

*The Good Citizen and the  
Demands of Democracy:  
An Application of the Political  
Philosophy Of Yves R. Simon*

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Introduction

Democratic government, like any human institution, is not perfect. It is by all accounts in recent history, however, the form of government preferred by most of the people in the world. There are good reasons for this preference, not the least of which is that democracy by definition entails an essential respect for human freedom. Humans, being what they are, cherish their freedom. For this reason and others, there is a natural affinity between human beings and democratic government.

Granted that democratic government respects human freedom, it is of the utmost importance that the free citizens of democratic nations understand the true meaning of human freedom and that they be prepared to accept the responsibilities and obligations of citizenship in such nations. If freedom is merely understood to be the absence of constraint or the abundance of choice, its essential meaning is lost. Full human freedom in a democratic society requires government of the citizens by the citizens themselves. So clear was this to Yves R. Simon that he defined democratic government in terms of the self-government of the people. "When the political idea assumes the democratic form, the people asserts, over and above its freedom *from* abusive power, its freedom *to* govern itself. Keeping the government confined within

a definite field is no longer held sufficient; the government has been taken over by the people. Such is democratic freedom, the defining feature of democracy.”<sup>1</sup>

By further exploration of the political philosophy of Yves R. Simon, I will show in this paper that the defining feature of democracy, this self-government of the people, is linked to a distinct understanding of human nature. I do this first by showing that for Simon, democratic freedom has the character of an end for which free choice is the means. Secondly, I explore Simon’s definition of virtue and show how prudence functions in Simon’s thought as the human disposition that perfects human choosing in order that it achieve its end. Finally, I show why Simon insists on the interdependence of prudence with the moral virtues and what the consequences of this interdependence are for the democratic citizen. These three moves in the argument provide the structure for my paper: Part I, “Democratic Freedom as Human Achievement”; Part II, “Prudence: Freedom’s Virtue”; and Part III, “Justice and the Common Good.” I conclude that if democratic government is blessed with virtuous citizens of good character, it is never an accident. Such a blessing is not a luxury of democracy; it is essential to it. Government may be many things without virtuous citizens but it cannot properly be called democratic. If Simon is right, his political philosophy has much to offer to the democracy we claim in the United States today.

### Democratic Freedom as Human Achievement

The relation of choice to full democratic freedom is a relation of means to end. Simon understands means/end relations in terms of the Aristotelian language of causality.

Let the formal cause be defined as that by reason of which a thing is *what* it is. In the relation to the composite, matter is describable as that *out of which* a thing is made; but in relation to the form itself, matter should be described as that *in which* the form resides and that which owes its own determination, its own being such and such, its own whatness, to the form. Clearly, a relation of matter to form obtains within the order

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<sup>1</sup>Yves R. Simon, *Philosophy of Democratic Government* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951, 1961, 1977), p. 76. Revised edition (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), detailed subject index added.

of final causality, between the means and the end. Every means, as such, derives from the end its being what it is, its desirability, its goodness, its intelligibility as a thing in the order of final causality.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, means is to end as matter is to form. Just as matter owes its determination, its “whatness” to the form, so too does the means owe its own determination to the end for which it acts. This is no small point in Simon’s argument. The end of an action *defines* the means, making the means be what it is. Only those means that achieve their ends, then, can properly be called means at all. If a means to a particular end was chosen and the means failed, then its character as means was mere illusion.

Some ends function as means when they are intended to achieve an ulterior purpose. “The end is the form of the means; the ulterior end, which is more of an end, is the form of the inferior end, which is more of a means.”<sup>3</sup> Calling the concepts of “means” and “end” “opposite and related concepts,” Simon reminds us that they “admit of combination in all degrees.”<sup>4</sup>

Let us never think that whatever is a means is thereby entirely denied the character of an end, or that whatever has the character of an end is thereby denied the character of a means. A pure means is a thing that has absolutely no desirability of its own and cannot be desired except as a way leading to a thing desirable.<sup>5</sup>

The end of one action, therefore, may take on the character of the means for another.

