QUESTION 49

The Integral Parts of Prudence

Next we have to consider each of the quasi-integral parts of prudence. And on this topic we will inquire into these eight parts: (1) memory; (2) understanding (or intelligence); (3) docility; (4) shrewdness; (5) reasoning; (6) foresight (or providence); (7) circumspection; and (8) caution.

Article 1

Is memory a part of prudence?

It seems that memory is not a part of prudence:

Objection 1: As the Philosopher shows, memory exists in the sentient part of the soul. But as is clear from *Ethics* 6, prudence exists in the reasoning part. Therefore, memory is not a part of prudence.

Objection 2: Prudence is acquired through, and progresses by means of, experience. But memory exists in us by nature. Therefore, memory is not a part of prudence.

Objection 3: Memory is about past things. But as *Ethics* 6 explains, prudence has to do with future actions about which there is deliberation,. Therefore, memory is not a part of prudence.

But contrary to this: In *Rhetorica* 2 Tully posits memory among the parts of prudence.

I respond: As has been explained (q. 47, a. 5), prudence has to do with contingent actions (*est circa contingentia operabilia*). Now in these matters a man cannot be guided by what is true absolutely speaking and with necessity, but is instead guided by what occurs in most cases (*in pluribus*). For as *Ethics* 6 explains, the principles must be proportionate to the conclusions, and from principles of a certain sort one reaches conclusions of that sort.

Now it is through experience that one must come to examine what is true for the most part, and this is why in *Ethics* 2 the Philosopher says that intellectual virtue derives its generation and increase from time and experience. But as is clear from *Metaphysics* 1, experience is composed of many memories (*experimentum est ex pluribus memoriis*). Hence, it follows that having memory of many things is required for prudence. This is why memory is appropriately posited as a part of prudence.

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained (q. 47, aa. 3 and 6), prudence applies universal cognition to the particulars of which there is sensation. Hence, many things that belong to the sentient part of the soul are required for prudence, and among them is memory.

Reply to objection 2: Just as there is an aptitude for prudence by nature, whereas its perfection (*completio*) comes from exercise or grace, so, too, as Tully explains in his *Rhetorica*, memory does not only proceed from nature, but also involves a lot of skill and diligence. There are four ways in which a man makes progress in remembering well:

The first is to think of appropriate, but not altogether common, similitudes of the things he wants to remember; for we are more struck with wonder at what is uncommon, and so the mind lingers longer and more intensely over those things—which is why we remember to a greater degree things that we saw in childhood. Therefore, finding similitudes or images of what we want to remember is necessary; for simple and spiritual ideas slip away from the mind unless they are, as it were, tied down to it by certain corporeal similitudes, since human cognition is more powerful with respect to things that can be sensed. This is also why a power to remember is posited in the sentient part of the soul.

Second, a man must arrange in an orderly way the things that he wishes to hold in his memory, so that he might easily proceed from one remembered thing to another. Hence, in *De Memoria* the Philosopher says, "Sometimes individuals seem to remember things by their positions (*a locis*); this is the reason why they quickly pass from the one to the other."

Third, a man must proceed with solicitude and apply his affections to those things that he wants to remember, since the more something is impressed on the mind, the less it slips away. Hence, in his

Rhetorica Tully says, "Solicitude preserves the figures of images entire."

Fourth, we must frequently think about what we want to remember. Hence, in *De Memoria* the Philosopher says that "meditating preserves memory," since, as is explained in the same book, "custom is like a nature. This is why we remember quickly what we have thought about many times, proceeding in a quasi-natural order from one thing to another."

Reply to objection 3: It is necessary for us to make an argument, as it were, from past things to future things (*ex praeteritis oportet nos quasi argumentum sumere de futuris*). And so the memory of past things is necessary for us to deliberate well about future things.

Article 2

Is understanding a part of prudence?

