

St. Thomas Aquinas

The Summa Theologica

(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by

Fathers of the English Dominican Province

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OF THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES (SIX ARTICLES)

We now have to consider the various kinds of virtue: and (1) the intellectual virtues; (2) the moral virtues; (3) the theological virtues. Concerning the first there are six points of inquiry:

- [\(1\)](#) Whether habits of the speculative intellect are virtues?
 - [\(2\)](#) Whether they are three, namely, wisdom, science and understanding?
 - [\(3\)](#) Whether the intellectual habit, which is art, is a virtue?
 - [\(4\)](#) Whether prudence is a virtue distinct from art?
 - [\(5\)](#) Whether prudence is a virtue necessary to man?
 - [\(6\)](#) Whether "eubulia," "synesis" and "gnome" are virtues annexed to prudence?
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Whether the habits of the speculative intellect are virtues?

Objection 1: It would seem that the habits of the speculative intellect are not virtues. For virtue is an operative habit, as we have said above ([Question \[55\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#)). But speculative habits are not operative: for speculative matter is distinct from practical, i.e. operative matter. Therefore the habits of the speculative intellect are not virtues.

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [FS](#) » [FS057.html](#) for "happiness is the reward of virtue" (Ethic. i, 9). Now intellectual habits do not consider human acts or other human goods, by which man acquires happiness, but rather things pertaining to nature or to God. Therefore such like habits cannot be called virtues.

Objection 3: Further, science is a speculative habit. But science and virtue are distinct from one another as genera which are not subalternate, as the Philosopher proves in Topic. iv. Therefore speculative habits are not virtues.

On the contrary, The speculative habits alone consider necessary things which cannot be otherwise than they are. Now the Philosopher (Ethic. vi, 1) places certain intellectual virtues in that part of the soul which considers necessary things that cannot be otherwise than they are. Therefore the habits of the speculative intellect are virtues.

I answer that, Since every virtue is ordained to some good, as stated above ([Question \[55\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#)), a habit, as we have already observed ([Question \[56\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#)), may be called a virtue for two reasons: first, because it confers aptness in doing good; secondly, because besides aptness, it confers the right use of it. The latter condition, as above stated ([Question \[55\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#)), belongs to those habits alone which affect the appetitive part of the soul: since it is the soul's appetitive power that puts all the powers and habits to their respective uses.

Since, then, the habits of the speculative intellect do not perfect the appetitive part, nor affect it in any way, but only the intellective part; they may indeed be called virtues in so far as they confer aptness for a good work, viz. the consideration of truth (since this is the good work of the intellect): yet they are not called virtues in the second way, as though they conferred the right use of a power or habit. For if a man possess a habit of speculative science, it does not follow that he is inclined to make use of it, but he is made able to consider the truth in those matters of which he has scientific knowledge: that he make use of the knowledge which he has, is due to the motion of his will. Consequently a virtue which perfects the will, as charity or justice, confers the right use of these speculative habits. And in this way too there can be merit in the acts of these habits, if they be done out of charity: thus Gregory says (Moral. vi) that the "contemplative life has greater merit than the active life."

Reply to Objection 1: Work is of two kinds, exterior and interior. Accordingly the practical or active faculty which is contrasted with the speculative faculty, is concerned with exterior work, to which the speculative habit is not ordained. Yet it is ordained to the interior act of the intellect which is to consider the truth. And in this way it is an operative habit.

Reply to Objection 2: Virtue is about certain things in two ways. In the first place a virtue is about its object. And thus these speculative virtues are not about those things whereby man is made happy; except perhaps, in so far as the word "whereby" indicates the efficient cause or object of complete happiness, i.e. God, Who is the supreme object of contemplation. Secondly, a virtue is said to be about its acts: and in this sense the intellectual virtues are about those things whereby a man is made happy; both because the acts of these virtues can be meritorious, as stated above, and because they are a kind of beginning of perfect bliss, which consists in the contemplation of truth, as we have already stated ([Question \[3\]](#), [Article \[7\]](#)).

Reply to Objection 3: Science is contrasted with virtue taken in the second sense, wherein it belongs to the appetitive faculty.

Whether there are only three habits of the speculative intellect, viz. wisdom, science and understanding?

Objection 1: It would seem unfitting to distinguish three virtues of the speculative intellect, viz. wisdom, science and understanding. Because a species is a kind of science, as stated in Ethic. vi, 7. Therefore wisdom should not be condivided with science among the intellectual virtues.

