimes get them wrong; I might say that my favorite player kicked more goals than anyone else who has played in his position, and my sparring partner might produce evidence that this is not in fact the case. But this won't move me from my claim about which club is home to the greatest footballer. Perhaps I will say that the statistic in question is not so important after all, or perhaps I will dispute the evidence, or perhaps I will quickly decide that it is not really him but some other Geelong footballer that deserves the title of the greatest ever. One way or another, I will do my best to hang onto the beliefs that go along with being a supporter of my team.

Even as I express my disgust at the umpire's decision and even as I defend the greatness of my own team's players, my companions and I are aware that my expressed opinions are not really what they present themselves to be. The purported facts to which I appeal in support of my opinions are not really what lead me to hold them. Really, I hold those opinions because I am a Geelong supporter. It would spoil the fun for me or anyone else to point this out, but we nevertheless know it to be the case. That is why my football-related opinions are so easy to predict.

I don't know whether this way of behaving will be familiar to all or most supporters of football teams, but it really is the way things are for

me.³³ And my belief-forming habits as a football supporter make me guilty of a mild form of bad faith. "The one who practices bad faith," says Sartre, "is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing falsehood." "I must know in my capacity as deceiver the truth which is hidden from me in my capacity as the one deceived. Better yet I must know the truth very exactly *in order* to conceal it more carefully—and this not at two different moments, which at a pinch would allow us to reestablish a semblance of duality—but in the unitary structure of a single project."³⁴ My project is to form and defend Geelong-centric beliefs about the world of football; for these to be the sorts of beliefs that I can defend in conversation, I must take them to be supported by an interpretation of the evidence that is not influenced by the desire to reach one conclusion rather than another, but for them to be the beliefs that I want them to be I must actively interpret the evidence in a biased manner. I want to have certain beliefs, but to ensure that I have those beliefs I must deceive myself about my motivations, without acknowledging the deceit.

The use of Sartrean machinery to evaluate my attitudes toward the Geelong Football Club is more than a little overblown, and that is because my support of Geelong is not a very serious matter. My being a supporter of Geelong, rather than some other team, does not influence any really important decisions of mine or result in any important change in my view of the world. If things do become a little serious—if, for instance, the player I name as the greatest in the game will be rewarded with a brand new car—then I will know that I should try to rise above my biased perspective and take a more reflective point of view. In any event, the point is not to confess to my own bad faith as a football fan, though I do feel better, but to suggest that the same brand of bad faith is displayed by those with the much more serious bundle of attitudes that makes for patriotism.

B. Bad Faith and Patriotism

A patriot's loyalty to country makes reference to fairly determinate characteristics that play a role in her own conception of her country and that she takes to be the sorts of characteristics that contribute to a country's being a good country. This amounts to the patriot's having beliefs, tied in with her patriotism, about her country's purely descriptive

33. I am not trying to say anything perceptive about football fandom in general, nor am I trying to say of it all that is relevant to the argument that is to come. There would surely be more to say; one relevant point, perhaps, is that many fans are especially likely to despair of or turn upon their own teams when things are going badly.

34. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (London: Routledge, 1969), 49.

qualities. Some likely candidates are, "My country is a free country," "My country is beautiful in a special and unusual way," "My country stands for equality," "My country is founded on the principle of equal rights for all," "My country is, compared to others, open and tolerant," "In my country, great individuals are able to flourish," "Mine is a country of rolling green fields and friendly farmers," "My country defends just causes on the international stage," and, "My country is brave and unyielding in conflict." Even a patriot, whose loyalty to country is entangled with a belief that her country has valuable qualities, has a somewhat independent conception of the sorts of descriptions that a country must meet, if it is to have valuable qualities.

