

## PART II

### THE VOCATION OF PHILOSOPHY

YVES R. SIMON:  
A QUESTION OF CALLING

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Although he published some forty articles previously, it seems convenient to date the beginning of Yves R. Simon's academic career to the appearance of his two works in 1934, *An Introduction to Metaphysics of Knowledge* and *A Critique of Moral Knowledge*.<sup>1</sup> In the former, he addresses the relation between knowledge and activity or action. To these two lines of inquiry, he added political philosophy, understood as part of ethics in the Aristotelian sense, from the Aquinas Lecture of 1940 to his more complete account in *Philosophy of Democratic Government*.<sup>2</sup>

So while he is primarily known as a political philosopher, a very strong argument can be made that he was above all a metaphysician,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [From 1923-1933, Simon published a number of mostly short articles, in *Les Cahiers Catholiques*, *La Démocratie*, *La Vie Intellectuelle*, and *Revue de Philosophie*. He then published *Introduction à l'ontologie du connaître* (Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1934): English, *An Introduction to Metaphysics of Knowledge*, trans. Vukan Kuic and Richard J. Thompson (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990), and *Critique de la connaissance morale* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1934): English, *A Critique of Moral Knowledge*, trans. Ralph McInerny (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003). For reference to Simon's earliest articles, and also to more recent, and sometimes revised, editions of works cited herein, see Anthony O. Simon's "Definitive Yves R. Simon Bibliography," in *Acquaintance with the Absolute: The Philosophy of Yves R. Simon*, ed. Anthony O. Simon (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 189-293—ED.]

<sup>2</sup> Yves R. Simon, *Nature and Functions of Authority* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1940), and *Philosophy of Democratic Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951). [For Simon's later reflections on authority, see the posthumously published *A General Theory of Authority*, intro. Vukan Kuic (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980)—ED.]

<sup>3</sup> Raymond L. Dennehy says that "metaphysics remains both pervasive in and key to his thinking" in "Yves R. Simon's Metaphysics of Action," in *Acquaintance with the Absolute*, 19.

especially in establishing the basis of his democratic philosophy using the Thomist theory of universals in dealing with issues of equality. Even before his first book, he had expressed praise of metaphysics in an essay on the philosopher Alain.<sup>4</sup> And then, after the *Metaphysics of Knowledge*, there was *Foresight and Knowledge*,<sup>5</sup> a treatise in the philosophy of science which, as Simon remarks, is construed as part of metaphysics, even as was *Trois leçons sur le travail*, in which he says: "Let us pursue then the metaphysical analysis of manual work."<sup>6</sup> And later he refers to the "metaphysical characteristics of contemplation,"<sup>7</sup> indicating at each stage of the analyses that it is metaphysical, as would be the forms of activity between these two principal poles.

We may add to this list the very important essay "On Order in Analogical Sets," stating that "the fundamental concepts of metaphysics are analogical."<sup>8</sup> In like manner, let us consider his treatment of practical knowledge in its various forms: from moral philosophy to prudential determination. In this respect, a rather long period was to pass until Simon reexamined a number of the basic issues contained in the collection entitled *Practical Knowledge*.<sup>9</sup> Of course he had written a treatise on free choice, *Traité du libre arbitre* (1951), revised later in the

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<sup>4</sup> Yves R. Simon, "The Politics of Alain," trans. John M. Dunaway, *Interpretation*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1985): 231.

<sup>5</sup> Yves R. Simon, *Foresight and Knowledge*, eds. Ralph Nelson and Anthony O. Simon (New York: Fordham University Press, 1995), xxi. "We believe that the part of philosophy which takes scientific knowledge as its object is only metaphysics itself in the exercise of its critical function": "Philosophy of Science," *Revue de philosophie*, VI, no. I (1935): 62.

<sup>6</sup> Yves R. Simon, *Trois leçons sur le travail* (Paris: Pierre Téqui, 1938), 2. [For his most mature reflections on work, see *Work, Society, and Culture*, ed. Vukan Kuic (New York: Fordham University Press, 1971)—ED.]

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Yves R. Simon, *Philosopher at Work: Essays by Yves R. Simon*, ed. Anthony O. Simon (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 139.

<sup>9</sup> Yves R. Simon, *Practical Knowledge*, ed. Robert J. Mulvaney (New York: Fordham University Press, 1991).