Objection 2: Further, in differentiating powers, habits and acts in respect of their objects, we consider chiefly the formal aspect of these objects, as we have already explained ([FP, Question \[77\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#)). Therefore diversity of habits is taken, not from their material objects, but from the formal aspect of those objects. Now the principle of a demonstration is the formal aspect under which the conclusion is known. Therefore the understanding of principles should not be set down as a habit or virtue distinct from the knowledge of conclusions.

Objection 3: Further, an intellectual virtue is one which resides in the essentially rational faculty. Now even the speculative reason employs the dialectic syllogism for the sake of argument, just as it employs the demonstrative syllogism. Therefore as science, which is the result of a demonstrative syllogism, is set down as an intellectual virtue, so also should opinion be.

On the contrary, The Philosopher (Ethic. vi, 1) reckons these three alone as being intellectual virtues, viz. wisdom, science and understanding.

I answer that, As already stated ([Article \[1\]](#)), the virtues of the speculative intellect are those which perfect the speculative intellect for the consideration of truth: for this is its good work. Now a truth is subject to a twofold consideration---as known in itself, and as known through another. What is known in itself, is as a "principle," and is at once understood by the intellect: wherefore the habit that perfects the intellect for the consideration of such truth is called "understanding," which is the habit of principles.

On the other hand, a truth which is known through another, is understood by the intellect, not at once, but by means of the reason's inquiry, and is as a "term." This may happen in two ways: first, so that it is the last in some particular genus; secondly, so that it is the ultimate term of all human knowledge. And, since "things that are knowable last from our standpoint, are knowable first and chiefly in their nature" (Phys. i, text. 2, 3); hence that which is last with respect to all human knowledge, is that which is knowable first and chiefly in its nature. And about these is "wisdom," which considers the highest causes, as stated in Metaph. i, 1,2. Wherefore it rightly judges all things and sets them in order, because there can be no perfect and universal judgment that is not based on the first causes. But in regard to that which is last in this or that genus of knowable matter, it is "science" which perfects the intellect. Wherefore according to the different kinds of knowable matter, there are different habits of scientific knowledge; whereas there is but one wisdom.

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [FS](#) » [FS057.html](#) to all the sciences; viz. to demonstrate conclusions from principles. But since it has something proper to itself above the other sciences, inasmuch as it judges of them all, not only as to their conclusions, but also as to their first principles, therefore it is a more perfect virtue than science.

Reply to Objection 2: When the formal aspect of the object is referred to a power or habit by one same act, there is no distinction of habit or power in respect of the formal aspect and of the material object: thus it belongs to the same power of sight to see both color, and light, which is the formal aspect under which color is seen, and is seen at the same time as the color. On the other hand, the principles of a demonstration can be considered apart, without the conclusion being considered at all. Again they can be considered together with the conclusions, since the conclusions can be deduced from them. Accordingly, to consider the principles in this second way, belongs to science, which considers the conclusions also: while to consider the principles in themselves belongs to understanding.

Consequently, if we consider the point aright, these three virtues are distinct, not as being on a par with one another, but in a certain order. The same is to be observed in potential wholes, wherein one part is more perfect than another; for instance, the rational soul is more perfect than the sensitive soul; and the sensitive, than the vegetal. For it is thus that science depends on understanding as on a virtue of higher degree: and both of these depend on wisdom, as obtaining the highest place, and containing beneath itself both understanding and science, by judging both of the conclusions of science, and of the principles on which they are based.

Reply to Objection 3: As stated above ([Question \[55\]](#), [Articles \[3\]](#),4), a virtuous habit has a fixed relation to good, and is nowise referable to evil. Now the good of the intellect is truth, and falsehood is its evil. Wherefore those habits alone are called intellectual virtues, whereby we tell the truth and never tell a falsehood. But opinion and suspicion can be about both truth and falsehood: and so, as stated in *Ethic. vi, 3*, they are not intellectual virtues.

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Whether the intellectual habit, art, is a virtue?

Objection 1: It would seem that art is not an intellectual virtue. For Augustine says (*De Lib. Arb. ii, 18,19*) that "no one makes bad use of virtue." But one may make bad use of art: for a craftsman can work badly according to the knowledge of his art. Therefore art is not a virtue.

Objection 2: Further, there is no virtue of a virtue. But "there is a virtue of art," according to the Philosopher (*Ethic. vi, 5*). Therefore art is not a virtue.

Objection 3: Further, the liberal arts excel the mechanical arts. But just as the mechanical arts are practical, so the liberal arts are speculative. Therefore, if art were an intellectual virtue, it would have to be reckoned among the speculative virtues.

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [FS](#) » [FS057.html](#) It reckon it among the speculative virtues, which, according to him, reside in the scientific part of the soul.