Each of the beliefs just mentioned is one that the patriot could have about any country, not just her own, and is a belief that could conceivably turn out to be false. It is quite possible to encounter evidence that a country is not really so beautiful, does not really defend just causes on the international stage, in fact contains a preponderance of very grumpy farmers, or is not as open and tolerant as it seemed. When the patriot encounters such evidence with regard to a country that isn't her own, she will, depending on what kind of evidence it is, in certain ways alter her beliefs. Perhaps she will change her mind about whether the country is as she imagined, perhaps she will suspend judgment until further evidence emerges—whatever. But what I want to claim is that she is constitutionally unlikely to respond in the same sorts of ways to evidence that her own country lacks the valuable qualities that she thought it to have and that it is here that her bad faith is to be found.

If the patriot is guilty of the brand of bad faith that I display as a football fan, then that is because she interprets evidence with the goal of sustaining her conception of her country as bearing particular, valuable characteristics. Out of patriotic loyalty, she is motivated to believe that her country has certain features, and she marshals the evidence in ways that support this belief; but she cannot maintain the belief in its full-blooded form if she admits to herself that it is not grounded in an unbiased assessment of the evidence; so she does not make this admission. A patriot might find herself confronted with evidence that her country is guilty of systematic wartime atrocities or that the founders of her country were motivated by a racist ideology, where this is evidence that, were it to concern a different country, would lead her to conclude that the country does not merit affection in the way that she had thought. If she responds in such a way as to avoid drawing the same conclusion about her own country—if she denies the evidence, or starts believing that wartime atrocities and racist ideologies are not so bad after all, or immediately turns her efforts to believing that her country has some different qualities that she can convince herself to think valuable—then we have our instance of bad faith.

All of this presupposes not just that the patriot has certain sorts of beliefs but also that she is motivated to maintain them, even in the face of countervailing evidence. Must the patriot be so motivated?

She will be if she sees her patriotism as a virtue. To see a character trait as a virtue is to see it as one that the ideal person would possess and is hence, in standard cases, to desire to cultivate it in yourself. A society in which patriotism is regarded as a virtue will be one in which people, especially children, are given special encouragement to view their country with pride and reverence and to have the associated descriptive beliefs, supported by the relevant evidence or not. It indeed seems quite plausible to think that this pressure, and the brand of bad faith to which it gives rise, is present in societies that value patriotism. We have all heard claims to the effect that teachers and leaders should present our country's history and political system in a positive light, for fear that people will otherwise fail to love the country in the ways that they should.

The deep source of patriotic bad faith, however, lies in the tension between patriotism's demanding certain sorts of beliefs and its failing to be grounded in or dependent upon those beliefs.³⁵ The patriot does not direct her patriotic love at her country just because she judges it to have particular valuable qualities, but the kind of loyalty that she has to her country, the kind of fidelity that she shows it, involves an acceptance of that judgment. The patriot is motivated to maintain her belief that her country has valuable features of a certain sort because she has a commitment that is grounded in that country's being her own country. To admit to any such motivation would be to admit that the belief is not formed in response only to the evidence and, hence, to undermine the credibility of the belief and the integrity of the loyalty that depends upon it—and so the motivation cannot be admitted.

The patriot's belief that her country has certain attractive features presents itself as having been formed through an unbiased set of opinions about the nature of her own country plus some neutrally endorsed criteria for what properties of countries count as valuable, but this is not really the full story. Driven by her loyalty to country, the patriot will hide from herself the true nature of the procedure through which she responds to evidence that bears upon the question of what her country is really like.

That is my basic case for the claim that patriotism is connected with bad faith. I need to say much more about the exact content and status

35. Some awareness of this tension is displayed in the evocative final section of MacIntyre's "Is Patriotism a Virtue?" For a more positive view of the way in which patriotism combines particularity and universal judgments, see Benjamin R. Barber, "Constitutional Faith," in Nussbaum, *For Love of Country?* 30–37.

of the claim, why it gives reason to think that patriotism is a vice, and where it leaves patriotism as compared to some other kinds of loyalty.

