

Communal Justification, Role Identity and Political Obligation

I The Problem of Political Obligation

The following are commonsense in our everyday life: we should stop at the red lights; we should pay the taxes; we should serve in the military forces for some time. In these activities we are discharging our obligations to our government, because these actions are required by laws made by our government. These obligations to obey the laws made by our government are so called political obligations. However, our obedience to the government is not unconditional. We are not bound to obey a tyrannical government, a government that does not care about the interests of its citizens. In this case we have no political obligation, and that's why rebellion and revolution are justified. In addition, political obligations have a particularity feature. We only have the obligation to obey laws promulgated by our own government. Simmons calls this 'particularity requirement'. In his words, it is 'a principle of political obligation which binds the citizen to one *particular* state above all others, namely that state in which he is a citizen.' (Simmons 1979, p. 32) These are the three fundamental intuitions concerning political obligations. We can formulate them as follows: (1) we have political obligations to a just government; (2) we have no political obligation to an unjust government; (3) we only have political obligations to our own government. What a theory of political obligation is supposed to do is to offer an explanation of at least these three fundamental intuitions.

Voluntarists claim that political obligations are based on some voluntary actions of the individual. The consent theory and the fair play theory can both be classified as voluntarist theories. The standard versions of consent theory take the voluntary consent of the individual to the government as the foundation of political obligation. The fair play theory takes the willing acceptance of the benefits from the government as the foundation of political obligation. In section II, I show that voluntarist theories cannot offer a perfect explanation of political obligation. The argument is twofold. On the one hand, most people who have political obligations do not perform the required voluntary actions, or even perform the opposite actions; on the other hand, many people who perform the required voluntary actions do not have political obligations. Simmons also holds that both the consent theory and the fair play theory cannot offer an explanation of political obligation, but he still maintains the voluntarist principle, so the inevitable consequence for him is philosophical anarchism, which states we have no political obligation whatsoever. In section III, I argue that philosophical anarchism is counter-intuitive.

By contrast, I will abandon the voluntarist principle of obligation. Instead I advocate the communal justification of political obligations. A law may be justified in the communal level without the required voluntary actions of individuals, yet they still have the obligation to obey this law. But the communal justification cannot ignore individual interests. In fact, it is ultimately based on individual interests. If the communal justification implies some individual sacrifice then this sacrifice is necessary, or even inevitable. It is probably required by the pursuit of individual interests. Besides, role identity provides another connection between individuals

and the community, so it offers some additional support to the communal justification and can be integrated into the communal justification theory. This is the content of section IV.

After this central section I discuss two relevant theories: family analogy theory (section V) and plural subject theory (section VI). These two theories and my theory are mutually supporting, but I will also point out some difference between them. Then I contrast my theory with Rawls' natural duty of justice (section VII). Simmons' major criticism on the natural duty of justice is that it cannot meet his particularity requirement. However this criticism does not apply to my theory. I will show that my theory can meet the particularity requirement well. In the last section, section VIII, I conclude my argument in this essay.

II Voluntarism

Simmons formulates voluntarism as follows. 'Voluntarists claim that our political obligations can arise only from our voluntary choices to subject ourselves to the political authority of others or to participate in the ongoing cooperative schemes of political life.' (Simmons 1996, p. 248) I take it that 'our voluntary choices to subject ourselves to the political authority of others' suggests the consent theory, and 'our voluntary choices to participate in the ongoing cooperative schemes of political life' suggests the fair play theory. In this section I focus on these two forms of voluntarist theory. Specifically, the consent theory holds that only if an individual intentionally and voluntarily consents to a government, can he have political obligations; the fair play theory holds that only if an individual willingly and knowingly accepts the benefits from the government, can he have political obligations.

The basic assumption for voluntarist theory is that man is naturally free. He has a free will and he has the ability and right to handle his own fortune. This assumption is best exemplified in the actions of signing a contract and making a promise. A contract without my signature has no binding power on me; and only if I promise to meet a student beyond my office hours, do I have the obligation to go to my office then. The voluntarist principle sounds to work very well in these two cases. However problems still remain. Can signing a contract and making a promise cover all the moral and political activities? More basically, is the assumption that man is naturally free flawless?