I answer that, Art is nothing else but "the right reason about certain works to be made." And yet the good of these things depends, not on man's appetitive faculty being affected in this or that way, but on the goodness of the work done. For a craftsman, as such, is commendable, not for the will with which he does a work, but for the quality of the work. Art, therefore, properly speaking, is an operative habit. And yet it has something in common with the speculative habits: since the quality of the object considered by the latter is a matter of concern to them also, but not how the human appetite may be affected towards that object. For as long as the geometrician demonstrates the truth, it matters not how his appetitive faculty may be affected, whether he be joyful or angry: even as neither does this matter in a craftsman, as we have observed. And so art has the nature of a virtue in the same way as the speculative habits, in so far, to wit, as neither art nor speculative habit makes a good work as regards the use of the habit, which is the property of a virtue that perfects the appetite, but only as regards the aptness to work well.

Reply to Objection 1: When anyone endowed with an art produces bad workmanship, this is not the work of that art, in fact it is contrary to the art: even as when a man lies, while knowing the truth, his words are not in accord with his knowledge, but contrary thereto. Wherefore, just as science has always a relation to good, as stated above ([Article \[2\]](#), ad 3), so it is with art: and it is for this reason that it is called a virtue. And yet it falls short of being a perfect virtue, because it does not make its possessor to use it well; for which purpose something further is requisite: although there cannot be a good use without the art.

Reply to Objection 2: In order that man may make good use of the art he has, he needs a good will, which is perfected by moral virtue; and for this reason the Philosopher says that there is a virtue of art; namely, a moral virtue, in so far as the good use of art requires a moral virtue. For it is evident that a craftsman is inclined by justice, which rectifies his will, to do his work faithfully.

Reply to Objection 3: Even in speculative matters there is something by way of work: e.g. the making of a syllogism or of a fitting speech, or the work of counting or measuring. Hence whatever habits are ordained to such like works of the speculative reason, are, by a kind of comparison, called arts indeed, but "liberal" arts, in order to distinguish them from those arts that are ordained to works done by the body, which arts are, in a fashion, servile, inasmuch as the body is in servile subjection to the soul, and man, as regards his soul, is free [liber]. On the other hand, those sciences which are not ordained to any such like work, are called sciences simply, and not arts. Nor, if the liberal arts be more excellent, does it follow that the notion of art is more applicable to them.

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Whether prudence is a distinct virtue from art?

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [FS](#) » [FS057.html](#) It is right reason about certain works. But diversity of works does not make a habit cease to be an art; since there are various arts about works widely different. Since therefore prudence is also right reason about works, it seems that it too should be reckoned a virtue.

Objection 2: Further, prudence has more in common with art than the speculative habits have; for they are both "about contingent matters that may be otherwise than they are" (Ethic. vi, 4,5). Now some speculative habits are called arts. Much more, therefore, should prudence be called an art.

Objection 3: Further, it belongs to prudence, "to be of good counsel" (Ethic. vi, 5). But counselling takes place in certain arts also, as stated in Ethic. iii, 3, e.g. in the arts of warfare, of seamanship, and of medicine. Therefore prudence is not distinct from art.

On the contrary, The Philosopher distinguishes prudence from art (Ethic. vi, 5).

I answer that, Where the nature of virtue differs, there is a different kind of virtue. Now it has been stated above ([Article \[1\]](#); [Question \[56\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#)) that some habits have the nature of virtue, through merely conferring aptness for a good work: while some habits are virtues, not only through conferring aptness for a good work, but also through conferring the use. But art confers the mere aptness for good work; since it does not regard the appetite; whereas prudence confers not only aptness for a good work, but also the use: for it regards the appetite, since it presupposes the rectitude thereof.

The reason for this difference is that art is the "right reason of things to be made"; whereas prudence is the "right reason of things to be done." Now "making" and "doing" differ, as stated in Metaph. ix, text. 16, in that "making" is an action passing into outward matter, e.g. "to build," "to saw," and so forth; whereas "doing" is an action abiding in the agent, e.g. "to see," "to will," and the like. Accordingly prudence stands in the same relation to such like human actions, consisting in the use of powers and habits, as art does to outward making: since each is the perfect reason about the things with which it is concerned. But perfection and rectitude of reason in speculative matters, depend on the principles from which reason argues; just as we have said above ([Article \[2\]](#), ad 2) that science depends on and presupposes understanding, which is the habit of principles. Now in human acts the end is what the principles are in speculative matters, as stated in Ethic. vii, 8. Consequently, it is requisite for prudence, which is right reason about things to be done, that man be well disposed with regard to the ends: and this depends on the rectitude of his appetite. Wherefore, for prudence there is need of a moral virtue, which rectifies the appetite. On the other hand the good things made by art is not the good of man's appetite, but the good of those things themselves: wherefore art does not presuppose rectitude of the appetite. The consequence is that more praise is given to a craftsman who is at fault willingly, than to one who is unwillingly; whereas it is more contrary to prudence to sin willingly than unwillingly, since rectitude of the will is essential to prudence, but not to art. Accordingly it is evident that prudence is a virtue distinct from art.

