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JOHN BURIDAN ON THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES

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ALINE MEDEIROS RAMOS

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LES VERTUS INTELLECTUELLES SELON JEAN BURIDAN

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COMME EXIGENCE PARTIELLE

DU DOCTORAT EN PHILOSOPHIE

PAR

ALINE MEDEIROS RAMOS

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φρόνησις καὶ ἀρετὴ καὶ εὐνοία  
Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1378a8

“O saber é realmente uma coisa muito bonita,  
Depende do que se saiba,  
Também deverá depender de quem sabe, acho eu”  
José Saramago, *O Homem Duplicado*

“A dissertation is written under duress in an environment where  
the author is constantly proving they are experts and no one  
quite believes them. That isn't a book. It's a treatise.”  
Jessica Marie Johnson

“Ganho para escrever. Aqui ofereço de graça e com erros.”  
Fernanda Young

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Legend has it, Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan once met at a Paris café and Dylan asked Cohen how long it had taken him to write “Hallelujah.” Cohen apparently lied and said it had taken him “just a couple of years,” while it had actually taken him about seven years. When asked, in turn, about how long it had taken him to write “Like a woman,” (or some other of his most famous songs) Dylan replied “fifteen minutes.” While I do not at all compare my writing here to the genius of Leonard Cohen – a Montrealer himself – this dissertation was certainly written *secundum modum Marianopolis*, although perhaps not quite like Cohen’s chiseling marble, but rather like molasses in January. *Non perfecta sed perscripta*.

First of all, I would like to thank all people *sine quibus non*. First and foremost, I thank Claude Panaccio for his very patient work and guidance. This work would not have come to fruition without his thoughtful and thorough corrections, suggestions and counsel. I also thank him for being the ultimate role model for me not only on account of his rigorous work on the history of philosophy and philosophy of language, but also for his kind teaching and very generous mentoring. Thank you for sharing your abundant wisdom with me.

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## DEDICATION

*To my grandparents (in mem.),  
who were everything*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

### **Aristotle**

<i>APo.</i>	<i>Posterior Analytics</i>
<i>DA</i>	<i>On the Soul</i>
<i>DC</i>	<i>On the Heavens</i>
<i>EN</i>	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
<i>Met.</i>	<i>Metaphysics</i>
<i>MM</i>	<i>Magna Moralia</i>
<i>Phys.</i>	<i>Physics</i>
<i>Pol.</i>	<i>Politics</i>
<i>Rhet.</i>	<i>Rhetoric</i>

### **John Buridan**

<i>QAPo.</i>	<i>Quæstiones in Analytica priora</i>
<i>QDA</i>	<i>Quæstiones De Anima</i>
<i>QMet.</i>	<i>Quæstiones Metaphysicorum</i>
<i>QNE</i>	<i>Quæstiones super decem libros Ethicorum Aristotelis</i>
<i>QPhys.</i>	<i>Quæstiones super octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis</i>
<i>QRhet.</i>	<i>Quæstiones super Rhetoricam Aristotelis</i>
<i>SD</i>	<i>Summulae de dialectica</i>
<i>TC</i>	<i>Treatise on consequences</i>

### **John Duns Scotus**

<i>Ord.</i>	<i>Ordinatio</i>
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### **Thomas Aquinas**

<i>ST</i>	<i>Summa theologiæ</i>
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### **William Ockham**

<i>OPh</i>	<i>Opera philosophica</i>
<i>OTh</i>	<i>Opera theologica</i>
<i>SL</i>	<i>Summa logicæ</i>

## RÉSUMÉ

L'objectif de cette thèse est de tracer un aperçu de la théorie de Jean Buridan sur les vertus intellectuelles et de promouvoir la discussion sur le commentaire de Buridan sur l'*Éthique à Nicomaque (QNE)*. Pour ce faire, mon premier objectif était de rendre certaines parties du commentaire éthique de Buridan plus accessibles aux lecteurs et lectrices contemporains en fournissant une édition de travail du texte latin accompagnée de sa traduction anglaise. Chaque *quæstio* est suivie d'un bref examen exégétique qui clarifie le raisonnement et les arguments de Buridan. Ensuite, la deuxième partie de mon travail, étant de nature synthétique, fournit un compte rendu plus systématique de chacune des cinq vertus intellectuelles examinées par Buridan, à savoir la technique, la compréhension, la connaissance, la prudence et la sagesse. Les analyses fournies s'appuient sur les *QNE* ainsi que sur d'autres travaux du corpus buridanien, et sont également comparées et mises en contraste avec les théories de certains des précurseurs, contemporains et successeurs de Buridan.