The argument against the voluntarist theory of political obligation is twofold. On the one hand, most people who have political obligations neither intentionally and voluntarily consent to the government, nor willingly and knowingly accept the benefits from the government. This kind of consent and acceptance is very rare in everyday life. Many people even have no clear consciousness of government and laws. The way in which they obey the laws is just following suit. The case of the criminals is more convincing. I think many criminals will regard the government and laws as a burden and constraints for them, so they will never consent to the government and willingly accept benefits from the government, yet they still have political obligations. To deny that criminals also have political obligations is to deny that the government should punish them by law, which is absurd. On the other hand, many people who consent to a government or willingly accept benefits from a government do not have political obligations to the government. A person in China may hold that the American government is better than China's, so consent to it and willingly and knowingly accept benefits from the American government through the Sino-US trade. Yet he has no obligation to obey American laws. Another counterexample is concerning slavery. A slave may consent to his government and

willingly accept benefits from his masters, but he has no obligation to obey the slavery laws, because these laws are unjust.

Now we can see, the assumption that man is naturally free and he has the ability and right to handle his own fortune is very problematic. Specifically, both the ability and the right of free choice are problematic. Man, living in a human community, has many restrictions. One kind of restriction is that he often cannot get a complete understanding of his choice. So I say that the ability of free choice is questionable. A superficially free choice may be dominated by some deeper conception or ideology. Another kind of restriction results from the society as a whole. In a society we are living together with others, so we have no right to choose to do evils to this society. The two examples of slaves and criminals correspond to these two kinds of restrictions respectively. The voluntarist theories confuse two concepts: the consciousness of obligations and obligations *per se*. Voluntarists maintain that the consciousness of obligations is the foundation of obligations. Obviously this will cause relativism, even skepticism. But in fact, moral and political activities can be evaluated *objectively*. If a man sees a child drowning and he can swim, but does nothing to save the child, then this just demonstrates that he has a very weak sense of moral obligation, but this cannot exempt him from the moral responsibility. Similarly, Hitler's unconsciousness of the evils he did could not exempt him from his political responsibility.

III Philosophical Anarchism

Having examined the three major traditional political theories (the consent theory, fair play theory and gratitude theory), in the last chapter of his book *Moral Principles and Political Obligations* Simmons concludes:

The general conclusion to which we are forced by this examination, then, is that political theory cannot offer a convincing general account of our political bonds. ... We must conclude that citizens generally have no special political bonds which require that they obey and support the governments of their countries of residence. Most citizens have neither political *obligations* nor "particularized" political *duties*, and they will continue to be free of such bonds barring changes in political structures and conventions. (Simmons 1979, p. 192)

This is so called philosophical anarchism. The above passage clearly shows that Simmons' philosophical anarchism is derived from the failure of traditional political theories. The inference is very simple: traditional political theories cannot explain political obligations, therefore political obligations do not exist. Two major problems arise straightforwardly. First, for this inference to be valid a suppressed premise is needed. That is, traditional political theories are the only possible political theories. Simmons' discussions suggest that he firmly holds the voluntarist principle of obligation, which says obligations can only be created by individual voluntary actions. So it's reasonable to infer that he will maintain that traditional theories are the only possible political theories. However this may not be the case. In the next section I try to advocate a different theory of political obligation than the traditional ones. Secondly, the conclusion is rather counter-intuitive. At the beginning of this essay I mentioned several intuitions concerning political obligation. We have a fundamental intuition that we should obey the laws promulgated by our just government. How can philosophical anarchism accommodate this intuition? In this section I focus on this second problem.

Simmons cannot deny our fundamental intuition concerning political obligation. He writes, 'from a conclusion that no one in a state has political obligations, *nothing* follows immediately concerning a justification of disobedience.' (Simmons 1979, p. 193) This is the key difference between philosophical anarchism and anarchism *per se*. Philosophical anarchism denies the existence of political obligations, but does not deny our obedience to the government. Let's see how Simmons reconcile these two intuitively conflicting positions. 'There are, even in the absence of political obligations, still strong reasons for supporting at least certain types of governments and for obeying the law.' (*ibid.*) Then he enumerates several such reasons: (1) 'if our government is just, we will have good reason to support it (and any other just government) even if we have no political obligations.' (*ibid.*) (2) 'the other virtues which a government can possess will also be instanced occasionally, providing other reasons for supporting governments possessing them.' (*ibid.*) (3) 'the [negative] effect which our disobedience has on others may provide reasons for obeying.' (*ibid.*)