C. Clarifying the Thesis

My picture of patriotic bad faith relies upon a scenario under which the patriot encounters evidence that challenges her patriotic beliefs or her picture of her country as being characterized by particular valuable qualities. (I have concentrated upon evidence that the country does not have the qualities at all, but the job might also be done by evidence that those qualities really play no role, or only a peripheral role, in making the country what it is.)³⁶ There will be cases, however, in which the patriot's conception of her own country is perfectly accurate, and in which she never faces any reason to think otherwise. The patriot might believe that her country is founded upon the values of freedom and equality, and it may indeed be founded upon those values; if so, then she may never need to creatively interpret any evidence to the contrary.

Such a fortunate patriot might never fall into bad faith, because she might never need to hide from herself the truth about how she responds to the evidence about her country that she actually confronts—but she will still be disposed to fall into bad faith, under circumstances that (as it happens) never actually arise. She may never need to hide from herself the truth about how she responds to certain types of evidence, but she would, if such evidence were encountered. So while it is overstating things to say that patriotism inevitably involves bad faith, it still seems true—and this is my official claim—that patriotism involves the disposition to fall into bad faith under some easily imaginable circumstances.

D. The Strength of the Thesis

My claim yields what are, I suppose, empirical predictions, like the prediction that patriotic people will be especially resistant to evidence that places their home countries in a poor light. But I am not positing just a contingent correlation between patriotism and bad faith, of the sort that I would be positing if I said that patriots are disposed to choose country music over folk. I am positing an internal connection between the disposition to bad faith and the structure of patriotic attitudes them-

36. Example: I think of my country as a defender of human rights on the international stage but then encounter strong evidence, first, that most other countries put far more energy into that cause than mine does and, second, that by far the greatest international priority of my country is to maintain access to certain foreign markets. This evidence might be to the effect not that my country does not defend human rights on the international stage—maybe it does—but rather that that fact captures nothing important about my country's nature.

selves. That said, I do not want to go quite so far as to say that the connection is one of absolute conceptual necessity. I do not think that it is impossible to be a patriot who is not disposed to fall into bad faith. Let me explain.

I have described a patriot who, when her conception of her own country is challenged, ignores or creatively reinterprets the evidence, or changes her views about what features it is good for a country to have, in ways that allow her to maintain a picture of her country consistent with patriotic loyalty. Can we imagine a genuine patriot with a different pattern of response? What might a patriot be disposed to do in such circumstances, if not to fall into bad faith?

A couple of cases need to be dismissed at the outset. The first is of the putative patriot who, in response to evidence against her country's having the valuable features she believes it to have, happily abandons those beliefs and ceases to love her country. "I loved my country because I took it to stand for freedom and equality," she might say, "but now that I see that it doesn't, there is no reason to love it." This person never was a true patriot. Her loyalty to country has been revealed to be a derived loyalty, dependent upon her regard for freedom and equality plus the judgment, now revised, that those are things for which her own country happens to stand.

The second case to be dismissed is of the person who changes her beliefs in light of the evidence—who ceases to think of her country as having the relevant valuable characteristics—but finds that this makes no difference to the way that she feels about her country. "It mattered to me that my country stands, or so I thought, for freedom and equality," she says, "but now that I see that it doesn't, I realize that my thinking that it did was never a condition of my loyalty. It's enough that my country is mine." What is uncovered here is a loyalty that never really was grounded in a conception of the country as being, in some central respects, a good one. So it—again—never really was an instance of genuine patriotism.

More relevant, and interesting, is the case of a patriot who seriously and honestly confronts evidence that his country is not as he thought and takes such evidence as a reason to examine and rethink his patriotism. Rather than avoiding consideration of the possibility that his country lacks the characteristics to which his patriotism makes reference, such a patriot is prompted to wonder whether he really ought to have the kind of first-order loyalty to country that he does.