Reply to Objection 1: The various kinds of things made by art are all external to man: hence they do not cause a different kind of virtue. But prudence is right reason about human acts themselves: hence it is a distinct kind of virtue, as stated above.

Reply to Objection 2: Prudence has more in common with art than a speculative habit has, if we consider their subject and matter: for they are both in the thinking part of the soul, and about things that may be otherwise than they are. But if we consider them as virtues, then art has more in common with the speculative habits, as is clear from what has been said.

[Donate bitcoin.](#) St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [FS](#) » [FS057.html](#), and the end of human life. But in some arts there is counsel about matters concerning the ends proper to those arts. Hence some men, in so far as they are good counselors in matters of warfare, or seamanship, are said to be prudent officers or pilots, but not simply prudent: only those are simply prudent who give good counsel about all the concerns of life.

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Whether prudence is a virtue necessary to man?

Objection 1: It would seem that prudence is not a virtue necessary to lead a good life. For as art is to things that are made, of which it is the right reason, so is prudence to things that are done, in respect of which we judge of a man's life: for prudence is the right reason about these things, as stated in *Ethic.* vi, 5. Now art is not necessary in things that are made, save in order that they be made, but not after they have been made. Neither, therefore is prudence necessary to man in order to lead a good life, after he has become virtuous; but perhaps only in order that he may become virtuous.

Objection 2: Further, "It is by prudence that we are of good counsel," as stated in *Ethic.* vi, 5. But man can act not only from his own, but also from another's good counsel. Therefore man does not need prudence in order to lead a good life, but it is enough that he follow the counsels of prudent men.

Objection 3: Further, an intellectual virtue is one by which one always tells the truth, and never a falsehood. But this does not seem to be the case with prudence: for it is not human never to err in taking counsel about what is to be done; since human actions are about things that may be otherwise than they are. Hence it is written (*Wis.* 9:14): "The thoughts of mortal men are fearful, and our counsels uncertain." Therefore it seems that prudence should not be reckoned an intellectual virtue.

On the contrary, It is reckoned with other virtues necessary for human life, when it is written (*Wis.* 8:7) of Divine Wisdom: "She teacheth temperance and prudence and justice and fortitude, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life."

I answer that, Prudence is a virtue most necessary for human life. For a good life consists in good deeds. Now in order to do good deeds, it matters not only what a man does, but also how he does it; to wit, that he do it from right choice and not merely from impulse or passion. And, since choice is about things in reference to the end, rectitude of choice requires two things: namely, the due end, and something suitably ordained to that due end. Now man is suitably directed to his due end by a virtue which perfects the soul in the appetitive part, the object of which is the good and the end. And to that which is suitably ordained to the due end man needs to be rightly disposed by a habit in his reason, because counsel and choice, which are about things ordained to the end, are acts of the reason. Consequently an intellectual virtue is needed in the reason, to perfect the reason, and make it suitably affected towards things

Reply to Objection 1: The good of an art is to be found, not in the craftsman, but in the product of the art, since art is right reason about things to be made: for since the making of a thing passes into external matter, it is a perfection not of the maker, but of the thing made, even as movement is the act of the thing moved: and art is concerned with the making of things. On the other hand, the good of prudence is in the active principle, whose activity is its perfection: for prudence is right reason about things to be done, as stated above ([Article \[4\]](#)). Consequently art does not require of the craftsman that his act be a good act, but that his work be good. Rather would it be necessary for the thing made to act well (e.g. that a knife should carve well, or that a saw should cut well), if it were proper to such things to act, rather than to be acted on, because they have not dominion over their actions. Wherefore the craftsman needs art, not that he may live well, but that he may produce a good work of art, and have it in good keeping: whereas prudence is necessary to man, that he may lead a good life, and not merely that he may be a good man.

Reply to Objection 2: When a man does a good deed, not of his own counsel, but moved by that of another, his deed is not yet quite perfect, as regards his reason in directing him and his appetite in moving him. Wherefore, if he do a good deed, he does not do well simply; and yet this is required in order that he may lead a good life.