English translation.<sup>10</sup> His lectures on *The Tradition of Natural Law* and *The Definition of Moral Virtue* were published posthumously.<sup>11</sup>

What is characteristic of Simon's writing on almost any subject is the tendency to return to earlier problems for reconsideration and emendation. The contrast between *A Critique of Moral Knowledge* (1934) and *Practical Knowledge* (with inclusions from 1953 to 1961) is instructive not only on a range of issues, but significantly on the task of moral philosophy itself. In the earlier work, in which the conception of a theoretically practical science was elaborated at length, the purpose of moral philosophy was stated to be "to direct action from a distance, doubtless, but even so efficaciously,"<sup>12</sup> and again he says, "moral philosophy has for its end to direct action, however remotely."<sup>13</sup> Or the purpose could be stated, "to guide action, though from a distance." The repetition of such expressions in the *Critique* suffices to inform us how important this aim was in the earlier case. It also brings to our attention how Simon's meditations had evolved in the following twenty-five years. For in *Practical Knowledge*, while the idea of a directive moral knowledge is not repudiated, there is clearly a different emphasis.

Using the important distinction between explanation and fulfillment, he describes a "discipline in which the features of scientific thought unite with the purpose of directing action."<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, "inasmuch as ethical science directs human action (albeit from a distance), it exercises a function that is entirely foreign to the theoretic sciences."<sup>15</sup> And Simon next wants to emphasize the theoretical side of theoretically practical knowledge: "the primary purpose of moral

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<sup>10</sup> Yves R. Simon, *Traité du libre arbitre* (Liège: Sciences et lettres, 1951); revised English edition *Freedom of Choice*, ed. Peter Wolff (New York: Fordham University, 1969).

<sup>11</sup> Yves R. Simon, *The Tradition of Natural Law*, ed. Vukan Kuic (New York: Fordham University, 1965) and *The Definition of Moral Virtue*, ed. Vukan Kuic (New York: Fordham University, 1986).

<sup>12</sup> Yves R. Simon, *Critique de la connaissance morale*, 87.

<sup>13</sup> Yves R. Simon, *A Critique of Moral Knowledge*, 47.

<sup>14</sup> Yves R. Simon, *Practical Knowledge*, 42.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

philosophy is to understand moral essences."<sup>16</sup> And a little further he adds, "the explanation of moral essences."<sup>17</sup> The reliance on explanation over fulfillment leads him to state "that moral philosophy is principally analytical,"<sup>18</sup> whereas earlier a rather clear cut distinction was made between the analytical aspects of philosophy and the moral synthesis.

Why does he now pay so much attention to the theoretical character of moral philosophy? I think he finds this concentration necessary at a time when tradition and traditional values are in decline, and when there is a general demand, not only in ethics, for reasons to be given and for explanations to be provided; and if that is indeed the situation, then moral philosophy's primary aim in these times is theoretical, analytical, and explanatory. Whatever guidance it can provide now plays a secondary role.

Simon raised questions about moral and social facts in the *Critique*, particularly the relationship between moral philosophy and the social sciences. In an essay that appeared in 1932, he takes up the issue of the role of 'facts' in philosophy generally. This is a topic that certainly shows the influence of Henri Bergson, particularly concerning the use of scientific facts in philosophical discourse. It is a principle of Aristotelian philosophy that the source of all our knowledge is sense experience. Even in metaphysics, which is purely rational, it is also empirical in that it incorporates facts. When it comes to the resolution of concepts, metaphysics is resolved in the intelligible, in being. Physics, on the other hand, resolves its concepts in the observable, the senses. There are also differences between the definitions of terms in the philosophical and empiriological spheres.<sup>19</sup>

In the conclusion of his analysis, Simon indicates "the empirical character of philosophy;" that is, it is based on facts.<sup>20</sup> However, there

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 56. "To say that moral philosophy directs human action *from a distance* is to use a well-grounded metaphor. In fact, the distance is often great."

<sup>19</sup> Yves R. Simon, "Philosophers and Facts," *The Great Dialogue of Nature and Space*, ed. Gerard J. Dalcourt (Albany: Magi Books, 1973), 142.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 144.

are three kinds of fact: the vulgar, the scientific, and the philosophical. "In each case there is an absolute that determines the mind's attitude; in each case it is an experience that resolves the issue."<sup>21</sup> In a more technical formulation: "To formulate a fact then is to make an existential judgment under the guarantee of a sensation."<sup>22</sup> In pursuit of his principal thesis that there are three different levels, so neither science nor philosophy can take a fact from the vulgar or common level without refinement or, let us say, 'transformation.' But more to the point, he rejects the notion of a philosophy based on scientific facts. "Philosophy ought to entrust to nothing but itself the task of establishing the facts which it uses."<sup>23</sup> He offers us a list of philosophical facts:

