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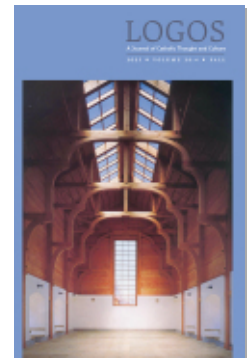
Prudence as Connatural Knowledge

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Prudence as Connatural Knowledge

I. Connatural Knowledge

THE WORD “KNOWLEDGE” HAS A BROAD SEMANTIC RANGE—it describes epistemic realities that are quite diverse. Knowledge can mean *information*, such as the knowledge of analytical geometry or of communal life in medieval Italy. Knowledge also describes a *skill*, such as the knowledge of bread-making or clock repair. Both are kinds of knowledge I might *have*, but they are not a part of me. But there is a third type of knowledge, which is harder to distinguish from myself. It is a part of me; it is what classical philosophy calls a *habit*. In this regard, we speak of the talent of the poet or the courage of the soldier. The poet’s facility with beautiful language and the soldier’s courage in the face of adversity is possessed in a way that is *second nature*. Beyond knowledge as information (like trigonometry or twelfth-century life in Perugia) or knowledge as a skill (like making bread or fixing clocks), which both remain—at least to some degree—distinct from myself, we are considering an ingrained, personal knowledge that is coextensive with myself. It is a knowledge derived from a deep intimacy and union with the reality known. It is a knowledge forged in experience, shaped by affection, possessed as a habit. The accomplished poet and the experienced soldier have developed a *new sense* by which they are able *experientially* to judge things pertaining to beauty or courage by reference to their own internal sense or instinct. This is the terrain of connatural knowledge.

Knowledge by way of connaturality is an important feature in Aquinas's theological epistemology. One could broadly distinguish two general categories for human knowledge in Aquinas. One is by way of study and learning and the other is by way of connaturality, that is, by way of experience and affection. The first is signaled by terms such as *per modum cognitionis* (by way of cognition), the second by terms such as *per modum inclinationis* (by way of inclination).¹ This taxonomy of two broad categories for human knowing in Aquinas—that of discursive reason and that of connaturality—allows us to deduce five key *differentiae* proper to knowledge by way of connaturality.² While this antithesis can be exaggerated, the contrast, nevertheless, illumines the manner in which connatural knowledge operates distinctly from discursive reason.

First, the decisive role that the will plays in connatural knowledge renders it a formally distinct type of knowing. Love is, for Aquinas, the efficient cause of knowledge; love elicits a desire to know more. We might say the will—desire, appetite, love—drives the knowing process forward. However, in connatural knowing, the will is not only an efficient cause, but a *formal cause*. The appetite so conditions the knowing process—penetrating the act of knowing in such an intense and abiding manner—that it alters the species of such knowledge; it is a *loving knowledge*. Connatural knowledge is, then, a knowledge of the heart; it knows by way of the affect.

Second, the object of connatural knowledge is a singular reality. It concerns something in particular, the concrete, *this* thing before me, here and now. It is a legitimate question—one which we will consider—whether and in what way Aquinas's epistemology admits the singular to be a genuine object of *scientia*.

Third, the terrain on which connatural knowledge operates—at least in the natural order—is the practical. It seeks to respond well—that is to say, justly and virtuously—to the unique vagaries of daily life. For this reason, the vast majority of Aquinas's examples of connatural knowledge concern the moral life—what to do and how to act. Whereas the end of knowledge (*scientia*) is the intellectual grasp of universal truth, connatural knowledge aims at practical truth, truth in act, truth about the contingent order that could be otherwise.