It seems that understanding (*intellectus*) is not a part of prudence:

Objection 1: Among things that are divided off as opposites, one is not a part of the other. But as is clear from *Ethics* VI, understanding is posited as an intellectual virtue divided off from prudence. Therefore, understanding should not be posited as a part of prudence.

Objection 2: Understanding is posited among the gifts of the Holy Spirit and, as was established above (q. 8, aa. 1 and 8), it goes with [the virtue of] faith. But as is clear from what was said above (q. 4, a. 8 and *ST* 1-2, q. 62, a. 2), prudence is a virtue distinct from faith. Therefore, understanding does not belong to prudence.

Objection 3: As is explained in *Ethics* 6, prudence has to do with singular actions. But as is clear from *De Anima* 3, understanding involves the cognition of things that are universal and immaterial. Therefore, understanding is not a part of prudence.

But contrary to this: Tully posits intelligence (*intelligentia*) as a part of prudence, and Macrobius posits understanding (*intellectus*), which amounts to the same thing.

I respond: 'Understanding' is not being taken here for an intellective power, but is instead being taken as implying a correct estimation of a last principle (*aliquid extremum principium*) that is taken as known in its own right—just as we are likewise said to understand the first principles of a demonstration. Now every deduction of reason proceeds from certain things that are taken as primary. Hence, every process of reasoning proceeds from something that is understood. Therefore, since prudence is right reason with respect to actions, it follows that the whole process of prudence must be derived from understanding. And it is for this reason that understanding is posited as a part of prudence.

Reply to objection 1: Prudence's reasoning terminates in a particular action (*ad particulare operabile*) as a conclusion, and, as is clear from what has been said, it applies universal cognition to the action. Now in a syllogism a singular conclusion comes from a universal proposition and a singular proposition. Hence, prudence's reasoning must proceed from two sorts of understanding:

One of them has cognition of universals. This belongs to the sort of understanding that is posited as an intellectual virtue, since what are naturally known to us are not just universal *speculative* principles, but also, as is clear from what was said above (q. 47, a. 6), universal *practical* principles, e.g., *Evil is not to be done to anyone*.

By contrast, the other sort of understanding is that which, as is explained in *Ethics* 6, involves cognition of the *last* principle, i.e., of some first singular and contingent action, viz., the minor premise, which, as has been explained (q. 47, a. 6), has to be a singular proposition in prudence's syllogism. As is explained in the same place, this first singular item is a singular end (*singularis finis*). Hence, the sort of understanding that is posited as a part of prudence is the correct estimation of some particular end.

Reply to objection 2: As is clear from what was said above (q. 8, a. 1), the sort of understanding

that is posited as a gift of the Holy Spirit is a certain sharp perception of divine things. But as has been explained, it is in a different sense that understanding is posited as a part of prudence.

Reply to objection 3: The correct estimation of a particular end is itself called (a) 'understanding' insofar as it has to do with some principle and (b) 'good sense' (*sensus*) insofar as it is particular. This is what the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 6: "With respect to these things," viz., singular things, "one must have good sense, i.e., understanding." However, this should be thought of as applying to the *interior sense* by which we pass judgment on particulars and not to the *particular senses* by which we have cognition of proper sensibles.

Article 3

Should docility be posited as a part of prudence?

It seems that docility (*docilitas*) should not be posited as a part of prudence:

Objection 1: What is required for every intellectual virtue should not be appropriated to any one of them. But docility is necessary for every intellectual virtue. Therefore, it should not be posited as a part of prudence.

Objection 2: The things that are relevant to the human virtues are within our power (*sunt in nobis*), since we are praised or blamed according to what is within our power. But it is not within our power to become docile; rather, this happens to some individuals because of their natural disposition. Therefore, it is not part of prudence.

Objection 3: Docility belongs to a student (*discipulus*). But since prudence gives precepts (*est praeceptiva*), it seems instead to belong to teachers. Therefore, docility is not a part of prudence.