To illustrate, let us say that a citizen supports the election of a particular person to public office. Certain actions lead to the desired end of victory on polling night: door-to-door campaigning, fund-raising activities, and participation in public rallies all help the cause. This election result, though the end of the political activism, itself becomes the means to some other end. For what was this person elected? For the purpose of having a friend in an influential position who will return the good favors from the campaign? Or, for the purpose of serving the

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<sup>2</sup>Yves R. Simon, *Freedom of Choice*, ed. Peter Wolff (New York: Fordham University Press, 1969, 1987, 1992), pp. 61–62.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

common good of the entire community, whatever personal sacrifices that may entail on the part of the campaign worker? This difference in motive is significant because the goal of electing a particular person now takes on the character of the means to achieving some other end. The process goes on until the ultimate end is reached. No means employed in the achievement of any intermediary end can properly be called a means if it interferes with the ultimate end of the political order. Any choice can be illusory.

Choice need not be mistaken, however. To avoid illusory choice, one needs only to behave according to the law of human nature. "The basic statement that every nature is the realization of an idea implies that every nature has within itself a law of activity which is its own law."<sup>6</sup> Simon accepts, with St. Thomas, that any being, simply because it exists, enjoys some degree of autonomy because of its law of activity. Further, the more a thing participates in the idea of being, the greater its autonomy. How is human autonomy, then, related to human being? "Autonomy is the glory, the splendor of being. Now terminal freedom, since it is both freedom of choice and autonomy, is the kind of autonomy which properly fits the rational nature as such. Terminal liberty is the glory of the rational nature."<sup>7</sup>

Maritain scholars will recognize the term "terminal liberty" from the first chapter of *Freedom in the Modern World*.<sup>8</sup> In this work Maritain distinguished between the initial freedom that human beings inherit with their rational nature, and terminal freedom, which is an achievement of that nature. "We are called upon," Maritain says, "to become in action what we already are in the metaphysical order: a person (an individual substance of rational nature)."<sup>9</sup> The freedom to choose, then, is not its own end. Initial freedom is *for* terminal freedom: that which we are by nature called to be. Initial freedom is for the achievement of rational personhood, the glory of our being. For that reason, human choosing that fails to achieve terminal freedom is not properly called free choice.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Yves R. Simon, *Nature and Functions of Authority* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1940, 1948), p. 42.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>Jacques Maritain, *Freedom in the Modern World*, trans. Richard O'Sullivan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938).

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>10</sup>Simon adopted Maritain's terms "initial" and "terminal" freedom in most of his writings on the subject. In 1958 in a lecture at the University of New Mexico, however, he distinguished

Simon recognizes that the *terminus* about which Maritain spoke is achieved by a human mastery over all the possible ways of acting:

[F]reedom proceeds not from any weakness, any imperfection, any feature of potentiality on the part of the agent but, on the contrary, from a particular excellence in power, from a plentitude of being and an abundance of determination, from an ability to achieve mastery over diverse possibilities, from a strength of constitution which makes it possible to attain one's end in a variety of ways.<sup>11</sup>

Further, it is something at which human action *must* aim. The last end of being human is not a matter of choice. This object of human action is "the spontaneous, natural, necessary, and involuntary adherence of the will to the comprehensive good; it is the natural desire for happiness; it is the necessary volition of the last end."<sup>12</sup>

Using the Aristotelian metaphysics of causality, Simon has shown that the final end ultimately conditions and defines all means. Now he asserts that the final end is something to which the will adheres spontaneously and naturally. Human beings necessarily will the last end understood to be the comprehensive good. Given these two premisses, Simon is justified in the claim that choices which lead away from, rather than toward, true freedom, are not free choices. The task is to understand that "freedom of choice, as freedom of choice, calls for the elimination of the power of making wrong choices."<sup>13</sup>

In contrast to what Yves R. Simon has offered as definitive of democratic freedom, the images of democratic freedom that prevail in the United States today make choice alone the ultimate value. To suggest that the range of choices available to U.S. citizens be limited is tantamount in some circles to an assault on human freedom itself. There is little consciousness in the slogans of either the political right or left of this society that the power to choose can be used for bad as well as good ends. The human power to reason among a myriad

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initial freedom from "mature" freedom. His notes for the lecture entitled "Free Choice and Its Relation to Law" (July 8, 1958) include the following: "The maturation of freedom is one with the interiorization of the law, and this is one with the acquiring of the virtues." Jacques Maritain Center, University of Notre Dame; see the file on "Newman Lecture Series: On Authority and Liberty."