Fourth, the manner in which connatural knowing operates is by way of inclination and habit. Ordinarily, we know by way of representation—a reality is known to us through a spiritual similitude. Because it is impossible for a spiritual power such as knowing to immediately possess a material object, we are united instead with its intentional species. That is quite different from the will's grasp of the good, which proceeds not by way of similitude, but by the actual possession of the good loved. Love aims to clasp hold of reality itself. Connatural knowledge is marked by the immediacy proper to love rather than the distance that marks knowledge. Knowledge by way of connaturality is nonconceptual, or better, preconceptual. Before reason has made distinctions and definitions, before argumentation and demonstration, connatural knowledge responds instinctively, intuitively, in the appetites. Such knowledge proceeds by attending to the tendencies of the will, its immediate attraction or aversion to a concrete situation. Discursive reason proceeds by way of concepts, *from the outside in*. Connatural knowledge proceeds by way of deep-seated inclinations, *from the inside out*. Thus, in determining what virtue demands in a particular, contingent circumstance a virtuous person can appeal to his own internal moral barometer.

Fifth, experience, time, and maturity are the necessary conditions for connatural knowledge. The interior habits and inclinations on which connatural knowledge depends obtain only through the repeated just and virtuous engagement with diverse, particular circumstances. The connatural knowledge that a sailor has of navigation grows in acuity, precision, and deftness according to the register of experience. The same law of experience is at work in perspicacious and confident moral judgments of connaturality.

To briefly recapitulate. We have five key differentiae that distinguish connatural knowing: (1) love establishes its formal character; (2) its object is the singular; (3) its sphere of operation is the practical; (4) it acts by way of inclination and habit; and (5) it comes to possession in experience. Now these also happen to be the defining characteristics in Aquinas's account of prudence. Indeed, acquired prudence is, for Aquinas, the preeminent sphere of our connatural encounter with reality.

II. Prudence as Connatural Knowledge

A. PRUDENCE AND THE APPETITES

Aquinas defines prudence as “the knowledge of what to seek and what to avoid,” or more literally, knowledge of what things are appetible and repugnant (*prudentia est cognitio rerum appetendarum et fugiendarum*).³ This succinct definition illustrates Aquinas’s conclusion that prudence is, properly speaking, a knowledge (*cognitio*) whose seat is the faculty of reason (*prudentia proprie sit in ratione*).⁴ However, the definition also immediately links this knowledge (*cognitio*) with the will’s appetites (*appetitiones*) and aversions (*fugiti*).

It is this unique relation between *cognitio* and *appetitio* that is foundational to Aquinas’s account of prudence. He explains, “Although prudence resides in this part of the reason as in a subject—because of this it is called an intellectual virtue—it is not connected with reason alone, as art or science, but it requires rectitude of the appetitive faculty.”⁵ In this respect, Aquinas frequently appeals to Aristotle’s maxim from *Nicomachean Ethics*: “According as a man is, such does the end seem to him.” The will serves as the efficient cause disposing the knowledge of prudence, but it also enters into the formal cause, informing the principles according to which prudence reasons. He explains, “A man affected by passion judges differently when he is not so affected and what seems good to him when he is angry does not seem good when he is calm.”⁶ While forgetfulness is the preeminent scourge of other intellectual virtues, passion sabotages prudence, maintains Aquinas, appealing to both Aristotle and Scripture:

Prudence is not taken away directly by forgetfulness, but rather is corrupted by the passions. For the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* vi, 5) that *pleasure and sorrow pervert the estimate of prudence*: wherefore it is written (Dan 13:56): *Beauty hath deceived thee, and lust hath subverted thy heart*, and (Ex 23:8): *Neither shalt thou take bribes which blind even the prudent*.⁷

Prudence is a preeminent form of connatural knowing, because the appetites are inextricably involved in the reasoning of prudence, coloring the end pursued.

B. PRUDENCE AND THE SINGULAR

Prudence is an unwieldy virtue. On the one hand, it is an intellectual virtue; its seat is the cognitive faculty whose object is fixed, universal truth: *scientia*. However, the distinguishing characteristic of the connatural knowledge of prudence is its *application* to contingent, particular circumstances, which are, by definition, not the realm of *scientia*. Aquinas writes, “It is necessary for the prudent man to know both the universal principles of reason, and the singulars about which actions are concerned.”⁸ How can this divide be bridged? Is there such a category as genuine knowledge about singular action? The answer, according to Aquinas, is that the intellect *directly* knows the universal, but that it knows the particular and singular *indirectly*.⁹ Aquinas safeguards the genuinely intellectual character of prudence in that, like the other intellectual virtues, its principal object is universal truth. Nevertheless, its distinguishing act is the indirect, reflexive *applicatio* of the universal to particular determinations. Prudence sets its face resolutely towards a singular concrete act to be carried out, all the while having its determination informed by eternal and universal principles.¹⁰

