

QUESTION 50

The Subjective Parts of Prudence

Next we have to consider the subjective parts of prudence. And since the prudence through which one directs himself has already been explained, what remains is to explain the species of prudence by which a multitude is governed. On this topic there are four questions: (1) Should *lawmaking* (*legispositiva*) be posited as a species of prudence? (2) Should *political* (*politica*) be posited as a species of prudence? (3) Should *economic* (*oeconomica*) be posited as a species of prudence? (4) Should *military* (*militaris*) be posited as a species of prudence?

Article 1

Should *kingly* be posited as a species of prudence?

It seems that *kingly* (*regnativa*) should not be posited as a species of prudence:

Objection 1: What is *kingly* is ordered toward preserving justice, since, as *Ethics* 5 says, “The ruler (*princeps*) is the guardian of justice.” Therefore, *kingly* belongs to justice rather than to prudence.

Objection 2: According to the Philosopher in *Politics* 3, a kingdom (*regnum*) is one of the six types of political regime (*est una sex politarum*). But no species of prudence is posited for the other five types of political regime, viz., aristocracy, polity (which also goes by the name ‘timocracy’), tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy. Therefore, neither should *kingly* prudence be posited for a kingdom.

Objection 3: As is clear from Isidore in *Etymologia*, making laws belongs not only to kings (*reges*) but also to certain other types of ruler, and even to the people. But in *Ethics* 4 the Philosopher posits lawmaking prudence as a part of prudence. Therefore, it is inappropriate for *kingly* prudence to be posited instead of lawmaking prudence.

But contrary to this: In *Politics* 3 the Philosopher says, “Prudence is the proper virtue of a ruler.” Therefore, *kingly* prudence must be a special kind of prudence.

I respond: As is clear from what was said above (q. 47, aa. 8-12), it belongs to prudence to rule and to give commands. And where one finds a special type of rule and command within human acts, there one also finds a special type of prudence.

Now it is clear that in the case of someone who has to rule not only himself but the complete community of a city or kingdom, one finds a special and perfect type of rule. For a type of political regime (*regimen*) is more complete to the extent that it is more universal, extending to many and attaining to a more ultimate end. And so prudence belongs with a special and more complete character to a king (*rex*), who has to direct a city or kingdom. And it is because of this that *kingly* prudence is posited as a species of prudence.

Reply to objection 1: Everything that belongs to the moral virtues pertains to prudence as that which directs them. And as was explained above (q. 47, a. 5 and *ST* 1-2, q. 58, a. 2), this is why the right reason of prudence is posited in the definition of a moral virtue. And so the execution that belongs to justice, insofar as it is ordered toward the common good, which has to do with the role of a king (*quae pertinet ad officium regis*), likewise needs the direction of prudence. Hence, the two virtues of prudence and justice are especially proper to a king—this according to Jeremiah 23:5 (“A king shall reign and shall be wise, and shall execute justice and judgment on earth”)

Still, because directing belongs more to the king, whereas executing belongs to his subjects, *kingly* is posited as a species of prudence, which has to do with directing, rather than as species of justice, which has to do with execution.

Reply to objection 2: As *Ethics* 6 claims, a kingdom is the best sort of government as compared with the other types of political regime. And this is why the relevant species of prudence should be named from the kingdom. However, this is done in such a way that all other upright types of government are included under *kingly* prudence—though not the perverse types of government, which are opposed to

virtue and hence have nothing to do with prudence.

Reply to objection 3: The Philosopher named kingly prudence from the principal act of the king, which is to make laws. And even if this act belongs to others as well, it belongs to them only insofar as they participate to some extent in a king's governing power.

Article 2

Is political appropriately posited as a part of prudence?

It seems that *political* is not appropriately posited as a part of prudence:

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 1), kingly prudence is a part of political prudence. But a part should not be divided off against its whole. Therefore, political prudence should not be posited as a separate part of prudence.

Objection 2: The species of habits are distinguished by diverse objects. But what the king commands has to be the same as what the subject executes. Therefore, to the extent that political prudence belongs to the subjects, it should not be posited as a species of prudence distinct from kingly prudence.

Objection 3: Each of the subjects is an individual person. But each individual person can direct himself sufficiently through prudence in the general sense. Therefore, it is unnecessary to posit another species of prudence that is called 'political prudence'.

But contrary to this: In *Ethics* 6 the Philosopher says, "Of the types of prudence which have to do with the city, one kind is, as it were, architectonic law-making prudence, whereas the kind bears the common name 'political' and has to do with singular things."

I respond: A servant is moved by his master's command and a subject by his ruler's command, yet in a way that is different from the way in which non-rational and inanimate beings are moved by their movers. For inanimate and non-rational beings are driven solely by something else, and they do not move themselves, since they do not have dominion over their acts through free choice. And so in their case, rectitude of governance is not within their power, but is instead solely within the power of their movers. By contrast, men who are servants or who are in any way subjects are moved by others through commands (*aguntur ab aliis per praeceptum*) in such a way that they nonetheless move themselves through free choice. And so a certain rectitude of governance is required in them through which they direct themselves in obeying their rulers. And this is what the species of prudence called 'political prudence' has to do with.