Being exists; sensible being is multiple and subject to change; every sensible being presents a plurality of parts outside of each other; the things that fall under our sense admit of inequalities of perfection; there is order in the universe; all sensible beings are endowed with activity; there are some beings that are alive and others that are not; there are some beings that can know and some that cannot.<sup>24</sup>

He then adds that "these fundamental philosophical facts are at the same time facts of common experience."<sup>25</sup> However, some of the data of common experience require philosophical grounding: stated somewhat differently, "some philosophical facts can be established only through the technical elaboration of an experience."<sup>26</sup>

Simon uses the expression "*the empirical absolute*"<sup>27</sup> in this context. At the end of "An Essay on Sensation," he returns to this theme when he says:

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 155.

The experimental absolute, the fact, the thing by reason of which we make the difference between to be and not to be, is primarily delivered to us in an act that relativity and fluidity characterize. By going more deeply into the contrasted meanings of the experimental absolute and of the flux in which it is attained, much could be learned about sensation, and also about human nature, for the definition of man implies, among other things, that it is in the flux of a relation to sense qualities that he achieves his first acquaintance with the absolute.<sup>28</sup>

Simon maintains that "there are no metaphysical facts because we experience only physical beings."<sup>29</sup> He distinguishes moral facts from physical facts, and he argues that the former is "absolutely *sui generis*."<sup>30</sup> So there will be facts appropriate to practical knowledge as there are to theoretical. And there are judgments of value just as there are judgments about states of affairs.

Now the previous remarks may give an idea of the range of Simon's interests, but what I shall try to explain is how Simon conceived the vocation of the philosopher, and I believe this can best be discussed by seeing how he approached four topics: common sense, ideology, current affairs, and theology. For my thesis is how the treatment of these topics reveals not only the task of the philosopher, but his vocation as well. Let us begin with the passage that introduces philosophy and common sense: "Common sense includes a rudimentary philosophy and this philosophy formulates facts which a technical philosophy will make its own while rendering their formulation more precise."<sup>31</sup>

No one was a more indefatigable champion of common sense in philosophy than Mortimer Adler. In a series of books spanning some twenty years, he has discussed common sense in philosophy generally, in moral philosophy (ethics and politics), and in regard to Aristotle. Sometimes he seemed to treat common sense as opinion rather than

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<sup>28</sup> Yves R. Simon, "An Essay on Sensation," in *Philosopher at Work*, 111.

<sup>29</sup> Yves R. Simon, *The Great Dialogue of Nature and Space*, 161, n. 8.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

knowledge. However, for the most part he represents it as a kind of knowledge, as in *The Conditions of Philosophy*.<sup>32</sup> When it concerns ethics, however, Adler seems to make common sense more than a starting point that philosophic reason adopts, but the whole itself. In other words, it seems that the ethics of common sense and philosophy are co-extensive. The ethics at stake is Aristotelian, for this is the conclusion one comes to when Adler states, "as Aristotle is uniquely the philosopher of common sense, so his moral philosophy is uniquely the ethics of common sense."<sup>33</sup>

The principal objection to Adler's use of the term, here and elsewhere, is that one never knows precisely what is the object and scope of common sense awareness. I mentioned Adler in order to situate Simon's reflections on common sense and philosophy in regard to a tendency to find a close connection between the two. What, then, are Simon's conclusions?

The most thorough account of common sense can be found in *Freedom of Choice*.<sup>34</sup> Lacking any functional unity, common sense "is an aggregate of propositions, none of which requires, in the mind that assents to it, the refinement of a special and technical training."<sup>35</sup> Not all these propositions are known to all, nor are they "equally clear to all."<sup>36</sup> There are three kinds of proposition: those of a "philosophic character which are the starting point of every philosophy and science, propositions dictated by the leanings of the imagination, and propositions expressing a practical vision of the physical world."<sup>37</sup> And this means that a certain purification is required to render them fit for intellectual inquiry. Simon notes that "science normally conflicts with the imagery of common sense according to which the earth is flat,

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<sup>32</sup> Mortimer J. Adler, *The Conditions of Philosophy* (New York: Atheneum, 1965), 139.

<sup>33</sup> Mortimer J. Adler, *The Time of Our Lives: The Ethics of Common Sense* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1970), 236. See also his *Six Great Ideas* (New York: Macmillan, 1981), 7.