Mots clés: Jean Buridan, vertus intellectuelles, philosophie médiévale, scolastique, théorie de la vertu, nominalisme

## ABSTRACT

The aim of this dissertation is to draw an outline of John Buridan's views about the intellectual virtues and to foster debate on Buridan's commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*QNE*). In order to do that, my first goal was to make some parts of Buridan's *Ethics* commentary more accessible to readers by providing a working edition of the Latin text accompanied by its English translation. Each *quæstio* is followed by a brief exegetical examination which clarifies Buridan's reasoning and arguments. The second part of this work, being of a synthetical nature, provides a more systematic account of each of the five intellectual virtues Buridan discusses, namely craft, understanding, knowledge, prudence and wisdom. The analyses provided rely on the *QNE* and other works of the Buridanian corpus, which are then compared and contrasted with views held by some of his forerunners, contemporaries, and successors.

Keywords: John Buridan, intellectual virtues, medieval philosophy, scholasticism, virtue theory, nominalism

## INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I provide an account of the intellectual virtues according to John Buridan. To do that, I first propose a working edition of the Latin text of Buridan's *Quaestiones super decem libros Ethicorum Aristotelis (QNE)*, Book VI, questions 1, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 22, accompanied by an English translation and exegetical commentaries, which are then followed by more detailed philosophical analysis.

These questions from the *QNE* have hitherto neither been published as a Latin critical edition nor translated from Latin into any modern language. What I am calling a “working edition” is an edition that is neither critical nor diplomatic. Instead, it is based on a few manuscripts and a few incunable texts, whose publication dates range from 1489 to 1637. The reasons for my proposing a working edition will be explained in detail in chapters 1 and 2, the latter of which also provides a detailed account of my norms for editing the Latin text, and a few general notes on the English translation.

To date, there has been no systematic, thorough study of Buridan's *QNE*. My goal here, however, is much more modest than to offer that comprehensive account that is wanting. In only aiming to discuss the intellectual virtues, I leave aside what would be the much larger project of also accounting for the moral virtues, to which Aristotle (and, thus, also Buridan) dedicates Books II, III, IV and V of his *Nicomachean Ethics*,

and I also bracket off questions concerning friendship, eudaimonia, and the good life, broadly speaking. My goal in clarifying the role of the intellectual virtues in these selected texts is to shed some light on the intersection of Buridan's moral philosophy and epistemology. I have chosen to look at this theme from the viewpoint of the *QNE* for it is in this treatise, more specifically, in Book VI, that Buridan discusses the intellectual virtues amply. That is not to say that the *QNE* are my only source for this study. I will also be referring to the rest of the Buridanian corpus, especially the *QAPo.*, the *QDA*, the *QMet.* and the *SD*, as well as to other authors, in the hopes that this will help paint a clearer picture of the issues I am addressing.

Part one of this dissertation contains three chapters. In the first chapter, I present the main motivations behind this project, and I offer a brief introductory summary of Buridan's *Ethics*, intending to situate it – and my inquiry – in its historical context. I then briefly present some key notions of Buridan's virtue theory, focusing on intellectual virtues, followed by an overview of the existing scholarship in preparation for a more in-depth discussion of Buridan's text and virtue theory.