Not only is the *object* of prudence singular, but the *subject* is also singular. There is no mold corresponding to the “prudent man.” Distinct environments, responsibilities, and experiences shape each person’s prudence. It is well-nigh impossible to generate an abstract and universal portrait of the prudent man because prudence concerns particular singulars—it takes shape through repeated, virtuous, just, and wise responses to unique, unrepeatable, contingent circumstances. As the biography of Lincon will look quite different from that of Mother Theresa, so too will his prudence look different from hers.

Connatural knowledge involves the connection or attunement between a singular individual and a singular reality. That relation is utterly unique; the universe provides no additional attestations to either the individual or his or her reality. For this reason, each example of connatural knowledge is wholly unique. And, such is prudence: the connatural discernment of how a singular subject should act in relation to a singular object.

C. PRUDENCE AND THE PRACTICAL

Prudence is manifested in *action*, repeats Aquinas. The imperative to action distinguishes the knowledge of prudence from other knowledge. Two derived points issue from the practical expression of prudence. First, prudence gives priority to *execution*. Prudence is existential; it needs to be brought to birth in the world of time and space. Command (*praecipium*) is the last act of prudence and has priority. The end is first in intention. In the practical order, deliberation and judgment count for nothing unless what has been deliberated and judged is executed. Prudence is existential; it has to be born into the world.

Second, the knowledge of prudence is calibrated to a distinct category of truth, namely, practical truth. The veracity of a particular prudential determination is gauged according to the register of the concrete order. What then is the truth aspect proper to prudence? If prudence is an intellectual virtue, towards what truth does it aspire? Is there a correspondence (*adequatio*) between the mind and the existing order that prudence comes to determine, judge, and then act upon? At first blush that might seem improbable, given the fluidity of reality. And yet, Aquinas holds that there is a truth proper to prudence, namely practical truth. And, it is grasped in a connatural manner. Prudence is less an *adequatio* of the intellect to the real, as much as an *adequatio* of the upright will to the good.

There are no guarantees with prudence. The certainty of truth—the aim of all other intellectual virtues—is not the bar for connatural knowledge of future, singular contingencies. In response to the objector who contends that, as an intellectual virtue, the determinations of prudence should have the certainty of truth (*certitudo veritatis*), Aquinas responds, “Since the matter of prudence is the contingent singulars about which are human actions, the certainty of prudence cannot be so great as to be devoid of all anxiety (*solicitudo*).”¹¹ The light of practical truth is more occluded than that of speculative truth. The latter is grasped as it is (*adaequatio rei et intellectus*), but practical truth is grasped by discerning the will’s interior resonance with the good of an external contingent reality. Prudence demands that one not shrink from action despite the

darkness that inveighs on all sides of a requisite decision.¹² Hence what Aquinas calls the “anxiety” (*sollicitudo*) of prudence.

D. PRUDENCE AND ITS DISCERNMENT

If the object of prudence is practical truth and if the will plays a distinct, formal role in knowing practical truth, then the *mode of apprehension* proper to prudence will also be distinct. Prudence ascertains the *truth in act* not only by reason’s advertence to universal principles, but especially by gauging the affirmations of the appetite. That is to say, the reason of prudence operates by the connatural discernment of the resonances and dispositions of rectified appetite. In a word, the action needs to *feel* good.

A particular reality can elicit a response from the appetites—a response that is often visceral, one of repugnance or delight, of electricity or execration, and the intellect follows. Prudence’s determination of how to respond well to a singular, practical reality is informed not only by universal principles, but also by attending to the intuitive, interior inclinations of an upright will as a trustworthy barometer for how to act. The connatural attunement of the heart to justice allows the just man to make a just—that is to say, *true*—judgment about a singular, practical course of action by attending to his inner sense of justice.

