

QUESTION 51

The Potential Parts of Prudence

Next we have to consider the virtues which are adjoined to prudence and which are, as it were, its potential parts. And on this topic there are four questions: (1) Is good deliberating (*euboulia*) a virtue? (2) Is good deliberating a special virtue distinct from prudence? (3) Is good common judging (*synesis*) a special virtue? (4) Is good particular judging (*gnome*) a special virtue?

Article 1

Is good deliberating (*euboulia*) a virtue?

It seems that good deliberating (*euboulia*) is not a virtue:

Objection 1: According to Augustine in *De Libero Arbitrio*, “No one uses virtues badly.” But there are those who use *euboulia*, i.e., good deliberating, badly, either because (a) they contrive good deliberations in order to pursue bad ends, or because (b) they order certain sins toward the pursuit of good ends, e.g., when someone steals in order that he might give alms. Therefore, good deliberating is not a virtue.

Objection 2: As *Physics 7* explains, “A virtue is a certain perfection.” But good deliberating has to do with deliberating, which implies questioning and inquiring, and these involve imperfection. Therefore, good deliberating is not a virtue.

Objection 3: As was established above (*ST 1-2*, q. 65), the virtues are connected with one another. But good deliberating is not connected with any other virtues, since there are many sinners who deliberate well and many just individuals who are dull in their deliberations (*sunt in consiliis tardi*). Therefore, good deliberating is not a virtue.

But contrary to this: As the Philosopher puts it in *Ethics 6*, “*Euboulia* is rectitude in deliberation.” But right reason brings to completion the definition of *virtue*. Therefore, *euboulia* is a virtue.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 47, a. 4), it is part of the definition of a human virtue that it makes a man’s act good. Now among the other acts of a man, it is proper to him to deliberate, since this implies a certain inquiry on the part of reason about things which are to be done and in which a human life consists; for as *Ethics 10* explains, the speculative life lies beyond man.

Now *euboulia* implies goodness in deliberating, since it is taken from ‘*eu*’, which means good, and ‘*boule*’, which means deliberation, so that it is a good process of deliberating or, better, it is to deliberate well. Hence, it is clear that *euboulia* is a human virtue.

Reply to objection 1: There is no good deliberating if someone either sets up a bad end for himself in his deliberation or discovers evil paths toward a good end. Likewise, in speculative matters there is no good discursive reasoning if one reaches a false conclusion or if one draws a true conclusion from false premises, since he is not using an appropriate middle term (*quia non utitur convenienti medio*). And so as the Philosopher explains in *Ethics 6*, both of the cases mentioned are contrary to the definition of *euboulia*.

Reply to objection 2: Even if a virtue is by its essence a certain perfection, it does not have to be the case that everything that serves as the matter for that virtue implies perfection. For it is everything human that has to be perfected by the virtues—not only acts of reason, among which is deliberating, but also the passions of the sentient appetite, which are more imperfect still.

An alternative reply is that a human virtue is a perfection in the mode of a human being, who is unable to comprehend the truth with certitude by simply seeing things—especially in the case of things that are doable, which are contingent.

Reply to objection 3: *Euboulia* is not found in any sinner insofar as he is a sinner. For every sin is contrary to good deliberating, since to deliberate well requires not only discovering or thinking about

what is advantageous for the end, but also another circumstance, viz., the right amount of time, so that the time spent in deliberating is neither too long nor too short—along with the mode of deliberating, so that one is firm in his deliberation, and other due circumstances of this sort that a sinner does not pay attention to when he sins. By contrast, every virtuous individual deliberates well in those matters that are ordered toward the end of virtue—even if in other particular matters he does not deliberate well, e.g., in business dealings or in matters of war or in some other such matter.

Article 2

Is good deliberating a virtue distinct from prudence?

It seems that good deliberating (*euboulia*) is not a virtue distinct from prudence:

Objection 1: As the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 6, “The prudent individual seems to be good at deliberating.” But as has been explained (a. 1), this pertains to *euboulia*. Therefore, *euboulia* is not distinct from prudence.

Objection 2: As was established above (*ST* 1-2, q. 1, a. 3 and q. 18, a. 6), human acts, toward which the human virtues are ordered, receive their species mainly from their end. But good deliberating and prudence are ordered toward the same end; more specifically, as *Ethics* 6 explains, they are ordered not toward a particular end but toward the general end of the whole of life. Therefore, good deliberating is not a virtue distinct from prudence.

Objection 3: In the case of the speculative sciences, inquiry and the making of determinations (*inquirere et determinare*) belong to the same science. Therefore, by parity of reasoning, in the practical sciences they belong to the same virtue. But to inquire belongs to *euboulia*, whereas to make determinations belongs to prudence. Therefore, *euboulia* is not a virtue that is different from prudence.