<sup>11</sup>Yves R. Simon, *Freedom of Choice*, p. 153.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>13</sup>Yves R. Simon, "On the Foreseeability of Free Acts," *The New Scholasticism* 22, No. 4, (October, 1948), p. 359.

of alternatives for action is not alone a guarantee of human glory. If Simon is right, something else is needed: the power of making wrong choices must be eliminated.

### Prudence: Freedom's Virtue

By *nature* reason makes choice among alternative courses of action possible. That same rational nature, however, is the very one that entails the possibility of making wrong choices. The predicament suggests that another nature would be preferable. That is, it would be easier for human beings to achieve their comprehensive good if the possibility of error could be eliminated. The difficulty is that neither first nature nor final end are objects of choice for human beings. It is within the power of human nature, however, to cultivate a second nature. The character and disposition of human nature can be shaped so that error and illusion in human choosing are all but eliminated.

Simon's answer to how citizens can eliminate the power of making wrong choices requires an examination of virtue, "a quality that renders the will good and consequently less and less capable of making wrong choices."<sup>14</sup> Simon defines virtue as follows: "a *habitus*, that is, a disposition stable or steady by essence, like science and art, not uncertain by essence, like opinion; and which guarantees not only the perfection of a power, but also that of its use. (A quality of which no one makes a wrong use.)"<sup>15</sup>

A disposition is an arrangement of the parts of something "with a view to an effect pertaining to the whole."<sup>16</sup> When the "whole" in question is a human being, Simon says this about disposition:

By a man's disposition we mean precisely the unique arrangement of all his moral traits. And when his arrangement makes him totally reliable and dependable in human affairs, we call both the man and his disposition virtuous. . . . This . . . has always been the common understanding of the

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<sup>14</sup>The first explicit connection between free choice and virtue that I found in Simon's work was in some notes from the spring semester of 1948 at the University of Chicago. The course was entitled, "Freedom of Choice and the Ethics of Liberty." of Simon's papers at the Jacques Maritain Center at the University of Notre Dame Hesburgh library.

<sup>15</sup>Simon from the course notes, "Freedom of Choice and the Ethics of Liberty."

<sup>16</sup>Yves R. Simon, *The Definition of Moral Virtue*, ed. Vukan Kuic (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986, 1989), p. 79.

meaning of virtue: dependability in matters pertaining to the good of man as man.<sup>17</sup>

Still, for people to be considered virtuous, it is not enough for them to be dependable. A person who seems to be programmed to behave in certain ways can be reliable enough but this kind of dependability does not really capture the meaning of virtue. For this reason, Simon distinguishes *habitus* from habit. *Habitus* is grounded in objective necessity and allows for free choice and intention. Mere habit is something else: its character more resembles that of stubborn opinion, having a mechanical nature. This is why a disposition to act that is mere habit cannot characterize virtuous action. “Truly moral action,” says Simon, “is never involuntary. In virtuous action we do precisely what we want to do.”<sup>18</sup> Further, the disposition that is *habitus* is vital, thinking, and creative, always mindful of the objective necessity for which it acts. “Habit relieves us of the need to think; but *habitus* makes us think creatively.”<sup>19</sup>

Something is still missing. Full virtue must be put to good use. In Simon’s definition of virtue its stable essence was both related to science and art and distinguished from them. The distinction rests on how the particular disposition is used. Science, art, and virtue all possess what Simon calls a “qualitative readiness.” The scientist who is highly skilled in syllogistic reasoning and the artist who is a talented painter are both prepared enough, in the qualitative sense, to put their skills to good use. But will they achieve the potential that their talents promise? Only those who possess an “existential readiness,” in addition to their qualitative abilities can achieve the ends for which their talents are useful.<sup>20</sup> An intelligent but lazy scientist, for example, is not likely to make any new discoveries. It is only those whose dispositions are both qualitatively talented and existentially ready who are properly called virtuous.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>21</sup>The phrase, “existential readiness,” is roughly synonymous with finality, (“the good or goodness of a process”). Simon saw the need to coin this new phrase because “finality” is so laden with difficulties not only in discussions among philosophers of different schools, but also between philosophers and scientists. Though biologists, for example, often scoff at the

From the refinements in Simon's original definition of virtue, the following can be said about persons with virtuous dispositions: their moral traits are ordered in a way that makes them dependable in matters pertaining to human goodness. The steady disposition of the virtuous person is not merely the repetition of habit; it is a disposition characterized by free action and mindful of the objective necessity which guides its action. Finally, virtuous persons exhibit, along with the qualitative ability to perform certain acts, an existential readiness to put their skills and talents to good use. It remains to be seen how a virtuous disposition is related to the achievement of democratic freedom.