The *adequatio* of a virtuous will to a virtuous action is the practical truth that prudence apprehends. It does so by discerning the interior connatural attunement of appetite and action. Such discernment is not “proved by reason”¹³—it does not proceed according to the ordinary discursive mode of reason. The exterior conclusions of rational argument do not bind the verdict of prudence—even more, the determinations of prudence can at times *run counter* to what appears to be the demands of reason.

Yves Simon gives an everyday example of how the judgment of prudence can at times run counter to the weight of reason. A business proposition is made to an honest and experienced businessman. The proposal seems both immensely lucrative and utterly secure. While the deal is perhaps too good to be true, the businessman can find no fault with the proposal. Nevertheless, his rejection

of the proposition is definitive and resolute: “No.” When asked why he rejects such a seemingly scintillating scheme, he cannot spell it out—no arguments can with sufficient suasion counter such a compelling offer. And yet his decision is firm, “No.” When pushed to give an account, his response turns to metaphor: “Yes, it is not easy to see what is wrong with his plan, but sometimes you can smell things that you cannot see.”¹⁴

Consider the common expression, “something smells fishy.” It indicates precisely the type of connatural aversion that an experienced and honest businessman might have in the face of such an incandescent proposal. He adverts to his own intuitive sense or inclination for direction. By a judgment of the heart that seems to run counter to arguments of reason, he decides, “No, that smells off.”¹⁵ The metaphor is not accidental. Whereas seeing—a sense that engages reality far off—is a common metaphor for intellectual understanding, smell, taste, and touch express sense engagement with reality immediately at hand; as a metaphor, it bespeaks knowledge of the heart derived from direct experience.

E. PRUDENCE AND EXPERIENCE

Experience is the necessary condition for the connatural knowledge that belongs to prudence. Consider a proficient sailor. Years spent in the open water in sundry conditions have developed a keen sense for how to handle a ship in unexpected conditions. The direction of the wind, the pull on the mast, the distinct mood of *this* yacht in *this* weather are all well known to an experienced sailor. This is not a knowledge achieved studying sailing manuals. It is tacit knowledge—an intuitive *feel* for the nexus of wind, sea, and sail attained only after much time *actually sailing*.¹⁶ Here experience is coterminous with the connatural knowledge of prudence.

Experience, maintains Aquinas, provides *foresight*; the capacity to *read* a situation well so as to have a good sense of what is to come. At the outset of the treatise on prudence, Aquinas defines the virtue as a type of clear-sightedness—an ability to perceive the surrounding world accurately. Aquinas draws on Isidore of Seville’s definition: “A prudent man is one who sees as it were from afar, for his sight is keen, and he foresees the event of uncertainties.”¹⁷ Prudence

entails the capacity to *look ahead*, to understand what's around the corner. This only obtains with experience.

Of course, the future is unknown and no one can actually look around the corner. And yet, the prudent man has developed both an interior sense regarding how things will play out and a facility to respond quickly and rightly to unfolding circumstances. Prudence, writes Pieper, entails the capacity "to estimate, with sure instinct for the future, whether a particular action will lead to the realization of the goal."¹⁸ Aquinas makes the striking (and *prima facie* perplexing) contention that the prudent man *knows* future contingencies. For the prudent man, maintains Aquinas, things that could be otherwise are the object of such knowledge (*cognitio*): "To obtain knowledge (*cognoscere*) of the future from knowledge of the present or past, which pertains to prudence, belongs properly to the reason (*proprie rationis est*)."¹⁹ Aquinas explains that this sense (of vision) comes from the process of "putting things together" (*collationem*).²⁰ What is "put together" is, presumably, a perceptive self-awareness, long experience dealing with other people, and repeated interaction with the surrounding world.²¹

The perceptive, visionary character of prudence is closely allied with foresight (*providentia*). Aquinas writes, "Consequently, future contingents, insofar as they can be directed by man to the end of human life, are the matter of prudence: and each of these things is implied in the word foresight (*providentiae*)."²² The foresight of prudence is not simply a passive looking ahead but an active working out of future realities, directing contingent things to the end one seeks. In this way, the virtue of prudence can be understood as a finite approximation of divine Providence. The etymology of providence (*pro-videre*), Aquinas points out, is proximate to the "foresight" or "looking ahead" that belongs to prudence. Divine foresight, according to which God's primary causality orders all things to their end, is termed providence. Human foresight, according to which human secondary causality orders things to their end, is termed prudence. Amongst the almost infinite variety of possible human actions, prudence elects the best means to direct things to their end.²³ As such, the foresight of prudence is a derived, analogical expression of divine providence.