This kind of response requires that the patriot examine himself, not just his country. Most likely, it will lead to the loss of any distinctively patriotic outlook, through a process that I think might be familiar to many readers. It is a process of moving away from an instinctive attitude to your own country of the form "This is my great/beautiful/free/ . . .

country" and toward the recognition that your country, like any other, needs to be critically evaluated and that the patriotic picture of it held by you and others could well be illusory. In coming to this realization, you come to take a perspective upon your country that is too detached to coexist with genuine patriotism. To be a patriot who comes to such a point of view is to throw into question and revise what is likely to be a deeply held element of your way of making sense of the world. It is likely to involve a change, to a greater or lesser extent, in your self-conception; you are likely to cease to take your belonging to your country as a part of your identity in the way that you did. It can be difficult, disillusioning, and traumatic. As such, it is not a process upon which most patriots are likely to embark, and it is a process of reevaluation that patriotic loyalty positively discourages. But it is one way in which a patriot might respond to challenges to his patriotic beliefs, and it need not involve bad faith.

Here, then, is my claim about the nature of the connection between bad faith and patriotism. The patriot can encounter circumstances under which she would, were her patriotism not at stake, revise certain of her beliefs but under which she feels loyal to her country in a way that requires her to keep them. Usually, that loyalty will provide her with a motive to find ways of keeping those beliefs whatever the evidence, and that motive leads to bad faith. It is possible, however, that other elements of a patriot's psychology or circumstances will be such as to outweigh, or prevent the emergence of, that motive—most likely, I think, by prompting the kind of change in perspective described in the previous paragraph.³⁷ Patriotism is by its nature such as to make the patriot likely to have the disposition to fall into bad faith, but there can be exceptions.

Let me make some comments about the strength of my claim in another dimension. Whether or not you are convinced by the somewhat restrictive construal of patriotism for which I argued in Section I, I want it to be clear that my argument really is supposed to reveal something about a very broad class of loyalties to country, not just about the unthinking, jingoistic forms of patriotism that are so easy to belittle. The claim also applies to patriotic dissidents, and to those whose patriotism

37. I have not gone into questions about exactly which components of a patriot's psychology or circumstances might prevent him from falling into bad faith when his patriotic beliefs are challenged. Perhaps the answer will mention his strong concern with believing the truth or the fact that his patriotic motivations are relatively weak. Depending upon how that question is resolved, it may be that the right thing to say is in fact that all patriots, necessarily, are disposed to fall into bad faith, but that in some cases the disposition is masked or outweighed or disappears under the conditions of its manifestation. On such dispositions, see Mark Johnston, "How to Speak of the Colors," *Philosophical Studies* 68 (1992): 221–63; David Lewis, "Finkish Dispositions," *Philosophical Quarterly* 47 (1997): 143–58; and Michael Fara, "Dispositions and Habituals," forthcoming in *Noûs*.

is not really political in nature. Among the patriots whom I think likely to be guilty of bad faith are American dissidents who say that flouting international treaties is not just wrong but un-American, American patriots who are viscerally resistant to suggestions that the defenders of the Alamo did not really go down fighting, Australians overseas who tell us that people are friendlier back home, Australian patriots who insist that inner-city Melbourne or outback Queensland is the real Australia, and so on and on. I am not, of course, saying that the beliefs mentioned in these examples are false, just that the patriots concerned are unlikely to consider the evidence on its merits.

This might also be a good time to remind you that there are some passionate forms of loyalty to country that do not, in my view, qualify as patriotism and that are hence not targets of my argument. The toughest and most relevant case is of someone who feels a kind of moral identity with her country—she feels a special pride in the characteristics of it of which she approves, and shame and embarrassment over its perceived failures, she is committed to making the country better, and she would feel a special kind of anguish if she decided to move elsewhere—but whose attachment to her country really is grounded only in its being her country, not in her taking it to have a particular evaluative profile. Hers is not the kind of loyalty, that is to say, that essentially involves her taking her country to merit loyalty.