In his argument, Simmons confuses two quite different notions: supporting a government and obeying its laws. We can support a foreign government without obeying its laws. Although the virtues of a government may provide reasons for us to support it, those reasons still cannot explain our obedience to our own government. In fact, those reasons directly violate his own particularity requirement. On the other hand, the third reason really can explain our obedience, but it has already gone beyond voluntarist theories. The effect which our disobedience has on others may have nothing to do with our voluntary actions. We can see, in the reasons Simmons suggested, either it cannot explain our obedience to our government, or it can explain our obedience, but fails to be an individual voluntary action. I think it counter-intuitive to distinguish political obligation from the justifiedness of obedience to the government. If it is justified for us to obey the laws of our government, then we have the obligation to obey the laws of our government, but this is just political obligation. To distinguish these two notions is just like to say, although we are justified to save a drowning child, we have no moral obligation to do so. And this will cause much confusion in moral theory. The reason why Simmons restricts political obligation in such a narrow sense still lies in the voluntarist principle of obligation. In order to defeat philosophical anarchism thoroughly, we need to propose a non-voluntarist theory of obligation, which is the task of the next section.

IV Communal Justification and Role Identity

For the sake of comparison, we formulate the voluntarist principle as follows.

The Principle of Voluntary Actions: A person P has political obligation to a government G **iff** P performs some voluntary actions in relation to G , specifically, P voluntarily consents to G or willingly accepts benefits from G .

In section II, I have shown that this principle cannot provide a perfect explanation of political obligations. I enumerated several counterexamples for this principle. Here I will advocate a different principle and then apply it to those counterexamples.

The Principle of Communal Justification: A person P has political obligation to a government G of a community C **iff** (1) P is a member of C ; and (2) the laws made by G are justified by C .

By 'community' I mean a group of people living together. When we talk about political obligations, 'community' specifically refers to a group of people living in a certain state. I should prevent a possible misunderstanding at first. Communal justification does not conflict with individual interests; on the contrary, it is ultimately based on them. However communal justification needs not consider every individual's interests, but instead considers the community's interests as a whole.

The best way to illustrate this new concept is by using examples. The environment and natural resource law demands us to protect the environment and economize on natural resources. This law is justified by each community. A community should care about its future. The pollution of the environment and the abuse of natural resources will cause disasters for a community. Certainly this justification is based on individual interests. The protection of the environment and the economizing on natural resources are both in favor of the individuals. However it needs not be justified for each individual. In fact it is unfair for people currently alive. You might complain, 'the environment cannot become so bad that I cannot live in it and the natural resources are enough to use before I die, why should I bother to protect the environment and economize on natural resources?' Despite this, people currently alive still have the obligation to obey this law, because it is justified by the community. Another example is China's birth control law. The law provides that each couple can only have one child. Most Chinese feel restricted, because they want at least two children. In spite of this, I think we still have the obligation to obey this law, similarly because it is justified by the Chinese community. China has too many people, so birth control is essential to the modernization of China's society. Also, the birth control is ultimately for the interests of individuals. In both of these two cases, individual sacrifice is involved. It should be mentioned, for a law to be communally justified, the individual sacrifice involved cannot be intolerably unjust. If the environment and natural resource law demands us to stop using petroleum now, then we have no obligation to obey it. Similarly, if the birth control law forbids us to bear a child for the next fifty years, then we have no obligation to obey it either.

Now we can consider the counterexamples in section II. First, the example of criminals. The reason why criminals should be punished by law is that crimes are not justified by the community. Secondly, a person in China who consents to the American government and willingly accepts benefits from the American government does not have the obligation to obey American laws, because this violate the first condition of political obligations, i.e., he is not a member of the American community. Thirdly, the example of slaves. The reason why slaves have no obligation to obey the slavery laws is also that these laws are not justified by the community. Slavery humiliates many individuals; it causes too much individual sacrifice. Moreover, unlike the protection of the environment, the economizing on natural resources and birth control, which are necessary for a community, slavery just causes unnecessary individual sacrifice.