But contrary to this: As *Ethics* 6 explains, prudence issues commands (*est praeceptiva*). But this does not belong to *euboulia*. Therefore, *euboulia* is a virtue different from prudence.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 47, a. 4 and *ST* 1-2, q. 55, aa. 2-3), a virtue is properly ordered toward its act, which it renders good. And so virtues must be distinct in a way that corresponds to their diverse acts, and they must be distinct especially when it is not the case that the same character of goodness exists in their acts. For if the same character of goodness existed in them, then the diverse acts would belong to the same virtue. For instance, the goodness of love (*amor*), desire (*desiderium*), and joy (*gaudium*) depends on the same thing, and this is why all of them belong to the virtue of charity.

Now the acts of reason that are ordered toward a deed (*ad opus*) are diverse, and they do not have the same character of goodness, since it is by different sorts of goodness that a man is good at deliberating, good at judging, and good at giving commands. This is clear from the fact that these three things are sometimes separated from one another. And so it must be the case that *euboulia*, through which a man is good at deliberating, is a virtue distinct from prudence, through which a man is good at giving commands. And just as deliberating is ordered toward giving commands as something that is more principal than itself, so, too, *euboulia* is ordered toward prudence as a virtue which is more principal than it itself is and without which it itself would not even be a virtue—just as the moral virtues likewise would not exist without prudence, and just as the rest of the virtues would not exist without charity.

Reply to objection 1: What belongs to prudence is to deliberate well in an imperative manner, whereas what belongs to *euboulia* is to elicit good deliberation.

Reply to objection 2: The diverse acts are ordered toward a single ultimate end, viz., living the whole of life well, in a way that corresponds to different steps. For deliberating comes first, followed by judging, and the last step is commanding (*ultimum est praeceptum*), which is related *immediately* to the

ultimate end, whereas the other two acts are related *remotely* to the ultimate end. However, those two acts have certain proximate ends: deliberating has as a proximate end the discovery of what needs to be done, whereas judgment has certitude or firmness (*certitudo*) as a proximate end.

Hence, it does not follow from this that *euboulia* and prudence are not diverse virtues; what follows is that *euboulia* is ordered toward prudence in the way that a secondary virtue is ordered towards its principal virtue.

Reply to objection 3: Even among the speculative sciences, one rational science is dialectical and ordered toward an inquiry of discovery (*ad inquisitionem inventivam*), while another is demonstrative and determines the truth (*est veritatis determinativa*).

Article 3

Is good judging [in ordinary cases] (*synesis*) a virtue?

It seems that good judging in ordinary cases (*synesis*) is not a virtue:

Objection 1: As *Ethics* 2 says, “Virtues do not exist in us by nature.” But *synesis* exists in some individuals by nature, as the Philosopher explains in *Ethics* 6. Therefore, *synesis* is not a virtue.

Objection 2: As it says in the same book (*Ethics* 6), *synesis* has to do only with judgment (*est solum iudicativa*). But judgment alone, without command, can also exist in bad actions. Therefore, since virtue exists only in good actions, it seems that *synesis* is not a virtue.

Objection 3: There is never a mistake in commanding unless there is a mistake in judging, at least in the case of a particular action, which is what every bad individual errs in. Therefore, if *synesis* is posited as a virtue of judging well, it seems that no other virtue is necessary for commanding well. And so prudence will be superfluous—which is absurd. Therefore, *synesis* is not a virtue.

But contrary to this: Judging is more perfect than deliberating. But *euboulia*, which is good deliberating, is a virtue. Therefore, *a fortiori*, *synesis*, which is good judging, is a virtue.

I respond: *Synesis* implies correct judgment not with respect to speculative matters, but rather with respect to the particular actions that prudence likewise has to do with. This is why from *synesis* certain men are called ‘*syneti*’ in Greek, i.e., men of sense, or ‘*eusyneti*’, i.e., men of good sense—just as, contrariwise, those who lack this virtue are called ‘*asyneti*’, i.e., lacking in good sense.

Now a diversity in virtues must correspond to a difference among acts that are not traced back to the same cause. But it is clear that being good at deliberating and being good at judging are not traced back to the same cause, since many individuals are good at deliberating but do not have good sense, i.e., do not judge correctly. Likewise, in speculative matters, there are some who are good at inquiring, because their reason is quick to run through different things—this seems to stem from the condition of their imaginative power, which is able to form diverse phantasms easily—and yet it sometimes happens that individuals of this sort are not good at judging, and this is due to a defect in their intellect and occurs especially because of a bad disposition on the part of the common sensory power of the one who is not good at judging. And so it must be the case that beyond *euboulia* there is another virtue, viz., being good at judging. And this virtue is called *synesis*.