There are reasons to think that if you have this attitude then you do deserve the label “patriot.” You have a deep loyalty to country, a quality of concern for your country that you have for no other, and you take your identity to be partially tied up with your being of this country rather than somewhere else. But there are also reasons, which I find more impressive, to think that you do not count as a patriot. You may, consistently with your loyalty, feel a thoroughgoing disgust for your country, detesting all that you take it to symbolize. It would then sound very odd to call you a patriot, and this is the main reason, as I have said, why I think that the kind of loyalty under discussion is not enough for patriotism in the ordinary sense.

Really, though, it does not matter whether the label “patriotism” is extended to this kind of loyalty to country, so long as the following two points are understood. First, such loyalty is not touched by my argument in this article; I do not claim that it involves the disposition to bad faith. Second, it is quite different from the familiar forms of patriotism that *are* grounded in a conception of the beloved country as having particular valuable features. If it is a form of patriotism, then the argument of this article does not apply to patriotism in all its forms—but the argument does apply, I would still maintain, to patriotism of a central, recognizable, distinctive type.

E. Two Problem Cases

I want to consider two cases in which it might be thought that my posited link between patriotism and bad faith fails to be manifested. First, we might imagine a patriot whose beliefs about what makes for a good country are so intimately related to the characteristics of his own country that his belief that his country measures up to those standards is unfalsifiable. Imagine, for example, the patriotic French peasant marching off to fight Napoleon's wars.³⁸ His evaluative outlook may be entirely predicated upon the superiority of France and the righteousness of its national ambitions. There may be no space within this outlook for France's failing to be a great country, no possibility of evidence that could threaten the conviction that France is great.

According to one version of communitarianism, people in general are, or should be, in a situation much like that just described. As the products of a particular community, says the communitarian, our evaluative outlook is forged through and inseparable from the conception of the good life around which that community is organized. In separating the patriot's views about what makes for a good country from her views about what her own country is like, then, I might be said to have smuggled in universalist assumptions about the source and structure of our evaluative judgments.

The problem with this train of thought is that it presents the patriot's commitment to country as though it were almost entirely free of content—as though the commitment is to the values and projects for which a particular country stands, regardless of what they turn out to be. But patriotic loyalty is characteristically expressed in more substantive terms. It is not just, "I'm proud to be an American" but, "I'm proud to be an American, at least I know I'm free." Even for our French peasant, patriotism is sustained by attributions of particular characteristics to the beloved country, and it is a conceptually open question, one on which evidence either way is easy to imagine, whether or not the country in fact has those characteristics.³⁹

Second, it could be just completely obvious, to the patriot and everyone else, that the country really does have the qualities that the

38. Thanks to Matthew Smith for the example.

39. In any case, if we restrict our attention to the people who presently live in countries like this one, then it just seems obvious that we are dealing with people whose evaluative outlook is such as to allow the possibility that their own countries are not really all that good. If the communitarian's claim is so strong as to imply that we cannot make sense of the thought that our own country is unworthy of our evaluative endorsement or that there are aspects of our community's conception of the good life that deserve condemnation, then the claim is obviously false. I don't think that the communitarian is under any obligation to make such a claim, but I do think that such a claim is required to underlie the strategy just sketched.

patriot sees in it. It might be incredibly unlikely that any real evidence against its having such properties will emerge. Do we really learn anything interesting if we find that such a patriot has a disposition to do certain things under circumstances that, we can be almost certain, will never obtain?

