

QUESTION 48

The Parts of Prudence in General

Next we have to consider the parts of prudence. And on this topic there are four things to inquire into: first, what sorts of parts prudence has; second, what the quasi-integral parts of prudence are; third, what the subjective parts of prudence are; and, fourth, what the potential parts of prudence are.

The Only Article

Are the parts of prudence appropriately assigned?

It seems that the parts of prudence are not appropriately assigned:

Objection 1: In *Rhetoric* 2 Tully posits three parts of prudence, viz., memory (*memoria*), intelligence (*intelligentia*), and foresight (*providentia*). On the other hand, Macrobius, according to Plotinus's opinion, attributes six parts to prudence, viz., reasoning (*ratio*), understanding (*intellectus*), circumspection (*circumspectio*), foresight (*providentia*), docility (*docilitas*), and caution (*cautio*). By contrast, in *Ethics* 6 Aristotle says that good deliberation (*euboulia*), good common judgment (*synesis*), and good particular judgment (*gnome*) belong to prudence; and in connection with prudence he also mentions quick-wittedness (*eustochia*), shrewdness (*solertia*), good sense (*sensus*), and understanding (*intellectus*). And a certain other Greek philosopher claims that prudence involves ten things, viz., good deliberation (*euboulia*), shrewdness (*solertia*), foresight (*providentia*), ruling prudence (*regnativa*), military prudence (*militaris*), political prudence (*politica*), economic prudence (*oeconomica*), dialectical prudence (*dialectica*), rhetorical prudence (*rhetorica*), and physical prudence (*physica*). Therefore, it seems either that one of these assignments is excessive or that another is deficient.

Objection 2: Prudence is divided off as a contrary to science. But the political, the economic, the dialectical, the rhetorical and the physical are types of science. Therefore, they are not parts of prudence.

Objection 3: The parts do not exceed the whole. But intellectual memory (*memoria intellectiva*), i.e., intelligence (*intelligentia*), reasoning (*ratio*), good sense (*sensus*), and docility (*docilitas*) belong not only to prudence but to all cognitive habits. Therefore, they should not be posited as parts of prudence.

Objection 4: Just as *deliberating* (*consiliari*), *judging* (*iudicare*), and *commanding* (*praecipere*) are acts of practical reason, so, too, as was established above (*ST* 1-2, q. 16, a. 1), is *using* (*uti*). Therefore, just as good deliberation (*euboulia*), which pertains to deliberating, is adjoined to prudence, and just as good common judgment (*synesis*) and good particular judgment (*gnome*), which pertain to judgment, are adjoined to prudence, so, too, something pertaining to use should likewise have been posited.

Objection 5: As was established above (q. 47, a. 9), solicitude belongs to prudence, Therefore, solicitude should have been posited as one of the parts of prudence.

I respond: There are three kinds of parts: (a) *integral parts*, in the way that the walls, roof, and foundation are parts of a house; (b) *subjective parts*, in the way that *ox* and *lion* are parts of *animal*; and (c) *potential parts*, in the way that the nutritive and the sentient are parts of the soul. Therefore, there are three ways in which parts can be assigned to a virtue:

(a) First, by way of a similarity to *integral parts*, viz., in the sense that what are called the parts of the virtue are the things that must come together for a complete or perfect act of that virtue (*quae necesse est concurrere ad perfectum actum virtutis illius*). And in this sense one can designate eight parts of prudence from all the things enumerated above, viz., the six parts that Macrobius enumerates; a seventh that is added to them, viz., memory (*memoria*), posited by Tully; and quick-wittedness or shrewdness (*eustochia sive solertia*), posited by Aristotle. (For 'good sense' (*sensus*) is also called 'understanding' (*intellectus*), and this is why in *Ethics* 6 the Philosopher says, "Of these it is necessary to have good sense (*sensus*), i.e., understanding (*intellectus*).")

Now five of these eight parts have to do with prudence insofar as it is *cognitive*, viz., memory (*memoria*), reasoning (*ratio*), understanding (*intellectus*), docility (*docilitas*), and shrewdness (*solertia*), whereas the other three have to do with prudence insofar as prudence *gives commands* by applying the cognition to an action, viz., foresight (*providentia*), circumspection (*circumspectio*), and caution (*cautio*).