Although all the above examples demonstrate that the principle of communal justification can explain political obligations well, one might still be wondering how the laws justified by a community can have binding power on its members. Role identity provides a connection between a community and its members. I think it can help dispel such misgivings. First let me cite one passage from Horton's *Political Obligation*:

The existence of this relationship between member and polity shows itself in many and various ways, but one of the more interesting and important is that we view the actions of

the polity of which we are members, *our* polity, in distinctive ways. ... whether or not we approve of them, its actions appear to be particularly connected to us. ... they are the actions of our polity, the polity of which we are members. They are actions performed in our name and, as members of the polity, we are related to its actions in a way that we are not to those of polities of which we are not members. ... It is this sense of identification with the political community of which one is a member which is central to understanding political obligation. (Horton 1992, pp. 152-3)

This is the very position that I want to defend here. I should make an important distinction at first. As for role identity, Simmons argues, '[a] person who believed himself to be Napoleon could not intelligibly deny his obligation to, say, lead the French army, but this would not show that this person in fact had a moral obligation to lead the French army.' (Simmons 1996, pp. 262-3) In this argument, Simmons confuses conceptual role identity and actual role identity. Conceptual role identity means a person conceives himself to be in a certain position, while actual role identity means a person actually plays a certain role. Moreover, the actual playing of a certain role does not just mean performing the actions related to the role. An excellent actor may act Napoleon so well as very difficult to be told from Napoleon himself, but despite this the French army will not obey the actor. Conceptual role identity does not imply moral obligations, but actual role identity does imply moral obligations, though it is often accompanied with conceptual role identity. Simmons claims that the person in question *in fact* had no moral obligation to lead the French army, but this is just because the person did not *in fact* play the role of Napoleon. The role identity I discuss here is not conceptual role identity, but actual role identity.

Man cannot live in a vacuum, cannot live independently. Man's nature determines that he must live in a certain community. It is not only because man needs help from others, but also because he can easily adopt a preexisting way of life without much effort. So, what does it mean to live in a certain community? To live a particular way of life. To be a Chinese has much more connotation than just to be a human being. China has a history of several thousand years. In this long history a particular culture was formed. This particular culture has been embodied in every detail of a particular way of life. When an individual takes this particular way of life, no matter he likes it or not, no matter he has a clear consciousness or not, this particular culture will be integrated into the personality of this individual as an essential part. Thus this particular culture to a large extent determines who this individual is. In this way, a community is intimately connected with its members. In this context we can understand Jaspers' 'political guilt' well. According to Jaspers, every German should feel political guilt because of the evils Germany did in the Second World War, no matter he himself did something wrong or not. I think the role identity I discuss here offers a good explanation of political guilt. As Jaspers claims, '[w]e feel ourselves not only as individuals but as Germans.' (Jaspers, p. 80) So the German community is also intimately connected with every German, and this is the very foundation of political guilt.

Like traditions, laws constitute an important part of the way of life. But the difference is that laws have rigorous binding power. If the birth control law is justified by the Chinese community as a whole, then the law should become a norm in the Chinese way of life. Hence every member in the Chinese community has the obligation to conform to this norm. It might be argued that traditions are also justified by a community, but nobody has the obligation to conform to traditions. However the justification of laws is quite different from that of traditions.

The reason why birth control *as a law* is justified is that it is necessary to carry it out rigorously, i.e., in the form of a law.

V Family Analogy

Evidently there are many similarities between a political community and a family. The most prominent similarity is the nonvoluntary feature. A man cannot choose his native country just like he cannot choose his family. Hence he cannot choose the obligations involved in the political community and the family either. As Horton puts it, '[i]ndividuals are most often born into a polity as they are born into a family, and the obligations they acquire are often somewhat indeterminate.' (Horton 1992, p. 150) Another major similarity between a political community and a family is that both involve role identity. In the last section we have seen that a political community means a particular way of life and this particular way of life can model its members' individual personalities. So does a family. Because a child always grows up in his family, other family members, especially his parents, play an important role in the formation of the child's personality. Several authors, including MacIntyre (1981), Sommers (1986), Hardimon (1994) and Horton (1992), emphasize the role identity in a family. Again I cite Horton: 'both the family and the political community figure prominently in our sense of who we are; our self-identity and our understanding of our place in the world.' (Horton 1992, p. 150).

Simmons has two major concerns with what he calls 'communitarian theory', which can be roughly equated to the family analogy theory discussed here. One of his concerns is the role identity thesis and his position is that role identity cannot work. The other concern of his is the thesis of the normative independence of local practice. He also disapproves this thesis. While I disagree with his position on role identity, I am sympathetic with his response to the thesis of the normative independence of local practice. This thesis is almost a common feature of the family analogy theory. Still Horton explores it most sufficiently. He claims, 'a polity is, like the family, a relationship into which we are mostly born; and that the obligations which are constitutive of the relationship do not stand in need of moral justification in terms of a set of basic moral principles or some comprehensive moral theory.' (Horton 1992, p.150) And he argues, 'it is often sufficient to point out that a man is this boy's father to attribute certain obligations on the part of the man towards the boy.' (*ibid.*, p. 156) Like Simmons, I cannot go along with this line of argument. As the discussion in the last section shows, role identity does not exclude moral justification. Although one is a member of a political community, he has no obligation to obey the laws made by an unjust government. Similarly, a child has no obligation towards an unjust parent. If a child is often abused by his father, then I don't think he has the obligation to support his father when he grows up. Hardimon proposes a very interesting criterion of justification for this case. He calls it 'the principle of reflective acceptability', which says, 'noncontractual role obligations are not morally binding unless the roles to which they attach are reflectively acceptable.' (Hardimon 1994, p. 350) This principle is very close to objective justification, but it still carries much subjective element.