But contrary to this: According to Plotinus's opinion, Macrobius posits docility among the parts of prudence.

I respond: As was explained above (a. 2 and q. 47, aa. 3-6), prudence has to do with particular actions. Since there can be, as it were, an infinite diversity among such actions, they cannot all be sufficiently taken into account by a man. Hence, in those matters that pertain to prudence a man especially needs to learn from others, and especially from older people who have acquired a sound understanding concerning the ends in matters of action (*sanum intellectum adepti sunt circa fines operabilium*).

This is why the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 6, "It is necessary to pay attention to the indemonstrable pronouncements and opinions of people who are experienced and older and prudent no less than to their demonstrations, since they have insight into principles because of their experience." Hence, Proverbs 3:5 says, "Do not depend on your own prudence," and Ecclesiasticus 6:15 says, "Stand in the multitude of the prudent presbyters"—i.e., the prudent older people—"and join yourself from your heart to their wisdom."

Now one's being readily receptive to teaching (*bene disciplinae susceptivus*) pertains to docility. And so docility is appropriately posited as a part of prudence.

Reply to objection 1: Even though docility is indeed useful for every intellectual virtue, it is especially useful for prudence, for the reason already explained.

Reply to objection 2: Like the other things that belong to prudence, docility is from nature as regards one's aptitude for it, but as regards its perfection human effort is much more important, viz., when a man solicitously, frequently, and respectfully applies his mind to the teachings of the learned (*documentis maiorum*), not neglecting them out of laziness or despising them out of pride.

Reply to objection 3: As has been explained (q. 47, a. 12), through prudence one issues precepts not only to others, but even to his very self. Hence, as was explained above (q. 47, a. 12), this likewise

plays a role in the case of the subjects [of rulers], and so docility belongs to their prudence.

However, even the rulers themselves must be docile with respect to some things; for as has been explained, in the matters that fall under prudence, no one is sufficient unto himself with respect to all of them.

Article 4

Is shrewdness a part of prudence?

It seems that shrewdness (*solertia*) is not a part of prudence:

Objection 1: As is clear from *Posterior Analytics* 1, shrewdness has to do with easily finding middle terms in demonstrations. But prudence's reasoning is not demonstrative, since it has to do with contingent things. Therefore, shrewdness does not belong to prudence.

Objection 2: As *Ethics* 6 explains, it belongs to prudence to deliberate well. But in deliberating well there is no room for shrewdness, which is a certain sort of quick-wittedness (*eustochia*) or good guessing (*bona coniecturatio*), and which occurs quickly and without discursive reasoning. By contrast, as *Ethics* 6 points out, deliberation has to be slow. Therefore, shrewdness should not be posited as a part of prudence.

Objection 3: As has been explained (q. 48), shrewdness is a certain sort of good guessing. But it is proper to rhetoricians to make use of conjectures. Therefore, shrewdness belongs more to rhetoric than to prudence.

But contrary to this: In *Etymologia* Isidore says, "The solicitous individual is one who is shrewd (*solers*) and quick (*citus*)." But as was explained above, solicitousness belongs to prudence. Therefore, so does shrewdness.

I respond: A prudent individual has a correct estimation of what is to be done. Now in matters of action, as in speculative matters, a correct estimation or opinion is acquired in two ways: (a) by discovering it on one's own and (b) by learning it from another. And just as docility has to do with a man's doing well in acquiring a correct estimation from another, so shrewdness has to do with a man's doing well in acquiring a correct estimation on his own.

However, this is so on the assumption that shrewdness (*solertia*) is being taken for quick-wittedness (*eustochia*), which it is a part of. For quick-wittedness is good guessing with respect to anything whatsoever, whereas shrewdness is easy and prompt guessing with respect to finding a middle term—as is explained in *Posterior Analytics* 1. Yet the philosopher who posits shrewdness as a part of prudence is taking shrewdness for the whole of quick-wittedness (*eustochia*), and this is why he says, "Shrewdness is the habit which acts quickly to find what is appropriate."

