1. Political obligation

This chapter discusses the justifications for political obligation. The most important historical justification for political obligation is what is often called consent theory or contract theory. Consent theorists claim that we should obey the law because we have consented to do so. Meanwhile, the theorist H. L. A. Hart argues that if we accept a benefit, then it is only fair that we should reciprocate and give something back; if we enjoy the protection of police and armies, if we use roads, hospitals, schools, and other government-run services, then we should reciprocate by obeying the law. Other theorists argue that political obligation is something that we are bound by simply for being a member of a political community. If we cannot justify an obligation to obey the law, then we may have to adopt some form of philosophical anarchism — the view that we have no obligation to obey the law.

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