The reason for this diversity is clear from the fact that there are three things to think about concerning *cognition*:

The first is *the cognition itself*. If the cognition is about things that are past, then it is *memory*, whereas if it is about things that are present—regardless of whether they are necessary or contingent—it is called *understanding (intellectus)* or *intelligence (intelligentia)*.

The second is *the acquisition of the cognition*. This acquisition occurs either through teaching, and *docility (docilitas)* is relevant to this, or through discovery, and *quick-wittedness (eustochia)*, i.e., *good guessing (bona coniecturatio)*, is relevant here. As *Ethics* 6 points out, part of the latter is *shrewdness (solertia)*, which, as *Posterior Analytics* 1 explains, is the quick guessing of the middle terms [of syllogisms].

The third thing to consider is *the use of the cognition*, viz., insofar as, on the basis of the things that are known, one proceeds to have cognition of, or to judge, other things. And this belongs to reasoning (*ratio*).

On the other hand, in order that reason might *give commands* correctly, it should have three things:

The first is that it should command (*ordinet*) something that is appropriate to the end, and this pertains to *foresight (providentia)*.

The second is that it should pay attention to the circumstances of the matter at hand, and this pertains to circumspection (*circumspectio*).

Third, it has to avoid obstacles, and this pertains to *caution (cautio)*.

(b) Now the *subjective parts* of a virtue are its diverse species. And in this sense the parts of prudence, taken properly, are the prudence by which one *governs himself (regit seipsum)* and the prudence by which one *governs a multitude (regit multitudine)*; these two differ in species, as has been explained (q. 47, a. 11).

Again, the prudence by which one governs a multitude is divided into diverse species in keeping with the diverse kinds of multitudes.

There are some multitudes that are brought together for some special task; for instance, an army is assembled in order to fight, and it is governed by *military prudence (prudencia militaris)*. On the other hand, there are multitudes united for the whole of life, e.g., the multitude of a household or family, which is governed by *economic prudence*, or the multitude of a city or kingdom, which is directed by *kingly prudence* in the ruler and what is called *political prudence* simply speaking in the subjects.

Now as was explained above (q. 47, a. 2), if ‘prudence’ is taken so broadly as to include even speculative science, then one may also posit as parts of prudence *dialectical prudence, rhetorical prudence, and physical prudence*, in accord with the three modes of proceeding in the sciences. One of them, viz., physical prudence, is for effecting scientific knowledge through demonstration. The second mode, which belongs to dialectical prudence, is for fashioning opinions from what is more probable. And the third mode, viz., *rhetorical prudence*, is for inducing impressions (*suspiciones*) from conjectures or for persuading in some way. However, these three species of prudence can belong even to prudence properly speaking, which reasons sometimes from things that are necessary, sometimes from things that are more probable, and sometimes from conjectures.

(c) Now the *potential parts* of a given virtue are adjoining virtues that are ordered toward certain secondary acts or subject matters—not having, as it were, the full power of the principal virtue. And in this sense the parts of prudence are *good deliberation (euboulia)*, which has to do with deliberating; *good common judgment (synesis)*, which has to do with situations that commonly occur; and *good particular judgment (gnome)*, which has to do with situations in which one must sometimes depart from the

common law. By contrast, prudence has to do with the principal act, which is to command.

Reply to objection 1: The diverse assignments of parts differ insofar as different kinds of parts are being posited, or, alternatively, insofar as many parts of one assignment are being included within one part of another assignment. For instance, Tully includes caution and circumspection under foresight, and reason, docility, and shrewdness under intelligence.

Reply to objection 2: The economic and the political are not being taken here as sciences, but are instead being taken insofar as they are types of prudence. The reply to the other three examples is clear from what has been said.

Reply to objection 3: All these things are posited as parts of prudence not in all their generality but according to the relation they have to the things that pertain to prudence.

Reply to objection 4: To command correctly and to use correctly are always concomitant with one another, since the obedience of the lower powers, which pertain to use, follows upon reason's command.

Reply to objection 5: Solicitude is included in the notion of foresight.