I suppose not. But there are reasons to think that such cases—cases of patriots who can be sure that there will never be reason to question their beliefs about their own countries—will be very rare. For one thing, we are talking here about attributions of qualities that help to ground a serious loyalty to country, one that is of sufficient weight to make coherent a genuine reverence for country and a preparedness to make significant sacrifices for its sake. For another, we are talking about taking such properties to be central to the identity of a *country*, not just to parts of or aspects of a country. (Properties of such things would only ground loyalty to such things.) So we are unlikely to find patriots whose loyalty to country is grounded in its having properties like, “containing at least three trees” or “containing the very nice town in which I grew up.” We are much more likely to encounter sweeping attributions of properties, seeking to identify something profound about an entire country: its having a history of a certain character, its standing for certain values, its being founded on certain principles, that sort of thing. And claims that a country has particular properties of this sort are very regularly thrown into question by new evidence and new perspectives. They can of course be true, and we can sometimes be fairly certain that they are, but they are nevertheless claims toward which someone seeking the truth should keep a reasonably open mind.

It is also worth noting that it would be aberrant, perhaps impossible, for a genuinely patriotic loyalty to be fashioned in response to considerations like this one. We are not in a position to choose, with the conscious goal of avoiding bad faith, exactly which kind of patriotic loyalty we are to manifest. If you want to be a patriot but do not want to face the danger of falling into bad faith, you cannot just decide to ground your patriotism in some qualities of your country that you could convince yourself to be of value and whose existence you think unlikely to be challenged by evidence. That would be a strange kind of thought process yielding a strange kind of loyalty and would probably display some bad faith of its own.

F. What's so Bad about Bad Faith?

Assume that I am right in my claim that patriotism involves the disposition to fall into bad faith: where does this leave us with regard to our assessment of patriotism? Is bad faith necessarily a bad thing?

I think that the link between patriotism and bad faith yields a clear presumptive case against patriotism's being a virtue and for its being a

vice. The structure and role of patriotic attitudes are such that the patriot is likely to have biased, poorly supported beliefs that play an important role in determining her view of the world. Her resistance to certain sorts of beliefs is likely to lead her to have an inflated view of her own country's value and importance and to dismiss without adequate consideration those who are putting forth reasons to doubt that her country is what she takes it to be. Depending upon what sorts of beliefs ground her patriotism, the patriot is likely to be drawn toward unrealistically rosy pictures of her country's people and history, the principles for which it stands, or the ways in which it operates. All of this could well turn out to be influential when it comes to her making morally significant decisions: decisions about whether to support or fight in a war, about who should get her vote, about whether to make certain significant sacrifices, and so on.

There are various ways in which theoretical perspectives might add additional concerns. Perhaps the patriot, in deceiving herself about the nature of her belief-forming mechanisms, is treating her rational agency as a means rather than an end. Perhaps true belief is of intrinsic value to the believer, so that someone who is disposed to form false beliefs is disposed to be worse off than she would otherwise be. Perhaps patriotism is in conflict with fundamental virtues like honesty and with the epistemic virtues associated with good belief-forming, and perhaps there is good reason to think a character trait a vice if it clashes at a deep level with such basic virtues as these.

The claim that patriotism involves a tendency toward bad faith establishes a pretty strong prejudice in favor of the conclusion that patriotism is a vice. If the conclusion is to be resisted, then some work must be done in patriotism's defense.

G. Bad Faith and Other Loyalties

I said that I wanted to find a way of arguing against patriotism that did not translate automatically into an attack upon loyalties of all sorts, but there are reasons to suspect that I have not really succeeded. Consider social democrats who believe, for reasons of justice and compassion, that government should provide an extensive welfare safety net; aren't such people especially sympathetic to evidence that their favored policies are good rather than bad for economic growth, even though that is not a claim on which their commitment depends? Is it not natural and desirable for parents to be biased toward their own children? Aren't friends inclined to think well of each other? In short, isn't the thing that I have stigmatized as "bad faith" a feature of loyalty in virtually all of its forms?

The different cases raise different issues. I will take them in turn, and I think that what I say will make it clear how I would respond to

others that might be raised in a similar spirit. My basic claim is that patriotism is differentiated from most (but not all) familiar loyalties by the fact that the tendency toward bad faith is not just a frequent accompaniment of patriotic loyalty but flows from its very structure.