Reply to objection 1: As the Philosopher explains in the same place, shrewdness has to do with finding the middle term not only in demonstrative matters, but also in matters of action—as, for instance, when someone, upon seeing that certain men have become friends, guesses that they are enemies of the same individual. It is in this sense that shrewdness belongs to prudence.

Reply to objection 2: In *Ethics* 6 the Philosopher sets forth a sound argument to show that *euboulia*, which is good demonstration, is not *eustochia*, the value of which lies in quick thinking about what is needed. By way of contrast, someone can be a good at deliberating even if his deliberation takes a longer time or is more drawn out.

However, this does not rule out good guessing being an aid to good deliberating. Sometimes the good guessing is necessary, viz., when something that needs to be done comes up unexpectedly. This is why shrewdness is appropriately posited as a part of prudence.

Reply to objection 3: Rhetoric likewise thinks about actions. Hence, nothing prevents the same

thing from belonging to both rhetoric and prudence. And yet 'making guesses' (*coniecturationes*) is being taken here not only insofar as it pertains to the sort of conjectures that rhetoricians make use of, but insofar as a man is said to guess the truth in any sort of matter.

Article 5

Is reason (or good reasoning) a part of prudence?

It seems that reason (or good reasoning) (*ratio*) is not a part of prudence:

Objection 1: The subject of an accident is not a part of the accident. But as *Ethics* 6 explains, prudence has reason for its subject. Therefore, reason should not be posited as a part of prudence.

Objection 2: What is common to many things should not be posited as a part of any of them—or, if it is posited as a part, then it should be posited as a part of the one which it best fits. Now reason is necessary for every intellectual virtue, and especially for scientific knowledge (*scientia*) and wisdom (*sapientia*), which make use of demonstrative reason. Therefore, reason should not be posited as a part of prudence.

Objection 3: As was established above (*ST* 1-2, q. 79, a. 8), reason (*ratio*) does not differ in its essence from the intellect (*intellectus*). Therefore, if understanding (*intellectus*) is posited as a part of prudence, then it was superfluous to add reason as a part of prudence.

But contrary to this: According to the opinion of Plotinus, Macrobius numbers reason among the parts of prudence.

I respond: As *Ethics* 6 says, "It belongs to the prudent individual to deliberate well." But deliberation (*consilium*) is a certain sort of inquiry that proceeds from certain things to other things. But this is the work of reason. Hence, for prudence it is necessary that a man reason well (*sit bene ratiocinativus*). And since those things that are needed for the perfection of prudence are called 'required parts' or 'quasi-integral parts' of prudence, it follows that reason ought to be numbered among the parts of prudence.

Reply to objection 1: 'Reason' is being taken here not for *the power itself* of reason, but instead for *the good use* of reason.

Reply to objection 2: The certitude of reason comes from understanding (*ex intellectu*), but the necessity for reason comes from a lack of understanding (*ex defectu intellectus*). For beings such as God and the angels, in whom the intellective power exists in its full vigor (*plenarie viget*), do not need reason or reasoning (*ratione non indigent*).

Now the particular actions that are directed by prudence are especially remote from the condition of being intelligible (*recedunt praecipue ab intelligibilium conditione*), and the greater the distance, the less certain or determinate they are. For instance, as *Ethics* 3 explains, even though the things that belong to an art or skill are singulars, they are nonetheless more certain or determinate, and so there is no deliberation involved in most of them because of their certitude. And so even though in certain other intellectual virtues the reasoning is more certain than prudence is, nonetheless, what is required for prudence is that a man reason well, in order that he might be able to do well in applying universal principles to particulars, which are diverse and uncertain.

Reply to objection 3: Even though reason and the intellect are not diverse powers, nonetheless, they are named from diverse acts. For the name 'intellect' (*intellectus*) is taken from an inward penetration of the truth, whereas the name 'reason' is taken from inquiry and discourse. And so, as is clear from what has been said, both are posited as parts of prudence.