Reply to Objection 3: As stated in Ethic. vi, 2, truth is not the same for the practical as for the speculative intellect. Because the truth of the speculative intellect depends on conformity between the intellect and the thing. And since the intellect cannot be infallibly in conformity with things in contingent matters, but only in necessary matters, therefore no speculative habit about contingent things is an intellectual virtue, but only such as is about necessary things. On the other hand, the truth of the practical intellect depends on conformity with right appetite. This conformity has no place in necessary matters, which are not affected by the human will; but only in contingent matters which can be effected by us, whether they be matters of interior action, or the products of external work. Hence it is only about contingent matters that an intellectual virtue is assigned to the practical intellect, viz. art, as regards things to be made, and prudence, as regards things to be done.

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Whether "eubulia, synesis, and gnome" are virtues annexed to prudence? [* {euboulia, synesis, gnome}]

Objection 1: It would seem that "{euboulia, synesis}, and {gnome}" are unfittingly assigned as virtues annexed to prudence. For "{euboulia}" is "a habit whereby we take good counsel" (Ethic. vi, 9). Now it "belongs to prudence to take good counsel," as stated (Ethic. vi, 9). Therefore "{euboulia}" is not a virtue annexed to prudence, but rather is prudence itself.

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therefore seem to be the one whose act is judgment. Now "{synesis}" enables us to judge well. Therefore "{synesis}" is not a virtue annexed to prudence, but rather is a principal virtue.

Objection 3: Further, just as there are various matters to pass judgment on, so are there different points on which one has to take counsel. But there is one virtue referring to all matters of counsel. Therefore, in order to judge well of what has to be done, there is no need, besides "{synesis}" of the virtue of "{gnome}."

Objection 4: Further, Cicero (De Invent. Rhet. iii) mentions three other parts of prudence; viz. "memory of the past, understanding of the present, and foresight of the future." Moreover, Macrobius (Super Somn. Scip. 1) mentions yet others: viz. "caution, docility," and the like. Therefore it seems that the above are not the only virtues annexed to prudence.

On the contrary, stands the authority of the Philosopher (Ethic. vi, 9,10,11), who assigns these three virtues as being annexed to prudence.

I answer that, Wherever several powers are subordinate to one another, that power is the highest which is ordained to the highest act. Now there are three acts of reason in respect of anything done by man: the first of these is counsel; the second, judgment; the third, command. The first two correspond to those acts of the speculative intellect, which are inquiry and judgment, for counsel is a kind of inquiry: but the third is proper to the practical intellect, in so far as this is ordained to operation; for reason does not have to command in things that man cannot do. Now it is evident that in things done by man, the chief act is that of command, to which all the rest are subordinate. Consequently, that virtue which perfects the command, viz. prudence, as obtaining the highest place, has other secondary virtues annexed to it, viz. "{eustochia}," which perfects counsel; and "{synesis}" and "{gnome}," which are parts of prudence in relation to judgment, and of whose distinction we shall speak further on (ad 3).

Reply to Objection 1: Prudence makes us be of good counsel, not as though its immediate act consisted in being of good counsel, but because it perfects the latter act by means of a subordinate virtue, viz. "{euboulia}."

Reply to Objection 2: Judgment about what is to be done is directed to something further: for it may happen in some matter of action that a man's judgment is sound, while his execution is wrong. The matter does not attain to its final complement until the reason has commanded aright in the point of what has to be done.

Reply to Objection 3: Judgment of anything should be based on that thing's proper principles. But inquiry does not reach to the proper principles: because, if we were in possession of these, we should need no more to inquire, the truth would be already discovered. Hence only one virtue is directed to being of good counsel, whereas there are two virtues for good judgment: because difference is based not on common but on proper principles. Consequently, even in speculative matters, there is one science of dialectics, which inquires about all matters; whereas demonstrative sciences, which pronounce judgment, differ according to their different objects. "{Synesis}" and "{gnome}" differ in respect of the different rules on which judgment is based: for "{synesis}" judges of actions according to the common law; while "{gnome}" bases its judgment on the natural law, in those cases where the common law fails to apply, as we shall explain further on ([SS, Question \[51\], Article \[4\]](#)).

Reply to Objection 4: Memory, understanding and foresight, as also caution and docility and the like, are not virtues distinct from prudence: but are, as it were, integral parts thereof, in so

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species of prudence, e.g. domestic and political economy, and the like. But the three first names are, in a fashion, potential parts of prudence; because they are subordinate thereto, as secondary virtues to a principal virtue: and we shall speak of them later ([SS, Question \[48\]](#), seqq.).