

1 Thomas Aquinas – Summa Theologiae –

2 Second Part of the Second Part – Question 49: Prudence

3 Article 3. Whether docility should be accounted a part of prudence?

4 **Objection 1.** It would seem that docility should not be accounted a part of [prudence](#).
5 For that which is a [necessary condition](#) of every [intellectual virtue](#), should not be
6 appropriated to one of them. But docility is requisite for every [intellectual virtue](#).
7 Therefore it should not be accounted a part of [prudence](#).

8 **Objection 2.** Further, that which pertains to a [human virtue](#) is in our power, since it is
9 for things that are in our power that we are praised or blamed. Now it is not in our
10 power to be docile, for this is befitting to some through their [natural](#) disposition.
11 Therefore it is not a part of [prudence](#).

12 **Objection 3.** Further, docility is in the disciple: whereas [prudence](#), since it makes
13 precepts, seems rather to belong to teachers, who are also called "preceptors."
14 Therefore docility is not a part of [prudence](#).

15 **On the contrary,** Macrobius [In Somn. Scip. i, 8 following the opinion of Plotinus
16 places docility among the parts of [prudence](#).

17 **I answer that,** As stated above ([Article 2, Reply to Objection 1](#); [II-](#)
18 [II:47:3](#)) [prudence](#) is concerned with particular matters of action, and since such
19 matters are of [infinite](#) variety, no one [man](#) can consider them all sufficiently; nor can
20 this be done quickly, for it requires length of [time](#). Hence in matters
21 of [prudence man](#) stands in very great need of being taught by others, especially by old
22 folk who have acquired a sane understanding of the ends in practical matters.
23 Wherefore the [Philosopher](#) says (Ethic. vi, 11): "It is right to pay no less attention to
24 the undemonstrated assertions and opinions of such [persons](#) as are experienced, older
25 than we are, and [prudent](#), than to their demonstrations, for their experience gives them
26 an insight into principles." Thus it is written ([Proverbs 3:5](#)): "Lean not on thy
27 own [prudence](#)," and ([Sirach 6:35](#)): "Stand in the multitude of the ancients" (i.e. the old

1 men), "that are wise, and join thyself from thy heart to their wisdom." Now it is a mark
2 of docility to be ready to be taught: and consequently docility is fittingly reckoned a
3 part of [prudence](#)

4 **Reply to Objection 1.** Although docility is useful for every [intellectual virtue](#), yet it
5 belongs to [prudence](#) chiefly, for the reason given above.

6 **Reply to Objection 2.** Man has a [natural](#) aptitude for docility even as for other things
7 connected with [prudence](#). Yet his own efforts count for much towards the attainment of
8 perfect docility: and he must carefully, frequently and reverently apply his mind to the
9 teachings of the learned, neither neglecting them through laziness, nor despising them
10 through [pride](#).

11 **Reply to Objection 3.** By [prudence man](#) makes precepts not only for others, but also
12 for himself, as stated above ([II-II:47:12 ad 3](#)). Hence as stated (Ethic. vi, 11), even in
13 subjects, there is place for [prudence](#); to which docility pertains. And yet even the
14 learned should be docile in some respects, since no [man](#) is altogether self-sufficient in
15 matters of [prudence](#), as stated above.