Article 6

Should foresight be posited as a part of prudence?

It seems that foresight or providence (*providentia*) should not be posited as a part of prudence:

Objection 1: Nothing is a part of itself. But foresight seems to be the same thing as prudence, since as Isidore says in *Etymologia*, "The one who is called prudent sees far off," and, as Boethius points out at the end of *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, it is from this that the name 'providence' (*providentia*) comes. Therefore, foresight is not a part of prudence.

Objection 2: Prudence is solely practical. But foresight can also be speculative, since vision, which the name 'providence' is taken from, belongs more to the speculative part of the soul than to the operative part. Therefore, foresight is not a part of providence.

Objection 3: The primary act of prudence is to command or give precepts (*praecipere*), whereas its secondary acts are to pass judgment (*iudicare*) and to deliberate or take counsel (*consiliari*). But none of these acts seems to be properly implied by the name 'foresight'. Therefore, foresight is not a part of prudence.

But contrary to this is the authority of Tully and Macrobius, who, as is clear from what has been said (q. 48, a. unicus), posit foresight as a part of prudence.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 47, aa. 1 and 6 and 13), prudence has properly to do with the means to an end, and what belongs properly to its function is that the means should be appropriately ordered toward the end. And even though it is true that certain necessary things that are subject to God's providence exist for the sake of an end, only contingent actions that can be done by man for the sake of an end are subject to human prudence.

Now past things pass into a certain sort of necessity insofar as they are past, since what has been done is such that it is impossible for it not to have been done. Similarly, present things, insofar as they are present, also have a certain sort of necessity; for instance, while Socrates is sitting, it is necessary that he be sitting. Hence, it follows that what pertains to prudence are future contingents, insofar as they can be ordered by a man toward the end of human life.

Now both of these points are implied by the name 'foresight' or 'providence' (*providentia*). For 'foresight' (*providentia*) implies a certain sort of relation to something distant which things that occur in the present have to be ordered toward.

Reply to objection 1: Whenever many things are required for some single thing, it has to be the case that one of those many things is the principal one and all the others are ordered toward it. Hence, it is likewise the case with any whole that one part is the formal and predominant part by virtue of which the whole has unity. Accordingly, foresight is the more principal part among all the parts of prudence, because all the other things that are required for prudence are necessary for something's being correctly ordered toward an end. And so the very name 'prudence' (*prudentia*) is derived from 'providence' (*providentia*) as from its principal part.

Reply to objection 2: Speculative inquiry (*speculatio*) has to do with things that are universal and things that are necessary; such things are by their very nature not far off (*secundum se non procul*), since they exist always and everywhere—even if they are distant as far as we are concerned, insofar as we fall short in our cognition of them. Hence, foresight is properly spoken of only in practical matters and not in speculative matters.

Reply to objection 3: Being correctly ordered toward an end, which is included in the character of foresight, implies rectitude of deliberation, judgment, and precept, without which there cannot be a correct ordering toward the end.

Article 7

Can circumspection be a part of prudence?

It seems that circumspection (*circumspectio*) cannot be a part of prudence:

Objection 1: Circumspection seems to be a certain sort of consideration of the surrounding circumstances (*consideratio quaedam eorum quae circumstant*). But there are infinitely many such circumstances, and they cannot be comprehended by reason, in which prudence exists. Therefore, circumspection should not be posited as a part of prudence.

Objection 2: Circumstances seem to be more relevant to the moral virtues than to prudence. But circumspection seems to be nothing other than a consideration of the circumstances (*respectus circumstantiarum*). Therefore, circumspection seems to belong to the moral virtues rather than to prudence.

Objection 3: One who can see what is far off is *a fortiori* able to see things that surround him. But through foresight a man is capable of perceiving things that are far off. Therefore, foresight itself is sufficient for considering the things that surround one. Therefore, it is unnecessary to posit circumspection as a part of prudence over and beyond foresight.