III. Ike: A Profile of Prudence

The experience that belongs to acquired prudence is, for Aquinas, the quintessential virtue of a leader and, in a unique way, a *military leader*. Consider that the only example of *phrónēsis* provided by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is that of Pericles, the general who led Athens during the Peloponnesian War.²⁴ Also, in his treatise on prudence, Aquinas devotes an entire article to military prudence, which he holds to be a special species of care for the common good. Biographies of legendary military leadership tend to highlight the prudence of the commander: the earnest and at times excruciating deliberation and counsel, the decisive, sure judgment, and, finally, the command to bring the determinations of prudence into existence in a concrete order. Invariably, such accounts highlight the commander's intuitive, connatural sense of what the singular, practical demands.

A superlative example of such prudence is the leadership of the supreme commander of the Allied Forces, Dwight Eisenhower, when launching the invasion of Europe at the beginning of the end of the Second World War.²⁵ In the lead-up to the D-Day landings, Eisenhower strategized meticulously and exhaustively. Working more than one hundred hours per week, he planned the immense logistical and tactical feat required to launch the largest amphibious assault in history. In order to drop paratroopers with precision, the light of a full moon was needed on the night of the attack. Weather on the notoriously stormy English Channel had to be relatively calm. The operation was planned to commence at the crack of dawn with forty minutes of intense naval and air bombardment of the extensive defensive works and concrete gun bunkers perched high up on the walls of the Norman coast. Then thousands of soldiers would begin pouring out of ships into the algid waters to storm the beaches. Low tide was required so that wooden stakes, metal tripods, mines, and antitank obstacles would be visible for elimination. The window of opportunity for such an attack was terrifyingly small. The best intelligence predicted that the confluence of all these conditions would come together around June 5–7.

Operation Overlord, as the invasion was named, was tentatively

planned for June 5. Unfortunately, at precisely that time, a menacing storm was gathering over England and Northern France. Eisenhower and his commanding generals gathered on June 4 in Southwick House library to discuss whether to proceed. Landing the ships on the French shorelines in rough seas and howling wind could spell catastrophe for the entire mission. But to postpone invasion meant waiting for at least a month in hopes of a similar confluence of ideal conditions. Two million men now stood ready to deploy throughout the south of England, and thousands were already in position out in ships. To call off the operation and regroup less than forty-eight hours before launch would sap morale. Detailed plans would have to be scrapped, the opportunities for ideal summer launch conditions would dwindle, the element of surprise would be risked, and enemy defenses would continue to fortify.

As the storm raged outside, the generals inside Southwick House received a hopeful update about a change in weather. A thirty-six-hour lull in the storm was anticipated for the following day, June 6. A small, but perhaps sufficient, window of decent weather might allow the operation to launch. Although some of the general staff were encouraged that the attack could proceed, other generals voiced deep reservations. Would the storm's letup be long enough to put sufficient troops on the beach? If bad weather resumed, would the units on French soil be left stranded? Would the cloud cover still be too thick to allow for precise aerial bombing and the dropping of paratroopers?

Eisenhower systematically polled opinions around the room. The counsel of each commander was solicited. Generals Montgomery and Smith were enthusiastic and eager to launch the invasion. Admiral Ramsay, General Tedder, and General Leigh-Mallory were concerned: they had doubts about their naval and air capabilities in adverse weather. A decision had to be made, and only one man could make it. The future of the war and the fate of hundreds of thousands of soldiers lay in Eisenhower's hands. After pacing about for some minutes, Eisenhower quietly but decisively made his judgment: "O.K., let's go."