Chapter 2, as mentioned above, provides some preambular notes on the edition and translation I present in chapter 3. This is where I summarize my methodology for the presentation of the Latin text and its accompanying English translation. Chapter 3 contains the actual Latin edition and English translation of the selected questions: In *QNE* VI, 1, we have the thesis according to which virtues are correctly divided in moral and intellectual. In *QNE* VI, 8, Buridan argues that craft is a virtue. *QNE* VI, 9 aims to show that prudence is an intellectual virtue, while *QNE* VI, 11 contends that *intellectus* is a virtue. *QNE* VI, 12 accounts for wisdom, and how it can be conceived as being the same as knowledge and understanding, while also being a virtue in its own right. Finally, *QNE* VI, 22 shows how and why wisdom is the best out of all intellectual virtues, including prudence. These texts are each followed by brief exegetical

commentaries, which aim to clarify the structure of each *quaestio*, Buridan's theses, the potential objections to his views and his replies to these objections.

In the second part of the dissertation, I present a more detailed analysis of each one of the five intellectual virtues, comparing and contrasting Buridan's views in the *QNE* with arguments from his other works and with other authors (such as Albert, Aquinas, Odonis, Ockham, Burley, and some anonymous arts masters). In the chapter 4, on craft, I contrast Buridan's view with that of Aquinas and speculate on a few reasons why craft has been systematically downplayed in medieval accounts of intellectual virtues. Chapter 5 brings a discussion about *intellectus*, in which, in addition to pointing out some common points between Buridan's account and Odonis', I draw attention to Buridan's dispositional account of *intellectus* (as understanding), as opposed to what we usually find in the scholarship, which is a focus on the power (*intellectus* as intellect) or on the act (*intellectus* as intellection). To that end, this is where I draw a lot of comparisons between Buridan's *QNE*, *QAPo.* and *QDA*.

Just like chapter 5, in chapter 6, on scientific knowledge, one of my main concerns was to clearly distinguish between *scientia* as an act and as a *habitus*. Here, though, more than to simply rely on comparisons with Ockham, I have also looked at some other places where *scientia* is discussed in Buridan's corpus: in addition to the questions I presented in chapter 3, I considered *QNE* VI, 6 and, especially, the *SD* (viz. 8.4.3). In so doing, we come to realize that to have a firmer grasp of Buridan's idea of *scientia*, we must take into account his supposition theory – and this ultimately leads us to see that Buridan's nominalism “spills over” onto the ethics, and is not a self-contained, logico-metaphysical programme.

For chapter 7, I was able to rely not only on the existing scholarship on Buridan's notion of prudence, but also on other medieval accounts of this intellectual virtue. This

chapter, besides highlighting some commonalities between Ockham and Buridan yet again, allows us to see that even though Buridan is not in full unison with his preceding and contemporary arts masters (mainly those from the University of Paris), he is still quite close to them in his positions about *prudentia*. Chapter 8 recapitulates an issue which is first raised in chapter 7, namely, that of the place of wisdom vis-à-vis prudence, and I compare Buridan to some of his most relevant contemporaries, Odonis and Burley. This prompts a reflection about the decline of prudence, and – albeit without a proper in-depth philosophical examination – motivates us to ponder about the reception of these intellectual virtues in the modern era, with Descartes, Malebranche, and Kant.

To conclude, chapter 9 provides a brief outline of the conclusions of each chapter and suggests new paths of investigation. I highlight mainly two avenues to follow: one would be a natural progression from what has been done here, namely a more thorough comparison between Buridan and his contemporaries and near-contemporaries, out of whom Odonis stands out as the most promising option. The other would be a possible articulation between Buridan's theory of intellectual virtue and contemporary virtue epistemology. I briefly examine this prospective path and draw attention to its most salient pitfalls and limitations.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES IN JOHN BURIDAN'S *ETHICS*

#### COMMENTARY

##### 1.1 Motivation

Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, John Buridan (c. 1300-c. 1360), possibly the most famous of 14<sup>th</sup>-century arts masters at the University of Paris, has enjoyed a lot of scholarly attention from academics, particularly since the publication of the third volume of Duhem's *Études sur Léonard de Vinci*, in 1913, drew attention to the Picardian master's theory of impetus and its alleged cardinal role in overcoming the then-dominant Aristotelian view of motion.<sup>1</sup> Many "waves" of study have then followed: the interest in Buridan's natural philosophy (mostly physics) continued to be propelled by Anneliese Maier and E. A. Moody, for instance, and these studies were later expanded on by many scholars, such as Jack Zupko, so as to also include psychology. Efforts to account for Buridan's logic (including metaphysics) also started