"Among virtue," Simon says, "there is one which is principally the virtue of freedom. It is the virtue which concerns choice: prudence."<sup>22</sup> Prudence is concerned with choice because it means "wisdom in acting, wisdom in practice, wisdom in what we have referred to as human use."<sup>23</sup> Though choices about the best way to act are certainly subject to the unpredictable and uncontrollable contingencies of life, judgments about how to act do enjoy a truth. The truth that is appropriate to practical judgments enjoys a steadiness that can be assured in the employment of free choice toward the achievement of its natural end.

Speaking of the truth of the practical judgment, we do not refer to its conformity to the reality of things—this conformity cannot be perfectly ascertained—we refer to its conformity with the requirements of a will which is supposed to be sound, healthy, honest. According to the so enlightened view of Aristotle, the certain truth of which the practical judgment is capable is no theoretical but a practical truth; it is not the truth of a cognition but the truth of a direction; it does not consist of a relation of conformity between the mind and things, but in a relation of conformity between the judgment of the mind and the requirements of a right appetite of the end to be pursued.<sup>24</sup>

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notion of a teleology in nature, it is considered perfectly reasonable to discuss the function of a particular organ. Simon recognizes that to discuss the function of something is essentially the same as asking: what is it good for? The problem is that we do not always know the good for which certain natural processes act. For these reasons it makes more sense to speak of "existential readiness" than of finality when discussing the purpose, function or good of a particular disposition. Yves R. Simon, *Definition of Moral Virtue*, p. 71.

<sup>22</sup>From the course notes, "Freedom of Choice and the Ethics of Liberty."

<sup>23</sup>Yves R. Simon, *Definition of Moral Virtue*, p. 96.

<sup>24</sup>Yves R. Simon, *Nature and Functions of Authority*, p. 24.

Any choice for action will be subject to the contingent circumstances of life over which no citizen has control or foreknowledge. In that theoretical sense, actions can only be engaged with a probable certainty of what the outcome will be. In a practical sense, though, a steady principle of truth is assured: the prudential judgment is a “rule of direction” and as such “enjoys an absolute certainty.”<sup>25</sup>

Even though a moral science can be syllogistic when the reasoning is about general or hypothetical moral dilemmas, something more is needed to guide the good person in choosing when the circumstances are concrete and particular. The judgment of *what* to do is certainly an affair of the intellect and in that sense, prudence is an intellectual virtue. Because its judgment is concerned with what to *do*, however, it is also concerned with the will. The intellect relies on right reason for sound judgment. The will, on the other hand, relies on right inclination. This dual vision of prudence toward the intellect and will in human judgment, justifies Simon’s contention that, though moral science can be helpful in guiding concrete moral action, no dependable formula for good action is available for the particularities of our lives. The only dependable indicator, therefore, of the truth of practical judgments is the correct disposition of the person acting.

Simon’s discussion of the prudential judgment makes it clear that its truth lies in the truth of a direction. Such a premise betrays the assumption that there is a best place to go. According to this assumption, prudence shares with freedom the distinction of being misunderstood in our democracy. To be prudent in the United States of the twentieth-century is to protect one’s own self-interest. When President Bush insisted that a course of action “wouldn’t be prudent,” he clearly meant that it would not be in our national *self*-interest. Non-tenured faculty members know that to be prudent, they ought not to be too daring in their criticisms of unjust university policies. The risk is of their job security and their reputations in the academy. Members of the AARP protect their entitlements by threatening to turn from office those public servants who dare to talk of personal sacrifice for the sake of the common interest of the country. It is not “prudent,” therefore, to speak this truth if one’s own elected office is at stake. These examples and others indicate that it is, all too often, not the “truth of a direction”

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<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 25.

that defines prudential judgment in our democracy. Rather, it is the truth of individual self-interest that gives meaning to “being prudent.” In the political philosophy of Yves R. Simon, individual self-interest is not the goal that shapes human freedom. The indissoluble relationship among prudence and the moral virtues reveals that “the best place to go” in the political order is toward the good of the whole human community.