Reply to objection 1: Correct judgment consists in the cognitive power’s apprehending a thing as it is in itself (*apprehendat rem aliquam secundum quod in se est*). This stems from a correct disposition on the part of the apprehensive power. In the same way, the forms of corporeal things are impressed on a mirror in the way that they are when the mirror is well disposed, whereas if the mirror is badly disposed, then what appear are images which are distorted and badly constituted.

Now a cognitive power’s being well disposed for receiving things as they are stems in its origins from nature and in its completion from exercise or from a gift of grace—and this in two ways:

In one way, *directly* on the part of the cognitive power itself, viz., because it is imbued with true and correct conceptions and not with bad ones, and this belongs to *synesis* insofar as it is a special virtue.

In the second way, *indirectly*, from the good disposition of the appetitive power, from which it follows that a man judges well concerning things that are desirable. And it is in this way that the good judgment that belongs to a virtue follows upon the habits of the moral virtues; but this sort of good judgment has to do with the ends, whereas *synesis* has to do rather with the means to the end.

Reply to objection 2: In bad individuals there can, to be sure, be correct judgment in general, but, as was established above (q. 47, a. 13), their judgment is always corrupted in the case of a particular action.

Reply to objection 3: It sometimes happens that what has been judged correctly is deferred or else carried out negligently or in a disordered way. And so following upon the virtue of being good at judging there has to be a final, principal, virtue, viz., being good at commanding—and this virtue is prudence.

Article 4

Is good judging in exceptional cases (*gnome*) a special virtue?

It seems that good judging in exceptional cases (*gnome*) is not a special virtue:

Objection 1: Because of *synesis*, one is said to be good at judging. But no one can be called good at judging unless he judges well in all matters. Therefore, *synesis* extends to passing judgment on everything. Therefore, there is no other virtue of judging well that is called '*gnome*'.

Objection 2: Judging falls between deliberating and commanding. But there is only one virtue that is good deliberating, viz., *euboulia*; and there is only one virtue that is good commanding, viz., prudence. Therefore, there is only one virtue that is good judging, viz., *synesis*.

Objection 3: Matters which occur rarely and in which one has to depart from common laws seem to be matters of chance, with respect to which, as *Physics 2* explains, there is nothing to reason about (*quorum non est ratio*). But all the intellectual virtues have to do with correct reasoning. Therefore, there is no intellectual virtue with respect to the matters just mentioned.

But contrary to this: In *Ethics 6* the Philosopher comes to the conclusion that *gnome* is a special virtue.

I respond: Cognitive habits are distinguished by higher or lower principles; for instance, in speculative matters wisdom (*sapientia*) takes into account higher principles than does scientific knowledge (*scientia*), and this is why they are distinct from one another. And so the same thing must also hold in matters of action.

Now it is clear that what lies beyond the order of a lower principle or cause is sometimes traced back to the order of a higher principle; for instance, abnormalities in the parts of animals (*monstruosi partus animalium*) lie outside the order of the active power in the semen, and yet they fall under the order of a higher principle, viz., of a celestial body or, further on, of divine providence. Hence, one who studied the active power in the semen could not judge with certitude about abnormalities of this sort, and yet they can be judged by taking divine providence into account (*secundum considerationem divinae providentiae*).

Now at times it happens that something has to be done outside of the common rules of action, e.g., that something one has been entrusted with should not be returned as long as one's homeland is under attack, or something else of this sort. And so one must pass judgment about such things by reference to principles that are higher than the common rules by reference to which *synesis* judges. And these higher principles require a higher virtue of judging, and this higher virtue is called *gnome*, which implies a sort

of perspicacity in judging.

Reply to objection 1: *Synesis* judges truly of all things that occur in accord with the common rules. But as has already been explained, there are certain other things that have to be judged outside of the common rules.

Reply to objection 2: A judgment should be based on a thing's proper principles, whereas an inquiry (*inquisitio*) is made by appeal to common principles as well. Hence, it is likewise the case that in speculative matters, dialectic, which has to do with inquiry, proceeds from general principles, whereas demonstrative science, which has to do with judgment, proceeds from proper principles. And so *euboulia*, which the inquiry of deliberation pertains to, is a single virtue for everything, whereas *synesis*, which has to do with judgment, is not. Command, on the other hand, looks to a single character of the good in all things, and so prudence is just a single virtue.

Reply to objection 3: The consideration of *everything* that can happen outside the common course of things belongs solely to God's providence, but among men the one who is more clear-sighted can judge many of these things by his own reason. And this is what *gnome* has to do with, since it implies a certain clear-sightedness of judgment.