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<sup>1</sup> A caveat is in order here: it is now rather clear that Duhem overstated his case and most scholars would consider that Buridan, despite his impetus theory, remained committed to Aristotelian views and cannot be rightly called a forerunner of Galileo's. Cf. Maier (1955).

to emerge with many modern editions of his texts being published since the 1970s and with the translations and studies which have since abounded. Now, it seems, we have a “third wave” of scholars intending to further develop some of these Buridianian themes. Within this surge in interest for Buridan, I have chosen to focus on Buridan’s ethics, which has been the subject of a few studies, but never of a systematic treatment. Yet, by no means do I intend to fully bridge a research gap and provide a comprehensive account of Buridan’s ethics, nor do I mean to provide a bird’s-eye view of his moral theory here, for reasons that will soon become clear, but which mainly have to do with the range of Buridan’s moral theory both in terms of (1) thematic scope, which includes not only issues proper to what we currently call ethics but also aspects of politics and economics, to name just a few, and of (2) the massive body of text Buridan has produced, since ethics-related themes are found in a number of works, spread out on the thousands of pages which Buridan dedicated to commenting on the entirety of the Aristotelian corpus. Instead, I focus on a single aspect of a single work, namely on the intellectual virtues as they are discussed in the *Quæstiones super decem libros ethicorum* (*QNE*). The reason I have chosen to focus on this book is that the *QNE* is one of Buridan’s most influential works,<sup>2</sup> even though it is one of the least systematically studied nowadays,<sup>3</sup> and it is where we find most of Buridan’s discussion focused on the five intellectual virtues.

We know the *QNE* to have been extremely popular at Buridan’s time based on the number of surviving manuscripts, abridged copies and incunables.<sup>4</sup> Michael lists 82 manuscripts of the *Quæstiones* which are nowadays kept in libraries in eleven countries:<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Korolec (1975) and Flüeler (2008).

<sup>3</sup> As I have noted, this is very much a changing trend but, to date, there is no full translation of this work published in a modern language.

<sup>4</sup> A thorough list containing a description of surviving manuscripts is found in Michael (1992).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. also Lines (2005), p. 15. This number does not include a manuscript of Buridan’s *Expositio in decem libros ethicorum Aristotelis* (which is currently housed in France), nor shorter question

### QNE surviving manuscripts distribution map

Germany: 20; Austria: 16; Italy (incl. Vatican): 15; France: 14; Switzerland: 6; Poland: 4; Belgium: 2; Czech Republic: 2; Sweden: 2; United Kingdom: 1.

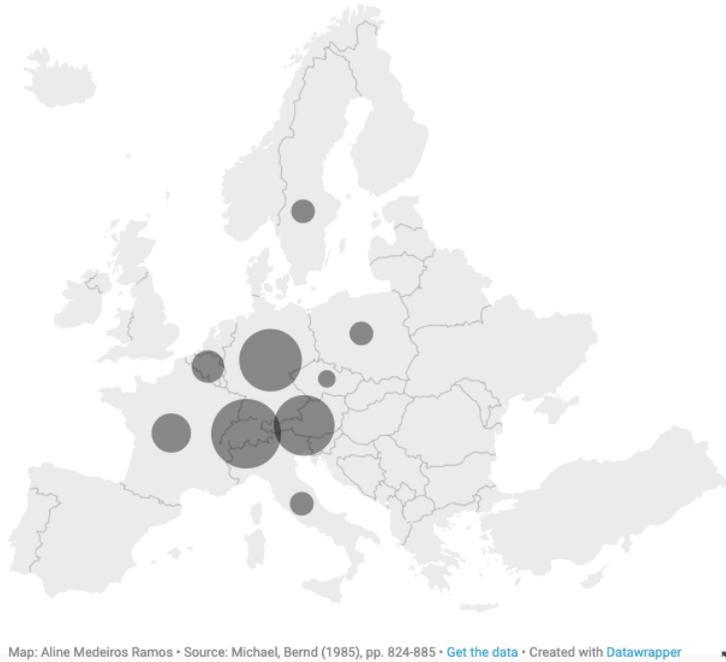


Figure 1.1: *QNE* surviving manuscripts distribution map

This abundance of manuscripts, which is rather unusual for a philosophical work from that time, is an indication that there was a demand that the commentary be copied many times, possibly for institutional use in the context of universities. This, considered along with the geographical disposition of manuscripts we can see on the map above,