### Justice and the Common Good

Democratic citizens are no different from all other human beings in these ways: they share with everyone the rational nature that entails the possibility of error and illusion; they are destined to will a comprehensive good; they have the ability to cultivate a second nature that makes right choice easy and dependable. Imbedded in this notion of dependability, however, is the mindfulness of the objective necessity which shapes human choice. In the political order this object takes the form of justice, the virtue concerned with human relationships and the good end at which all human choice must aim.

It takes some care to define justice because, though it is the perfected ability to give consistently to “others” that which is their due, the “other” that is the object of this virtue may be either another individual or communal.<sup>26</sup> The subject or moral agent of justice can also be an individual or the community representing the person of one. It is because of the multiple ways in which the subjects and objects of just actions can be understood that the virtue itself is necessarily explained in three modes: commutative, legal, and distributive.<sup>27</sup>

The commutative mode governs the relationships between strictly equal individuals who enter into contractual agreements with one another. If all goes well, what is “due” is clearly defined by the terms of the contract and any arbiter can adjudicate disputes about who owes what to whom. The legal mode of justice is concerned with the relation of individuals to the whole community, what is owed by the parts to the whole, and this too is regulated by law. It is this kind of justice that

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<sup>26</sup>Yves R. Simon, *Definition of Moral Virtue*, p. 98.

<sup>27</sup>The division is Aristotle’s and Aquinas’s and explained very well by Simon in *Definition of Moral Virtue*, pp. 98–100.

is concerned with a tax code, for example, giving all citizens the terms according to which they must contribute their individual earnings to the commonwealth. Finally, distributive justice is concerned with how that commonwealth is redistributed to the citizens; its relation is of the whole to its parts. But strict equality is not the standard according to which the redistribution is completed. Citizens who are victims of a natural disaster, for example, are distinguished by their hardship and may enjoy some financial relief from the federal government. That distribution would not, however, entitle citizens without the hardship to an equal share of that money in the mode of distributive justice.<sup>28</sup>

The question of how to secure distributive justice for a society returns us to a consideration of the virtue of prudence. The law or general principles that govern the distributive relationship in the community must always be applied to the particular and contingent circumstances of life. How does government decide, for example, whether sufficient need exists to distribute precious resources to the victims of a hurricane or an earthquake? Do the victims of a riot deserve similar consideration? If citizens insist on the right to rebuild on a vulnerable beach, should the government continue to finance this kind of risk? The point is that in every application of the principles that are designed to insure justice in the human community, some prudential judgment is required and this judgment cannot be a technological or scientific calculation. The common good is the only standard by which to judge the practical judgments of those whose duty it is to protect the whole community. The predicament of the democratic citizen is that those responsible for distributive justice are the people themselves.

The dependence of justice on prudence is not a one-way street. In fact, Simon tells us that making any prudential judgment requires all of the other virtues.

And that is the whole story: all moral virtues are knotted together in prudence. In any moral situation, we need prudence in order to find the mean, that is, the right answer. But prudence cannot determine this mean by logical derivation from general principles. To know what is the right thing to do in this unique existential situation, the prudent man relies on

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<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*

inclination which, in order to be reliable, must be sound not just in some but in all respects.<sup>29</sup>

Simon's definition of virtue emphasizes the dependability required of the virtuous person. At first it might seem as though a person could lack one virtue yet still be generally dependable. But Simon insists that such people cannot properly be called virtuous. "The good qualities of people who lack one virtue are *hypothetical*, which does not mean that they are not valuable. A good disposition which is hypothetical is not a virtue, it is not even a *habitus*."<sup>30</sup> The example Simon uses is that of the just man who breaks a contract under pressure because of his cowardliness. The dependability of this otherwise just man is threatened by his inability to do the just act when faced with his fear of some loss or suffering. So, his justice is undermined by his lack of courage. So, too, it can be said that a person's prudence suffers if temperance is lacking. Recall the activities of the marine embassy guards whose duty to national security was readily exchanged for time with Soviet prostitutes. It is important to note that claiming that a person cannot have one virtue without having all of them is not the same as claiming that all virtues must be equally developed in the person of good character. In the absence of any one virtue, though, all may be threatened, and this threat undermines the steadiness that is characteristic of virtue itself.