<sup>34</sup> Yves R. Simon, *Freedom of Choice*, 83-94.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*



people at the antipodes have their heads hanging downwards, light bodies cannot fall as fast as heavy ones ... substance is something dense and hard like a desk made of oak, etc."<sup>38</sup>

Sometimes common sense is in conflict with physics, for which "the earth and the feather attract each other, whereas for common sense, the earth attracts the feather, though weakly, and the feather does not attract the earth at all."<sup>39</sup> But sometimes science adopts the common sense understanding of the world, so "the concept of chance occurrence as an unpredictable event is a common sense notion accepted and modified by science."<sup>40</sup> In *Foresight and Knowledge*, this was explained at greater length. And the reason common sense accepts this notion of chance is attributed to its practical perspective, and so what is right in one context, the practical, "may hamper the perception of theoretical truth."<sup>41</sup> Simon counters this common sense (and scientific) proposition by a definition of chance as "*the manifest plurality of the causal process from which it results.*"<sup>42</sup> So the common sense notion of chance is influenced by practical interests. Consequently, since "common sense defines chance in relation to prediction, because it considers chance from the standpoint of action, we should not be surprised that philosophy has to correct common sense on a subject whose human significance never abates."<sup>43</sup>

Simon then turns to what he calls "the rudimentary"—sometimes elementary—"philosophy professed by common sense."<sup>44</sup> This is limited by the images it employs as well as by practical interests. We can say that this rudimentary system is philosophy in an imperfect state. It is the source of technical philosophy as common sense is a source of science. Firstly, it may contain the axioms of universal reason, although Simon says that these axioms are "antecedent to all philosophy and

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Yves R. Simon, *Foresight and Knowledge*, 8.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>44</sup> Yves R. Simon, *Freedom of Choice*, 85.

placed above all philosophy —that of common sense included.”<sup>45</sup> Secondly, a philosophy of common sense includes the statement of philosophical facts. Lastly, he asserts that common sense philosophy includes demonstrations, and he singles out those pertaining to God and to human freedom. But he recognizes that such propositions are in a state in which it is difficult to sort them out. He even refers to “the metaphysics of common sense,” while admitting that “the metaphysical thoughts of common sense are living and active only within an atmosphere saturated with images.”<sup>46</sup> All of this ends up convincing us that common sense philosophy is an imperfect state, immersed in imagery, and lacking adequate means of communicability.

As to the common sense notion of freedom, it may grasp the relation between reason and responsibility and freedom. It is sometimes believed that the deliverances of common sense are sufficient for philosophical demonstration and this is not supported by Simon. What he has tried to show is how rudimentary and inadequate such a common sense philosophy is, in order to make the case for a “technically elaborated apparatus.”<sup>47</sup>

So in comparing Adler’s position with that articulated by Simon, there is no doubt that common sense is a source for both of them, and there may be agreement between them concerning the common sense presuppositions of technical philosophy. However, the salient difference between the two is that Adler wanted to identify both his ethics and his political philosophy with common sense, while Simon never expressed, nor suggested, such an idea. He was intent on pointing out the contrast between them.

If philosophy, in Simon’s estimation, is not the same as common sense as a system of thought, it is important for him to distinguish it from another system of thought more likely to be confused with it: ideology. The relevant texts on the comparison of the two are found in *The Tradition of Natural Law*, based on a course given at the University of Chicago in the winter quarter of 1958. “An ideology is a system of propositions which, though indistinguishable so far as expression goes

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 89-90.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 94.

from statements about facts and essences, actually refers not so much to any real state of affairs as to the *aspirations* of a society at a certain *time* in its evolution."<sup>48</sup> Since a natural law theory may be either philosophical or ideological, we have to show in a more precise way what factors divide them. This is found in the definition of ideology and in its three major components. Its notion of truth is utilitarian, sociological, and evolutionistic.<sup>49</sup> This means that it is an instrument of change or preservation; the aspirations it expresses are those of a definite group, and "when that group expresses its timely aspirations in the language of everlasting truth."<sup>50</sup> As an instance of a writer who is noted for his slavery ideology, Simon mentions the political works of John C. Calhoun. He does not question the sincerity of such statements.

