

Article/Essay Title: “Standing for Something.”

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(handout prepared by Joseph Rees)

Readability: Easy/Intermediate. The prose is lucid and the concepts are intuitive, but the essay is a bit long (27 pages) and is in conversation with some preexisting literature, though Calhoun explains that literature well in lay terms.

Thesis: In everyday life, we value personal *integrity*, the virtue of standing for something well. But what is integrity? Existing views define integrity as a *personal virtue*, one that fortifies the boundaries of the self. Practically, then, integrity would mainly require insulation against the psychological and epistemic pressures that others’ competing values present. Calhoun demonstrates that each of these views is flawed. She independently defends an account of integrity as a *social virtue*, grounded not in fortifying the boundaries of the self, but rather in respecting one’s status as one among many equal co-deliberators trying to figure out what is worth doing. Practically, this would entail that “ambivalence and compromise” do not always indicate a lack of integrity, but rather sometimes betoken its presence.

Key Definitions:

The goal of this paper is to articulate a definition of *integrity*, and to adjudicate between competing definitions of it. But, whatever integrity is, it is the virtue of standing for something of value (oneself or one’s commitments) well.

Brief Summary:

- 1) What is integrity – the virtue of standing for something well? We clearly value it in everyday life, but defining it is difficult. Calhoun wants to both (1) define integrity, and (2) defend a new and controversial interpretation of integrity in the process, which challenges existing theoretical and lived assumptions.

Part One: Three Bad Views

- 2) The “Unified Self” View: Integrity is unified agency.
 - a. Example: Someone who smokes despite her will to quit lacks integrity, because she does not act on the will she wants. Or, someone who is politically ambivalent lacks integrity, because she is not wholehearted in her view.
 - b. Pros: Etymologically appropriate. Captures integrity’s association with wholeheartedness and resolve, and its contrast with hypocrisy.
 - c. Cons: (1) Lack of personal unity does not always signal a lack of integrity. Consider Maria Lugones, who is both Latina and lesbian, and argues that those identities are parallel, and not part of a unified whole. (2) Members of oppressed groups are more likely than others to lack integrity on this conception. (3) Integrity is implicated in everything one does.
 - d. Reduces integrity to something it is not: The conditions for unified agency.
- 3) The “Identity” View: Integrity is fidelity to one’s defining endorsements.
 - a. Example: A lifetime environmentalist who drives a Hummer lacks integrity because he has betrayed one of his definitive endorsements. As a result, he has failed to be the same person.

- b. Pros: Captures intuitive sense that the self as such is at stake. Consider: “I couldn’t live with myself if I did that.” Also captures the gravity of integrity; it protects our deepest commitments – serious business.
 - c. Cons: On this view, integrity is not implicated in endorsements more peripheral to one’s identity. But that doesn’t seem right. Minor betrayals of integrity happen all the time.
 - d. Reduces integrity to something it is not: The conditions for continuing as the same self.
- 4) “Clean Hands”: Integrity is an unwillingness to participate in evil.
- a. Example: Bernard Williams’ example of George, the opponent of chemical and biological warfare, who refuses to take a job at a defense contractor, even though the runner-up for the job is a hawk who would cause more harm. George has integrity on this view because there is evil he refuses to have his agency implicated in, regardless of the consequences.
 - b. Pros: Captures the experienced sense that what is at stake in challenges to integrity is not the boundaries of the self, but moral wrong.
 - c. Cons: Misidentifies the principle threat to integrity. The principle threat is not consequentialism, but social pressure. Intuitively, plenty of people with integrity cooperate with evil on consequentialist grounds.
 - d. Reduces integrity to something it is not: The conditions of principled moral refusals to act.

Part Two: Shared Assumptions of the Three Bad Views

- 5) All three reduce integrity to some independent virtue. Is integrity redundant? Eliminateable?
- 6) All three view integrity as a personal, and not a social virtue.
 - a. Personal Virtues: A personal virtue, like temperance, consists in having the proper relation to oneself.
 - i. It’s assumed importance is to fortify the boundaries of the self: *“When...the analysis of integrity is confined it understanding it as a personal virtue, ‘standing for’ something ultimately reduces to ‘standing by’ the line that demarcates self from not-self...[T]he adoption of principles and values as one’s own establishes the line between self and not-self. Acting with integrity, that is, on one’s own judgment, is thus intimately tied to protecting the boundaries of the self – to protecting it against disintegration, against loss of self-identity, and against pollution by evil. Acting without integrity undermines the boundaries of the self.”* (Calhoun, 253-4).

Part Three: Calhoun’s Positive View

- 7) Social Virtues: Social virtues consist in having the proper relation to others. Civility, for instance, is a social virtue, a desirable mode of conducting oneself among others.
 - a. Integrity is a social virtue. A gloss: *“Anyone who regards herself as an equal in autonomous judgment to others cannot be indifferent to what others think. When one’s own and others’ judgments come into serious conflict, ambivalence may be a way of*

acknowledging that equality...I am one person among many persons, and we are all in the same boat. None of us can answer the question – ‘What is worth doing?’ – except from within our own deliberative points of view....[N]othing guarantees success. The thought, ‘It is just my judgment and it may be wrong,’ cannot be banished no matter how carefully deliberation proceeds...[I]f integrity is the virtue of having a proper regard for one’s own judgment as a deliberator among deliberators, it would seem that integrity is not just a matter of sticking to one’s guns. Arrogance, pomposity, bullying, haranguing, defensiveness, incivility, close-mindedness, deafness to criticism (traits particularly connected with fanaticism) all seem incompatible with integrity. All reflect a basic unwillingness or inability to acknowledge the singularity of one’s own best judgment....Integrity calls us simultaneously to stand behind our convictions and to take seriously others’ doubts about them. Thus, neither ambivalence nor compromise seem inevitably to betoken a lack of integrity.” (Calhoun, 241-260).

SECTION TWO: to be completed by note taker during discussion

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Possible Applications:

Virtue Ethics
Epistemology
Intro to Ethics
Moral Psychology
Autonomy & relational autonomy
Oppression
Intersectionality
Identity
Authenticity
Conceptual analysis

Complementary Texts/Resources:

- *High Noon*
- “A Guide to Calling out and Calling In” – *Everyday Feminism*
- Phillip Pettit, “When to Defer to Majority Testimony,” or other literature on majority testimony
- Bernard Williams, “Persons, Character, and Morality” and “Integrity”
- Maria Lugones, “Playfulness, ‘World’-Traveling, and Loving Perception”
- Renee Brown ted talk, “The Power of Vulnerability”

Possible Class Activities:

- Last 10 pages could be helpful for the beginning of a class; discussion about what it means to be a good class participant
- Before reading: brainstorming what students think integrity is
- Split into groups, have each group present on the theories Calhoun criticizes
- Before reading: ask them to name people who has integrity and why; name people who lack integrity and why

What traditional texts might this text replace?

Bernard Williams

Frankfort