Citizens of democratic governments are uniquely situated when it comes to the development of their virtue and the ends for which their choices are implemented. In contractual arrangements in the commutative relationship, the necessity for which choices are made is merely that of the formal agreement. One citizen agrees to sell a house for a price that another agrees is fair. The steadiness of disposition that is required is that of keeping one's word and of being attentive to both the spirit and the letter of the contract. Each party to the contract negotiates the terms with an eye toward his or her own best interest. But the relationship of the democratic citizen to the distributive mode of justice is something else altogether. When citizens make decisions on the best way to govern, on whom to elect to represent them, the good intended must be that of the whole nation. Such citizens, when

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<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>30</sup>From the course notes, "Freedom of Choice and the Ethics of Liberty."

acting as the self-governing people of a sound democracy, see their individual self-interest taken up in the common good. And this is what makes democratic citizenship unique and challenging. Sometimes responsible citizenship requires the vigorous pursuit of self-interest and sometimes the goal is the good of the whole. A self-governing people needs the wisdom to know the difference.

### Conclusion

In this paper, I have drawn out from the thought of Yves R. Simon the following: a) democratic freedom has the character of an end for which free choice is the means; b) insofar as any choice that fails to achieve its end is empty and illusory, an ability to perfect human choosing, the virtue of prudence, is required; and c) prudence is so intertwined with the moral virtues of justice, fortitude, and temperance that their relationship is one of complete interdependence.

Emerging from Simon's definition of democratic freedom as self-government, there is a distinct understanding of human nature that invites attention. Democratic citizens understand themselves to be acting for ends. They know that with the rational nature that makes choice possible, they also inherit the possibility of making bad choices. To be self-governing is to understand that human beings have the power to shape a second nature that reduces the possibility of error in choice. It is to recognize and honor a destiny in the political order that makes the common good the legitimate end for which they choose. When the government has been taken over by the people, the objective of choice is the nation's good, and the assurance of truth in those choices is the dependable disposition of its citizens. Citizens without virtuous dispositions are incapable of self-government.

Thus, Simon's definition of democratic freedom, the relationship of free choice to the virtue of prudence, and the interdependence of prudence with the other moral virtues, reveals something essential about democratic citizenship. I stand by the claim that government is not properly called democratic if the citizens of that government lack a virtuous character.

As I look around our country today and listen to the political rhetoric, it is precisely this understanding of the citizen that is lacking. "Pro-choice" has become the slogan not only of those who believe that it is up to pregnant women alone to decide whether to carry a pregnancy to term, but also of those who believe that public monies

ought to be used to fund school choices whether they be public or private. When the U.S. citizen “takes over” the government, what ought to be the objective of decision-making in these cases? The answer is, of course, the common good. Yet, I have never heard an argument that it is in the *nation's* interest to allow abortions on demand or to forbid them. Nor have I heard anyone argue the merits or drawbacks of a federal voucher system for education based on what is in the country's best interest in forming the young.

Another example: faced as we are with a huge federal budget deficit, some admit that taxes must be raised or that entitlements must be cut as long as those sacrifices are not requested of them. And many of those who have suggested that individual sacrifices will be required of all if we are to restore our nation's financial integrity have either been voted from office or driven from public service in frustration. Yet when we vote as the governing people in a democracy, it is precisely our vision of the common good that is supposed to shape our decision-making. It is this vision and our responsibility to it that has all but left the consciousness of American citizens.

This brief exploration and application of Simon's moral and political philosophy reveals that there are actually two possible outcomes: we can either stop claiming that our form of government is in any legitimate sense a democratic one, or we can begin attending to what is truly the obligation of democratic citizenship, the formation of a national character that makes self-government possible. To accept the first option is to resign ourselves to enslavement. To commit to the second one is truly to choose for freedom.