Philosophy, on the contrary, sees in its propositions an objective property, not founded on the "sociological weight of common belief."<sup>51</sup> To this extent an ideology is similar to folklore, superstition, and old wives' tales. "An ideology, precisely considered as such, is a system of propositions which carry a heavy sociological weight."<sup>52</sup> The philosopher's role is to examine an ideology for its truth-value and he can be called a critic of ideology. "Ideology imitates philosophy; it uses expressions principally relative to essential, intelligible, and everlasting necessities."<sup>53</sup> Thus one can contrast the two because ideology involves "an object of desire," while "the object of philosophy is a pure object."<sup>54</sup>

Simon does not want to exaggerate the degree to which philosophy and science are successful in turning out completely demonstrative arguments, nor does he believe that it is an easy task to keep philosophy from the contamination of ideology. Only a perfect philosophy could achieve this. He is of the opinion that the Greek

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<sup>48</sup> Yves R. Simon, *The Tradition of Natural Law*, 16-17.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

philosophers succeeded in transcending these social aspirations, though he thought that Aristotle, so exemplary in this regard, was not free from ideological influences when he deals with manual labor and slavery. This transcendence is clearly more difficult in moral matters. Natural law enters the picture here, and there have always been legal scholars like Hans Kelsen to argue that all natural law theories are ideological.<sup>55</sup>

Having shown ways in which philosophy and ideology are different, Simon admits that sometimes there is an identity between an ideology and a philosophy, and a society might consider itself blessed "when aspirations coincide with truth."<sup>56</sup> However, I think that his basic message is that there is an inevitable tension between the philosophical vocation and the ideological temptation; that is, there are contemporary instances of ideological contamination of the particular kind that leads philosophers to abandon or hide the truth. That is, he was concerned with the need to resist the siren songs of twentieth century ideologies.

There is a passage in which Simon raises the issue of the function of philosophers in society that provides a transition to our next theme, the philosopher and commentary on current events. "Are there circumstances in which philosophers are called to utter judgments about present events and trends and by public statement to try to influence history?"<sup>57</sup> Writing as he did in the last years of his life, Simon's question might seem merely rhetorical. Yet there were obviously problems in undertaking that task since a philosopher spends a good deal of time doing research in libraries, and he is mainly experienced in the treatment of abstract ideas. Moreover, "a philosopher is not equipped to handle contingent matters and he probably can never fully escape the ideological influence of the society in which he lives."<sup>58</sup> Yet, on the positive side, he knows what prudence

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<sup>55</sup> Hans Kelsen, *Pure Theory of Law*, trans. Max Knight (Berkeley: University of California, 1967), 217-21.

<sup>56</sup> Yves R. Simon, *The Tradition of Natural Law*, 24.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

is, and as a student of theoretically practical science, he is qualified as a moral educator.

In *The March to Liberation*, Simon, speaking as a “man of science by profession,”<sup>59</sup> with a responsibility for serving humanity, will discuss specific issues that have arisen in the Second World War. In *Community of the Free*, a “reflection upon the concrete conditions of public morality in these days in which we live,”<sup>60</sup> he confronts the confusion of consciences and what he calls “mechanisms of illusion.” “A philosopher has some chance of making himself useful by trying to understand the operation of these mechanisms and exposing them.”<sup>61</sup> This work is particularly interesting for, in the course of dealing with the concrete conditions, the moral philosopher who as a theoretician examines the question of truth, defines the freedom of autonomy, argues for a universal ethics, invokes the principles of commutative justice, and remarks on what is wrong with the use of quotas.

So beginning with *La Compagne d’Ethiopie et la pensée politique française* (1936),<sup>62</sup> continuing with *The Road to Vichy: 1918-1938* (1942)<sup>63</sup> and the *March to Liberation* (1942) and finally with the original version of *Community of the Free* (1945), Simon addressed contemporary political issues. Did he succeed in avoiding ideological bias in these works? I think he did.

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<sup>59</sup> Yves R. Simon, *La Marche à la délivrance* (New York: Editions de la maison française, 1942), 10; English, *The March to Liberation*, trans. Victor M. Hamm (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: The Tower Press, 1942), 102. I have used the French original because the English translation is inaccurate here.

<sup>60</sup> Yves R. Simon, *Community of the Free*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), ix.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

<sup>62</sup> Yves R. Simon, *La Compagne d’Ethiopie et la pensée politique française* (Lille: Société d’impressions littéraires, industrielles, et commerciales, 1936). [For a revised English edition, see *The Ethiopian Campaign and French Political Thought*, ed. Anthony O. Simon, trans. Robert Royal (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009)—ED.]

<sup>63</sup> Yves R. Simon, *The Road to Vichy: 1918-1938*, revised edition, trans. James A. Corbett and George J. McMorrow, new introduction by John Hellman (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988).