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained (a. 1), kingly prudence is the most perfect species of prudence. And so the prudence that belongs to the subjects, which falls short of kingly prudence, retains the common name, so that it is called 'political prudence'—just as, in matters of logic, a term that is convertible [with the essence] but does not signify the essence retains for itself the common name 'proper'.

Reply to objection 2: As is clear from what was said above (q. 47, a. 5 and *ST* 1-2, q. 54, a. 2), it is diverse characters in the object that diversify the habit into its species. Now the very same things to be done are thought of by the king with a more universal character than that with which they are thought of by the subject who obeys. For many individuals obey the one king in diverse roles. And so kingly prudence is related to the sort of political prudence we are speaking of here in the way that an architectonic art or skill is related to an art or skill that operates by manual labor.

Reply to objection 3: By prudence in the general sense a man governs himself in relation to his own proper good, whereas by political prudence of the sort we are speaking of here a man governs himself in relation to the common good.

Article 3

Should *economic* be posited as a species of prudence?

It seems that *economic* should not be posited as a species of prudence:

Objection 1: As the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 6, prudence is ordered toward “living the whole of life well.” But as *Ethics* 1 explains, the economic is ordered toward a particular end, viz., one’s wealth. Therefore, economic prudence is not a species of prudence.

Objection 2: As has been established (q. 47, a. 13), prudence belongs only to those who are good. But the economic can also belong to those who are bad; for many sinners are foresighted in governing their families. Therefore, economic prudence should not be posited as a species of prudence.

Objection 3: Just as in a kingdom one finds someone who rules and someone who is a subject, so too in a household. Therefore, if economic prudence were a species of prudence in the way that political prudence is, then one would also have to posit paternal prudence just as one posits kingly prudence. But paternal prudence is not posited. Therefore, neither should economic prudence be posited as a species of prudence.

But contrary to this: In *Ethics* 6 the Philosopher says, “Among these”—i.e., among the types of prudence that have to do with governing a multitude—“there is economic prudence, law-making prudence, and political prudence.”

I respond: The character of an object that is diversified as *universal* and *particular*, or as *whole* and *part*, diversifies the arts and virtues, and in accord with this sort of diversity, the one art or virtue is the principal one with respect to the other. Now it is clear that a household occupies a middle ground between a singular person and a city or kingdom. For a single household is part of a city or a kingdom in the same way that a singular person is part of a household. And so just as *prudence generally speaking*, which governs a single person, is distinct from *political prudence*, so *economic prudence* is distinct from both of them.

Reply to objection 1: As *Politics* 1 explains, wealth is related to economic prudence not as an ultimate end, but as a certain instrument. By contrast, the ultimate end of economic prudence is living the whole of life well as regards domestic affairs (*secundum domesticam conversationem*).

However, in *Ethics* 1 the Philosopher posits wealth as an example of an end of economic prudence because of most people’s intense interest in wealth.

Reply to objection 2: Certain sinners are able to behave with foresight with respect to some of the things that have to be taken care of in their households, but not with respect to living well the totality of domestic life. For what is especially required for the latter is a virtuous life.

Reply to objection 3: As *Ethics* 8 points out, within a household the father has a certain sort of similarity to the king of a principality, and yet he does not have the complete power of governance in the way that a king does. And for this reason no fatherly species of prudence is posited separately in the way that kingly prudence is posited.

Article 4

Should *military* be posited as a species of prudence?

It seems that *military* should not be posited as a species of prudence :

Objection 1: As *Ethics* 6 explains, prudence is divided off from an art or a skill. But as is clear from the Philosopher in *Ethics* 3, the military seems to be an art with respect to matters of war.

Therefore, military prudence should not be posited as a species of prudence.

Objection 2: Just as military affairs are contained under the political, so are many other sorts of affairs, e.g., buying and selling, the manufacture of artifacts, and other things of this sort. But species of prudence are not posited for these other sorts of affairs which go on in the city. Therefore, no species of prudence should be posited for military affairs, either.

Objection 3: The fortitude of the soldiers counts for a lot in matters of war. Therefore, *military* belongs to fortitude rather than to prudence.

But contrary to this: Proverbs 24:6 says, “War is managed by due ordering, and there shall be safety where there are many deliberations.” But deliberations belong to prudence. Therefore, a species of prudence, which is called military prudence, is especially necessary for matters of war.

I respond: What is done through art and reason has to conform to that which exists according to nature and which has been instituted by God’s reason. But nature aims at two things: (a) governing each entity in its own right, and (b) resisting extrinsic agents that attack and corrupt it. For this reason nature has given animals not only a concupiscible power, through which they are moved toward what is accommodated to their welfare, but also an irascible power, through which an animal resists what attacks it.

Hence, in those matters that are in accord with reason, it is necessary for there to be not only political prudence, through which things that belong to the common good are appropriately disposed, but also military prudence, through which the incursions of enemies are repelled.

Reply to objection 1: The military can be an art insofar as it has rules for correctly using certain exterior things, e.g., arms and horses. However, insofar as it is ordered toward the common good, it has the character of prudence instead.

Reply to objection 2: The other kinds of affairs that take place in a city are ordered toward certain particular advantages, whereas military affairs are ordered toward protecting the whole common good.

Reply to objection 3: The execution of military prudence pertains to fortitude, but the directing belongs to prudence, and principally insofar as it exists in the leader of the military forces.