Even though the family analogy theory can be improved in this respect, it is still dangerous to overdraw the analogy between a political community and a family. Horton himself points out two disanalogies between the polity and the family. One is that 'a family involves a structure of essentially personal relations whereas the polity does not.' (Horton 1992, p. 151) The other is that a polity involves coercive authority whereas the family does not. I would say that there is an essential difference between political obligation and familial obligation. While political

obligation is owed by an individual to a community, familial obligation is owed by an individual to another individual. We have political obligations to our government, but our government represents our community, so we actually have political obligations to our community. We cannot say in the same sense that a child has moral obligations to his family. When we say so, we actually mean that the child has moral obligations to the other members of his family. Based on this difference, it is also hardly possible to apply the principle of communal justification to familial obligations.

VI Plural Subject

Gilbert's theory of political obligation is directly based on her social group theory. She defines a social group as a plural subject. The notion of plural subject is in turn based on the notion of joint commitment. So her theory of political obligation is ultimately founded on the notion of joint commitment. As she writes, '[p]lural subjects, as I define these, are constituted by joint commitments. The obligations that flow from such commitments are analogous to those that flow from common or garden agreements. Thus I have given a sort of "actual contract" theory of (a certain type of) political obligation.' (Gilbert 1996, p. 372) Then, what is a joint commitment? She claims, 'all that is necessary to *establish* what I call a "joint commitment" is that the relevant parties mutually express their readiness to be so committed, in conditions of common knowledge.' (*ibid.*, p. 366) The word 'readiness' is a bit ambiguous, but at least we cannot equate it with explicit agreement. In the second paragraph before the cited one, Gilbert presents two examples of joint commitment. In the first example, the two people involved explicitly express their willingness to go for a walk together, but in the second example they don't. Yet in both cases a joint commitment is established. We can see, for Gilbert, explicit agreements are sufficient to generate a joint commitment, but they are not necessary. Further, according to Gilbert, these agreements need not be voluntary. A joint commitment can be established even under coercion. 'Simmons argues that even in modern democracies the circumstances of the proposed agreement are generally analogous to coercion. If my argument here succeeds, it robs this argument of all force, for I have argued that agreements are possible in the face of outright coercion. I have also argued that whenever there is an agreement, these are corresponding obligations to conform to it.' (*ibid.*, p. 303) From these citations we can get a clear understanding of Gilbert's theory of political obligation. Simmons calls it 'nonvoluntarist contract theory.'

Gilbert's joint commitment theory of political obligation is also compatible with the communal justification theory. They both hold that the individuals' voluntary explicit agreements are not necessary to generate political obligations. In fact, this kind of agreements to the government are very rare in our daily life. However, we can still maintain that there is a joint commitment among the members in a political community. On the basis of this feature, I think Gilbert's plural subject theory can be applied to a political community. Next I argue that a joint commitment can be established even without any individual's voluntary explicit agreement. Imagine a group of people who are driven to a desolate island by a shipwreck. The grim situation forces them to cooperate and conform to an experienced sailor. Even though everyone else does not like the sailor and so does not want to conform to him, there is still a joint commitment established among them. And I also think everyone has the obligation to cooperate and conform to the sailor, because it is required by the survival of the whole group. A political community is just like this group. A political community cannot do without a government. If a law promulgated by the government is justified by the whole community then every member in the

community has the obligation to obey this law, even though it may cause some individual sacrifice. If we base a joint commitment not upon the individuals' voluntary explicit agreements, but upon the common way of life the individuals take, then the plural subject theory can work pretty well when applied to a political community, and Gilbert's theory of political obligation is perfectly compatible with the communal justification theory.