Less known is that shortly after his decision to launch, Ike sat down and wrote out a press release to be communicated in the next

few days should it prove necessary. It was a gut-wrenching notice he prayed would never see the light of day. It simply read: “Our landings in Cherbourg-Havre area have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops. My decision to attack at this time and place was based on the best information available. The troops, the air and the Navy did all that bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt, it is mine alone.” The note, preserved in the Eisenhower Presidential Library, shows the supreme commander had underlined the last two words: “mine alone.”

Prudence is the virtue superlatively on display in Eisenhower’s D-Day decision. Whether it is best to launch a dangerous attack filled with immense risk or to defer such an attack—a decision equally risky—is far from clear, far from the certainty of *scientia*. The form of such a prudential decision—the command to attack or defer attack—is the definitive expression, the casting into the concrete existential order of counsel and judgment. Years of military experience—Eisenhower’s own and others—were called upon, the expertise of logistics, weaponry, and meteorology was amply provided, intelligence reports of enemy movements and operations were studied in meticulous detail. But there was no certainty—military strategy shares elements of both a science and an art, but it is neither, it is prudential.²⁶ Amid the darkness on all sides, Eisenhower alone had to make the decision. Eisenhower’s decision is a vivid attestation to what Aquinas calls the “anxiety” (*sollicitudo*) of prudence. And yet a leader, especially a military leader, knows that a decision cannot be evaded; even amid much darkness the die must be cast.²⁷

Why did Eisenhower make the decision he made? In the last instance, he followed his own prudence. The singular, practical, contingent circumstance of storming the Normandy beaches was not a science. Very good arguments led diverse members of Eisenhower’s general staff to well-reasoned but diametrically opposed conclusions. The judgment about the “practical truth” in such a unique, singular situation cannot be separated from the utterly singular prudence of the man. Ultimately, Eisenhower’s prudence—his instinctual, intuitive decision to launch the invasion—did

not rest on external reasons, but on an internal barometer. In his words, the decision was “mine alone.” It was *his* prudence, *his* interior sense of what to do, fashioned from the composite of who he *was*—his unique experiences, friendships, joys, hopes, and terrors. Admittedly, his prudence was informed by many external reasons, facts, and information, but at the decisive moment of command, such external reasons and arguments faded into the background, and Eisenhower’s will and appetite expressed *his* unique prudence, *his* distinctive connatural knowledge.

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Notes

1. In his seminal work on the phenomenon of the development of Christian doctrine, the Spanish Dominican, Francisco Marín-Sola, appeals to the Church’s intuitive, affective, and connatural knowledge of the faith as underwriting the logic of development of doctrine. In so doing, Marín-Sola catalogues the language Aquinas uses to distinguish two ways by which the Church knows sacred truth, that of discursive reason and that of connaturality. See Francisco Marín-Sola, *L’Évolution homogène du dogme catholique*, 2 vols. (Fribourg, CH: Saint-Paul, 1924). The work was subsequently translated into English by Antonio T. Piñon: *The Homogeneous Evolution of Catholic Dogma* (Manila, PH: University of Santo Tomas, 1988), 409.
2. Thomas Gilby, in a magnificent and slim volume, delineates five ways in which “poetic knowledge” is distinct from the typical mode in which reason proceeds. While not following his division completely, I am indebted to his distinctions to account for the unique character of connatural knowledge. See Thomas Gilby, *Poetic Experience: An Introduction to Thomist Aesthetics* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1943).
3. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II-II, q. 47, a. 1. All texts and translation from Aquinas are drawn from the *Opera Omnia* published by the Aquinas Institute (Aquinas.cc) unless otherwise noted.
4. Aquinas, *ST* II-II, q. 47, a. 1.

5. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* 1174.
6. Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 9, a. 2.
7. *Ibid.*, II-II, q. 47, a. 16
8. *Ibid.*, II-II, q. 47, a. 3.
9. *Ibid.*, II-II, q. 47, a. 3. ad 1.
10. Henry Kissinger writes, "Because of the complexity of reality, truth in history differs from truth in science. The scientist seeks verifiable results; the historically informed strategic leader strives to distill actionable insight from inherent ambiguity. Scientific experiments support or cast doubt on previous results, presenting scientists with the opportunity to modify their variables and repeat their trials. Strategists are usually permitted only one test; their decisions are typically irrevocable." Henry Kissinger, *Leadership* (New York: Penguin, 2022), xviii.
11. Aquinas, *ST II-II*, q. 47, a. 9 ad 2. Oswald Spengler, the early twentieth-century German philosopher of history, captures how the "born leader" renders prudential judgments despite uncertain evidence: "[He is] above all a valuer—a valuer of men, situations, and things . . . [with the ability] to do the correct thing without 'knowing' it." Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), 383.
12. Joseph Pieper writes, "Man, then, when he comes to a decision, cannot ever be sufficiently prescient nor can he wait until logic affords him absolute certainty. If he waited for that, he would never come to a decision; he would remain in a state of inconclusiveness, unless he chose to make shift with a deceptive certitude. The prudent man does not expect certainty where it cannot exist, nor on the other hand does he deceive himself by false certainties." Joseph Pieper, *Four Cardinal Virtues* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt, 1965), 18.
13. Aquinas, *Nicomachean Ethics*, lect. 7 n. 1214.
14. Yves R. Simon, "Introduction to the Study of Practical Wisdom," *The New Scholasticism* 35 (1961): 23.
15. The example of the intuitive judgment of the businessman finds corroboration in a number of recent studies in the field of business. See Alden M. Hayashi, "When to Trust Your Gut," *Harvard Business Review*, February 2001. David G. Myer offers an engaging and popular survey of the place of "gut instincts" in practical decision-making: *Intuition: Its Powers and Perils* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).
16. Michael Polanyi (1891–1976) developed the concept of "tacit knowledge," according to which people possess an experiential "know-how" that exceeds their ability to articulate. Examples of "tacit knowledge" include swimming, riding a bike, or playing a musical instrument. The full dimensions of these activities are not capable of being explained, even by the adept. Polanyi contrasts this tacit knowledge, which is experiential

and connatural, from conceptual or explicit knowledge. Polanyi is critical of a certain Enlightenment scientific hegemony in which authentic knowledge necessarily demands distance, a stance “outside” of what is known. Tacit knowledge, although possessed in a nondiscursive, nonconceptual mode, apprehends its object “from within.” Such personal knowledge exceeds the possibilities of conceptual knowledge, because we always believe more than we can demonstrate and know more than we can say. See Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

17. Aquinas, *ST II-II*, q. 47, a. 1.
18. Pieper, *Four Cardinal Virtues*, 18.
19. Aquinas, *ST II-II*, q. 47, a. 1.
20. Ibid.
21. Henry Kissinger describes a prudential leader as one animated by “a strength of character to sustain a course of action whose benefits and whose dangers can be only incompletely glimpsed at the moment of choice.” Kissinger, *Leadership*, xvi.
22. Aquinas, *ST II-II*, q. 49, a. 6.
23. This is because prudence concerns not the ends but the means to the ends. And the means to achieving a good of life are infinite. See Aquinas, *ST II-II*, q. 47, a. 15: “The means to the end, in human concerns, far from being fixed, are of manifold variety according to the variety of persons and affairs.”
24. Consider also Thucydides’s description of Themistocles, the Athenian statesman and general who saved Greece from the Persians: “Themistocles was . . . at once the best *judge* in those sudden crises which admit of little or no deliberation, and the best *prophet* of the future, even to its most distant possibilities.” Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Richard Crawley (New York: Dutton, 1910), 138 (emphasis added). It is difficult to imagine a more succinct definition of prudence. Themistocles’s penetrating foresight allows him to make decisive and true judgments of contingent circumstances.
25. I am drawing from Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990).
26. Aquinas, *ST II-II*, q. 50, a. 4 ad 1.
27. Consider Kissinger’s description of the *sollicitudo* of prudence: “The leader-as-strategist faces an inherent paradox: in circumstances that call for action, the scope for decision-making is often greatest when relevant information is at its scantiest. By the time more data become available, the margin of maneuver tends to have narrowed.” Kissinger, *Leadership*, xvii.