But contrary to this is the authority of Macrobius, as was asserted above (q. 48, a. unicus).

I respond: As has been explained (a. 6), what mainly pertains to prudence is to order something toward an end. This is done correctly only if (a) the end is a good one and (b) the means to the end are likewise good and are appropriate to the end.

However, since, as has been explained (a. 3), prudence has to do with singular actions in which many things come together, it is possible that something that is good and appropriate to the end when considered in its own right (*secundum se*) is nonetheless rendered bad or inappropriate for the end by something that comes together with it. For instance, to show signs of love to someone, considered in its own right, seems appropriate for attracting that individual's affections toward love, but if pride or a suspicion of flattery occurs in that individual's mind, then showing signs of love will not be appropriate for the end. And so circumspection is necessary for prudence, viz., in order that a man might compare what is ordered toward the end with the circumstances as well.

Reply to objection 1: Even though there are infinitely many possible circumstances, nonetheless, there are not infinitely many actual circumstances; instead, there are a certain few that might change reason's judgment about what should be done.

Reply to objection 2: Circumstances belong to prudence insofar as prudence fixes them, whereas they belong to the moral virtues insofar as the moral virtues are perfected through the fixing of the circumstances.

Reply to objection 3: Just as it belongs to foresight to perceive what is appropriate *in its own right* for the end, so it belongs to circumspection to consider whether that same thing is appropriate, *given the relevant circumstances*, for the end,. Both of these pose a special difficulty. And so each of them is posited separately as a part of prudence.

Article 8

Should caution be posited as a part of prudence?

It seems that caution (*cautio*) should not be posited as a part of prudence:

Objection 1: In those cases in which nothing bad can exist there is no need for caution. But as is explained in *De Libero Arbitrio*, no one uses the virtues badly. Therefore, caution is irrelevant to

prudence, which directs the virtues.

Objection 2: It belongs to the same thing to provide for good things and avoid bad things; for instance, it belongs to the same art to bring about health and to cure sickness. But providing for good things belongs to foresight. Therefore, avoiding bad things belongs to it, too. Therefore, caution should not be posited as a part of prudence distinct from foresight.

Objection 3: No prudent individual attempts the impossible. But no one can take precautions to avoid all the bad things that can happen. Therefore, caution does not belong to prudence.

But contrary to this: In Ephesians 5:15 the Apostle says, "See how cautiously you should walk."

I respond: Prudence has to do with contingent actions (*contingentia operabilia*), in the case of which, just as what is true can be mixed in with what is false, so what is bad can be mixed in with what is good. This is because of the multiple forms of such actions (*propter multiformitatem huiusmodi operabilium*), in which good things are often impeded by bad things and in which bad things have the appearance of being good. And so caution is necessary for prudence in order that what is good might be taken in such a way that what is bad is avoided.

Reply to objection 1: In moral acts caution is necessary not in order for someone to guard himself against acts of virtue, but in order for him to guard himself against things by which acts of virtue can be impeded.

Reply to objection 2: Pursuing things that are good has the same character (*est eiusdem rationis*) as guarding against the opposite evils. However, it is a different matter to avoid *extrinsic impediments*. And this is why caution is distinct from foresight, even though both belong to the single virtue of prudence.

Reply to objection 3: Among the evils that a man has to avoid, there are some that are wont to occur for the most part (*ut in pluribus*). And such evils can by comprehended by reason. It is against these evils that caution is directed, either in order to avoid them completely or in order for them to do less harm.

By contrast, there are some evils that occur in fewer cases and incidentally (*ut in paucioribus et casualiter*). And since there are infinitely many of these, they cannot be comprehended by reason. Nor can a man take sufficient precautions against them—though, through the exercise of prudence, a man can guard against all the vicissitudes of fortune so as to suffer less harm.