However, the reasons for the philosopher occupying himself—"making himself useful"—with such practical and contingent events was not brought out clearly until his lectures on the tradition of natural law in 1958. Simon first states the problem:

When souls devastated by skepticism, desperation, and meaninglessness express their willingness to believe that the universe of morality is not merely a tale told by an idiot, philosophers would fail in their function if they requested these eager souls to wait until definitions are perfect, deductions strict, and axioms expressed in incontrovertible formulas.<sup>64</sup>

Accordingly, "the appropriate behavior may be described as a movement back and forth between the kind of thought and expression that the state of society and souls urgently require and the condition of theoretical purity and intelligible lucidity, which can be approached only very slowly and only through many trials and errors."<sup>65</sup> That explains what Simon hoped to achieve in his reflections on current affairs from 1936 to 1945.

Finally, let us examine the relationship between the philosopher and theology, supernatural theology. In a rare piece in which he directly deals with theology, Simon addressed the topic of "The Rationality of Christian Faith."<sup>66</sup> More precisely he analyzes faith, philosophy, and theology. This paper may be seen as a completion of his epistemological project since he compares philosophy and theology, in order to clearly mark their distinctive realms, their starting points, their demonstrations, and their conclusions. It is an extremely fine, rich account of theology, but it is not controversial.

On the other hand, he reported on Jacques Maritain's position that moral philosophy must be subalternated to theology if it is to be adequate to its object, as first expressed in *An Essay on Christian Philosophy*. Simon's remark in a footnote in *Critique* is noncommittal: "The idea is quite new, open to discussion, and we do not mean to take

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<sup>64</sup> Yves R. Simon, *The Tradition of Natural Law*, 39.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Yves R. Simon, "The Rationality of Christian Faith," *Philosopher at Work*, 41-55.

a stand on it now."<sup>67</sup> In fact, a considerable time was to pass before Simon took up the subject again, particularly in his extensive correspondence with Maritain. Concerning the question of moral philosophy, Simon says, "our own position is that a purely rational moral philosophy is essentially misleading."<sup>68</sup> He admits the possibility of a moral philosophy adequately taken. But he wonders if it is just "a duplicate of moral theology."<sup>69</sup> After reviewing the various factors in play, Simon states: "I merely raise this question without attempting to answer it, or even to formulate it properly."<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, he insists that "better judges will be able to say whether all this weighs in favor of a moral philosophy adequately taken, subalternated indeed to theology, but distinct from it."<sup>71</sup>

The exchange between Simon and Maritain, I believe, shows some misunderstanding, especially on the latter's part. Simon remarks that "my remaining doubts concerning the necessity of a moral philosophy adequately taken would vanish forever."<sup>72</sup> So to some extent Simon does not seem completely convinced. But I think Maritain overlooks Simon's tentativeness when he writes: "I am very happy with our agreement over the notion of moral philosophy adequately considered."<sup>73</sup> Now if those were all the indications we had, it might be impossible to discover where Simon comes down on this point.

In his last public appearance, speaking about Jacques Maritain, Simon pointed out the difference between Maritain and himself, particularly in regard to moral philosophy. From the very start Simon was hesitant to accept Maritain's idea of moral philosophy subalternated to theology. He then came to contrast the two positions:

Whether it is desirable that philosophical issues be treated in a state of abstraction or in a concrete condition of association

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<sup>67</sup> Yves R. Simon, *A Critique of Moral Knowledge*, 61, n. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Yves R. Simon, *Practical Knowledge*, 95.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

with the problems of our supernatural destiny, I would not hesitate to say that it is, to a large extent, a question of calling. I am strongly attracted by the method of isolation because it furnishes special guarantees of epistemological purity and logical rigor.<sup>74</sup>

Philosophy is not the same as common sense; it should seek to avoid ideological contamination; it may have the responsibility in certain situations to comment on current affairs; and, if the method of isolation is accepted, would keep its distance from theology. Such are the conclusions to be drawn from this exercise.

Simon had often stressed the disagreements between philosophers, the solitariness of the philosophical life, and the virtues required to pursue this vocation:

A philosopher who has ever succeeded in communicating his inspiration together with his demonstration, and who has experienced the joy of a friendship born of such communication, will always feel that if he had to choose again, philosophy would again be his calling.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Yves R. Simon, "Jacques Maritain: The Growth of a Christian Philosopher," in Joseph W. Evans (ed.), *Jacques Maritain: The Man and His Achievement* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 23.

<sup>75</sup> Yves R. Simon, "The Philosopher's Calling," *Philosopher at Work*, 6.