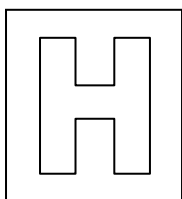


Candidate Name: _____

Class Adm No

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2023 Preliminary Examination Pre-University 3

GENERAL PAPER

8807/02

Paper 2

12 September 2023

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your **name**, **class** and **admission number** in the spaces provided at the top of this page.

This Insert contains the passage for Paper 2.

This question paper consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.

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Benedict Arnold considers the changing perceptions of loyalty today.

- 1 At a time when age-old political structures are crumbling, civil strife abounds, and economic uncertainty surges, loyalty offers us security in our relationships with associates, friends, and family. Often revered as a virtue across time and cultures, loyalty is commonly associated with the ideas of unwavering commitment and duty. Epic poems of ancient worlds, the *Mahabharata* and *Odyssey*, boasted stories of loyalty, from Yudhishtira's refusal to ascend to heaven without his devoted canine companion to faithful Penelope's patient wait for the return of her husband, Odysseus. In feudal systems, loyalty to one's lord or ruler was considered a sacred duty. Religious and philosophical teachings, such as those in Christianity and Confucianism, emphasise loyalty as a moral imperative that encourage individuals to remain steadfast in all their relationships. 5 10
- 2 Loyalty, however, is a suspect virtue. It is essential for good human social life but susceptible to abuse. It focuses more on persons rather than principles, which often leads to unethical choices and behaviour. In more competitive times, loyalty seems more of a handicap rather than a virtue, particularly at the workplace. Young workers are changing jobs more frequently, some as often as every year. Possessing diverse skills to take on more challenging roles, these workers seek out better employment in different companies in a perpetual pursuit for higher salaries. Consequently, remaining at the same job is interpreted as incompetence or foolishness – someone who stays is either unqualified to find a better-paying job, or too naïve to think that they would be rewarded fairly for their loyalty to the company. Gone are the days of starting and ending one's career in the same company, which was once seen as a mark of capability and dependability. It is now fashionable to change jobs as soon as one is able. With employers looking for different types and levels of skills, qualifications and attitudes, workers today are literally spoilt for choice, compared to workers in the past. 15 20
- 3 Many commentators claim that in this time of infinite choice, loyalty is dead. Statistics seem to bear them out – on average, corporations now lose half their customers in five years, half their employees in four, and half their investors in less than one. A look at the bigger picture suggests these indications of decreasing loyalty are replicated across society. Besides frequent job-hopping or being more fickle customers, studies also suggest that people today are less likely to stay committed to their choices, in all areas of their life. Divorce rates have nearly doubled over the past two decades; migration is on an uptrend; and people constantly change their cars, their phones, their hobbies and even their identities! We seem to face a future in which people no longer seem to care about maintaining existing relationships, but instead prefer to make new ones when it benefits them. 25 30
- 4 There are numerous reasons for questioning loyalty as a virtue. History has repeatedly shown there is nothing worse than blind loyalty as evinced by the Nazi SS's motto of "My Honor is Loyalty". Loyalty here apparently encompassed the killing of millions of innocent civilians in the most brutal way imaginable. Some SS veterans even attempted to defend their participation in these killings by appealing to this motto and their duty to be loyal. This allegiance to a group of people instead of the whole of humanity, if taken to an extreme, is what makes loyalty dangerous. Beyond the extreme example, loyalty has the potential to promote exclusion and discrimination of others outside the group, thereby promoting conflict and impeding societal progress. Ironically, in such circumstances, disloyalty, desertion, and treason become virtues. 35 40
- 5 The perils of loyalty are even instructed in fairytales. In *The Emperor's New Clothes*, the entire kingdom pretends to admire the emperor's non-existent clothes. He only realises his nakedness when a child guilelessly blurts the truth. In the tale, the subjects' loyalty to their king merely results in his shame when he realises the truth, but in the real world, followers blinded by their loyalty may not merely overlook the crimes of their leaders but rationalise them and spin them into acts of heroism. It undermines the integrity of our political system today as leaders then turn a blind eye to the worst sins of their followers. Ultimately, the group or cause eventually become corrupted because people mindlessly obey. Loyalty is such a force for destruction because it readily clashes with other virtues such as honesty and fairness, and people treat it as superior to 45 50

those virtues.

- 6 To many economists, loyalty is hardly a virtue. Indeed, loyalty results in higher costs to the consumer. The amount paid for goods and services become artificially inflated when people do not realise there are cheaper comparable alternatives or refuse to switch over. As a result, companies can then charge more without losing customers, since the customers are willing to pay more for what they believe is a superior product. Monopoly is an inevitable outcome of brand loyalty. And the loyal consumer is punished for their devotion with higher costs and shrinking choices. 55
- 7 Nevertheless, the outlook is not always bleak. There remain optimists who believe that loyalty is still an essential virtue today. Pointing to the trend of whistleblowers who are reporting on their employers, superiors and other authority figures, they argue that these incidents are actually an indication of loyalty, not the lack of it. Whistleblowing as a dilemma relates to the choice between the whistleblower's obligation to care for the public good and their loyalty to their employer. When Edward Snowden famously exposed his employers, the National Security Agency, for spying on the American people, many were outraged at his apparent lack of loyalty. Yet, Snowden's argument was that he was indeed loyal, just not to the Agency. Snowden, like many whistleblowers, believed that when authority figures transgress against ethical boundaries, their loyalty to society at large supersedes any loyalties to their immediate superiors. 65
- 8 Should we be concerned with the patterns of decreasing loyalty today? As it turns out, the numbers may not tell the whole story. Instead of signalling some sort of moral decay, the seeming lack of loyalty exhibited by many do in fact have reasonable justifications on moral grounds. While young workers change jobs more frequently, many of them also eventually settle down into a career path for life. Changing jobs, to them, is a matter of being fair to themselves and to the company. It is a refusal to work in a job they feel no passion for (or worse, a sense of dread or hatred instead), which shortchanges themselves and the company. Similarly, divorce rates are up, but many of these are marriages dissolved by mutual understanding. Rather than staying in unhappy marriages or even cheating on their partners, young people today choose to say, "this isn't working out for us", cut their losses, and move on. To them, these are not acts of disloyalty, but simply an attempt to work out a fair resolution. 75
80
- 9 Despite these justifications, the strong stigma against disloyalty remains. Yet, when even King Charles (arguably the world's most famous monarch) finds the idea of people swearing allegiance to him "abhorrent", it is worth reconsidering the supposed merits of loyalty. Perhaps the issue is not loyalty itself, but the objects of our loyalty. When loyalty is rooted in fallible humans, we are bound to be led astray. As Josiah Royce, author of *The Philosophy of Loyalty* says, "Be not loyal to your buddy Eddie, but loyal to the idea of brotherhood and friendship. Be not loyal to your wife, but loyal to the idea of love and fidelity. Be not loyal to your sister but loyal to the sacred nature of familial bonds. Be not loyal to a church but loyal to the gospel." 85

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