However, two problems concerning Gilbert's joint commitment theory of political obligation should be pointed out. The first problem still involves the meaning of the phrase 'express their readiness'. Does the phrase necessarily imply that the parties are clearly aware of their commitments? Gilbert's discussions suggest this. But if so, Simmons' criticisms have their force. Simmons points out three confusions in Gilbert's nonvoluntarist contract theory. I don't think the third confusion is very relevant, so I focus on the first two. In Simmons words, '[t]he first is the confusion of felt obligations with genuine obligations.' 'A second, related confusion is the confusion of political acquiescence with positive, obligation-generating acts or relationships.' (Simmons 1996, pp. 256-7) So the problem is that many people don't know their commitments in real life. Besides, there is also an important difference between Gilbert's theory and the communal justification theory. Gilbert's notion of political obligation is not sensitive to justice. No matter the government is just or not, a citizen has political obligation to it, so long as there is a joint commitment. So political obligations are not sufficient to explain what people ought to do in political affairs. But I think a political theory should be able to explain this. By contrast, the communal justification theory of political obligation is directly based on justice, so it is aimed to explain what people ought to do in political affairs.

VII Particularity

At the beginning of this essay, I mentioned an important feature of political obligations. This is the particularity feature, that is, we only have political obligations to our own government. Any successful theory of political obligation must meet the particularity requirement, that is to say, it must be able to explain this particularity feature of political obligations.

Simmons' major criticism of Rawls' natural duty of justice is that it cannot meet the particularity requirement. To make clear Rawls' theory of natural duty of justice, I quote a passage from his *A Theory of Justice*.

From the standpoint of the theory of justice, the most important natural duty is that to support and further just institutions. This duty has two parts: first, we are to comply with and to do our share in just institutions when they exist and apply to us; and second, we are to assist in the establishment of just arrangements when they do not exist, at least when this can be done with little cost to ourselves. (Rawls 1971, p. 334)

Simmons puts all his critical force on the phrase 'apply to us.' He claims, 'Rawls's natural duty of justice seems to face a serious problem. ... while the just political institutions of a country certainly "apply to" that country's citizens, this is always true only in the "territorial" sense of application.' (Simmons 1979, p. 151) But the 'territorial' sense of application cannot meet the particularity requirement, because geographical factors have no right to play a role in explaining the feature of political obligations. Simmons further claims, Rawls might use 'apply' in the strong sense, which can only be generated by individual voluntary actions, but this will reduce the theory of natural duty of justice to the traditional political theories, which have been defeated by

him. So he concludes, whether we use 'apply' in the 'territorial' sense or the strong sense, the theory of natural duty of justice cannot get off the ground.

I think Simmons' criticism hits the Achilles' heel of the natural duty of justice. The crucial problem for the natural duty of justice is that the justice involved is too abstract. It can be applied to every community. That's the reason why the natural duty of justice cannot meet the particularity requirement. However Simmons' criticism of the natural duty of justice does not apply to my theory. The communal justification theory can meet the particularity requirement well. Although my theory also emphasizes justice as a basis of political obligations, justice in communal justification is concrete. In fact, communal justification implies that the justification is community relative. So a law may be justified in one political community, but not in another. For instance, birth control law is justified in China, but not in America, simply because these two political communities have different situations. That's why Chinese have the obligation to obey this law, but Americans do not. We can see, the community relativity of justification is the very foundation of particularity feature of political obligations.

VIII Conclusion

'Communal justification' and 'role identity' are two key notions of this essay. Role identity has been discussed by many writers, but as far as I know, the notion of communal justification is new. The establishment of my communal justification theory of political obligation is directly based on the criticisms of the traditional voluntarist theories and Simmons' philosophical anarchism. I have argued that voluntarist theories have many counterexamples, and philosophical anarchism is counter-intuitive. Also I compared my theory with the family analogy theory, the plural subject theory and the theory of natural duty of justice respectively. Compared with other theories, the communal justification theory of political obligation has the following two key features:

- (1) *Objective justification*: Political obligations are generated by the individual's objective actions, but not his subjective actions, whether it be voluntary or not. Specifically, political obligations are generated by the individual's actually taking a certain way of life in a political community, but not his consenting to the government, or willingly accepting the benefits from the government, or even nonvoluntarily agreeing with the government.
- (2) *Relative justification*: Political obligations are community relative. A law can be justified in one political community, but not in another.

With these two features, the communal justification theory can overcome all the difficulties involved in other theories, so it can explain political obligations well. In addition, role identity provides an important connection between a community and its members. It offers some additional support to the communal justification theory.

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