The thing to note about our social democrat is that his special openness to only some sorts of empirical evidence is not derived from his political allegiance itself. It is perfectly possible to be loyal to social democratic conceptions of justice and compassion while believing that social democracies will not necessarily be the most economically prosperous of societies.

(It is also worth noting that it is not just possible but desirable that the social democrat be able to take a more open-minded approach to the relevant evidence without thereby throwing his commitment to social democratic principles into question. History provides many examples of the dangers of overreaching ideology: of socialists who insist that their policies must be the key to prosperity as well as social justice, of libertarians who insist that their policies will not only protect property rights but improve the lot of the worst-off. These are contentious examples, but they make the point. Where there do exist tendencies to creatively interpret empirical evidence for ideological reasons, it is very difficult to see them as virtuous; any analogy with patriotism is not good news for patriotism.)

Parents are often especially open to evidence that their children have special talents and other valuable characteristics and especially inclined to give their own children the benefit of the doubt. And this, leaving aside tennis parents and the like, can be a very good thing; there certainly doesn't seem to be anything sinister about it. Why think differently about the patriot's tendency to think well of her own country?

I think that things are different when it is countries rather than children that are at issue. The thought that citizens should be inclined to assume the best of their own countries or to give their own countries the benefit of the doubt, is one that I find obviously false and somewhat disturbing. The important point, though, is this. A parent's love for a child is not essentially tied up with a conception of the child as having specified, objectively valuable characteristics. One way to see this is to see that a parent who moves to a more objective point of view is not thereby undermining her love for her child. It makes perfect sense (and is often a good exercise) to say, "I think that my child has these special qualities that set him apart from others, but I'll admit that I could easily be wrong. I'm biased, after all. But whether I'm wrong or not makes no difference to my loving my child, and my being prepared to make significant sacrifices for his sake."

Compare this to someone who says, for example, "As a patriot, I think that my country stands for freedom and equality, but I'll admit

that I could easily be wrong. I'm biased, after all." It is difficult to hear this statement except as involving the speaker's taking a step back from his own patriotism. It sounds like he is entertaining the possibility that his patriotism is misplaced and wondering whether he really ought to have the serious commitment to country that he does. Patriotic loyalty discourages you from wondering whether the object of your loyalty really has the valuable qualities you think it to have. A parent's love for a child does not.

The case of friendship is more complicated, because there are so many different forms that a friendship can take. It seems true that some (though certainly not all) friendships can be such that loyalty to your friend requires an inclination to believe things about her that you would not, given the same evidence, believe about a stranger. Usually, though, there is a kind of opt-out clause that keeps you from being required to do anything too serious on the basis of such beliefs. Your loyalty to your friend might require you to be inclined to believe that she is a decent enough poet or that she is innocent of the crime of which she has been charged, without requiring you to invest in her self-publishing venture or act as her defense lawyer (without taking a more objective view of things first).⁴⁰ Remember also that a friendship is not always a good friendship but can be dysfunctional or destructive or stifling. And when you are required to make serious decisions or sacrifices on the basis of biased beliefs, on pain of being a disloyal friend, you have probably got yourself into a friendship that is not a very good one. If patriotism turns out to be analogous to friendships like these, then that—again—is not good news for patriotism.

My claim is not that patriotism is absolutely unique in being connected, by its nature, to a disposition toward bad faith. My case against patriotism could be made against any loyalty that has the following three features: first, it is not grounded in or answerable to the neutral judgment that its object has certain valuable characteristics; second, it essentially involves the belief that its object does have certain valuable characteristics; and third, it plays a role in the making of important, morally weighty decisions. Another case in which these features are present is that of a certain kind (certainly not the only kind) of loyalty to family, a kind that involves not just a special affection for your family but an endorsement of the values and way of life with which your family is associated. We can all think of cases in which loyalty to family is taken to have a very serious moral dimension and is taken to essentially involve taking your family to be a good or excellent family—where this attitude is required simply in virtue of this family's being your family. Some

40. I explore these issues at greater length in "Friendship and Belief," *Philosophical Papers* 33 (2004): 329–51.

religious loyalties might be similar. Of such loyalties, and any others like it, I am committed to drawing the conclusion that I have drawn about patriotism (and I think that it is the right conclusion to draw). But when it comes to applying my case against patriotism to these analogous loves and loyalties, I believe—hope—that I will not be forced to say anything too implausible.

H. A Virtue of Ignorance?

Some virtues are said to essentially involve a tendency to have false beliefs, and it might be argued, without disagreeing with most of what I have said, that patriotism is one of them. Julia Driver gives the example of modesty, saying that part of what it is to be a modest person is to underestimate, and hence to lack knowledge about, yourself and your achievements.⁴¹ She goes on to say that ignorance is also involved in the virtues of blind charity and the refusal to hold a grudge. Couldn't patriotism be a virtue like this?

I doubt it, because I think that Driver's defense of modesty so construed, and of the other virtues that she mentions, depends heavily upon the impression that the falsity of the beliefs in question is benign and inconsequential. We do not imagine Driver's modest person holding sweeping views about the world or making important decisions that would have been substantially different if only her beliefs about herself and her achievements were not so misguided. If we could show that modesty (or whatever) involves a systematic tendency to take false beliefs as inputs to processes through which morally significant beliefs are formed and serious decisions are made—that having the beliefs in question is likely to be morally dangerous—then we would have good reason to wonder whether modesty is really a virtue after all.

I. A Necessary Vice?

Consistent with all that I have said is a defense of patriotism as a character trait that has instrumental value or is contingently such as to promote the existence of the fundamental virtues. Patriots, it could be argued, are more likely to feel a sense of identification and solidarity with those around them and are hence more likely to be charitable, generous, and unselfish. Patriots may be more likely to have a sense of belonging and identity that leads them to be happier, better-adjusted individuals. Perhaps such considerations will be strong enough to have us conclude that patriotism is a necessary vice or that its negative features can be outweighed. I will not explore this question, except to point out that there are also reasons to suspect that patriotism leads to war, intolerance, bigotry, and stupidity—and is hence of instrumental disvalue.

41. Julia Driver, "The Virtues of Ignorance," *Journal of Philosophy* 86 (1989): 373–84.

J. Conclusion

I have argued that there are reasons to think that patriotism, by virtue of its very nature, is undesirable. Patriotic loyalty is of a kind that requires certain beliefs about its object, without being premised upon an independent judgment that these beliefs are true. As a result, the patriot has a tendency to make judgments about the qualities of her own country in a way quite different from that in which she makes judgments about others, but she is unable within her patriotism to admit to this tendency. That is patriotic bad faith.

Sometimes the disposition to patriotic bad faith is not something that we need be too concerned about. In some cases, it will never be expressed. In others, the motivations underlying it will be very weak. Given, however, the moral seriousness of patriotism and the importance that patriotism tends to hold for those who have it, there is good reason to think that the disposition to patriotic bad faith will usually be more than just an interesting psychological quirk or harmless indulgence. Patriotic bad faith is likely to play a central role in the patriot's construal of the world and of her own moral obligations, and it is likely to lead the patriot to make bad decisions of real consequence.

There are other issues, like the contingent connection between patriotism and other virtues, that have not been fully explored here but are relevant to the question of whether we should see patriotism as, all things considered, something to be encouraged. But if my argument succeeds, then we have seen a presumptive case for the conclusion that patriotism is not a virtue and is probably a vice.

More generally, I have tried to show that patriotism is not just another form of loyalty and, indeed, that familiar loyalties differ in several ways that could plausibly be held to be of ethical importance. Whether I am right or wrong in my criticisms of patriotism, neither the universalist nor anyone else should be bullied into endorsing particular kinds of loyalties on pain of being unable to endorse any loyalties at all. The class of loyalties and loves is less unified than it might seem.