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commentaries such as the *Quæstiones breves in sex libros ethicorum Aristotelis* (in Germany) and the *Quæstiones breves in quattuor libros ethicorum Aristotelis*, which survives in two manuscripts in Poland, one in Italy, and one in Austria. These are all catalogued in Michael's 1985 dissertation (pp. 824-885). Moreover, while the current disposition of the manuscripts might not come close to an accurate representation of the placement of the manuscripts in the Middle Ages, the detailed examination of provenance and hands of those manuscripts also corroborate that most manuscripts would have been originally found in central Europe. For a detailed account of manuscripts found in central Europe, cf. Markowski (1984) and Korolec (1974b). Although Markowski's and Korolec's accounts predate Michael's more complete compilation, their papers provide details on the provenance and contents of manuscripts housed in Erfurt, Göttingen, Krakow, Kremsmünster, Leipzig, Melk, Munich, Salzburg and Vienna (in Markowski's case), and specifically in Krakow (in Korolec's case).

suggests that there might have been a particular interest in Buridan’s moral philosophy in areas that are now part of central Europe. Not only was Buridan’s commentary very popular but interest in it seems to have spanned over quite some time. Some of the manuscripts available are estimated to have circulated shortly after Buridan’s death while, from the incunables, we learn that his text was reprinted until at least 1637 at Oxford. As a basis of comparison, a survey conducted by Lines of surviving manuscripts of commentaries on Aristotle’s *Ethics* indicates that Buridan is, along with Aquinas, the only philosopher to have this-many surviving *Ethics* manuscripts:<sup>6</sup>

Table 1.1: Surviving *Ethics* manuscripts by author

AUTHOR	SURVIVING <i>ETHICS</i> MSS.	AUTHOR	SURVIVING <i>ETHICS</i> MSS.
Eustratius of Nicaea	22	Walter Burley	17
Averroes	10	Geraldus Odonis	18 <sup>7</sup>
Albert the Great ( <i>lectural/paraphrasis</i> )	12 / 25	Jean Buridan	~100 <sup>8</sup>
Thomas Aquinas	~100	Albert of Saxony	24

If these numbers are any indication of the popularity of these works, the stark difference between how many manuscripts of Aquinas’ *Sententia in libros Ethicorum* and Buridan’s *Quaestiones in Ethicam* have survived and those of other popular treatises at the time should be enough to get us intrigued about the contents of these texts. And whereas Aquinas texts and studies thereof are readily available to the modern reader, Buridan’s text still presents itself as a challenge. What follows intends to take one of the first steps in rectifying this issue.

<sup>6</sup> This table is based on Lines (2005), p. 16 but contains only a selection of the data presented in it.

<sup>7</sup> Lines originally lists 17 manuscripts attributed to Odonis. I have rectified that information following Porter (2009), pp. 248-249, who lists 18 manuscripts and 2 incunabula.

<sup>8</sup> Precisely 88 according to Michael but Lines, in his estimation, is careful to add the proviso that, especially when such a large number of manuscripts have been identified, it is likely that there are other, yet-to-be-identified manuscripts – not catalogued by Michael. The same applies, mutatis mutandis, to the estimation of the number of Aquinas manuscripts.

## 1.2 Buridan's *Ethics*

As a matter of context, Buridan's *QNE* is thought to have been one of his last (if not his very last) work, written from 1344 onwards,<sup>9</sup> and its writing is assumed to have been abruptly interrupted some sixteen years later, possibly by Buridan's death. Most manuscripts, thus, end precipitously at the beginning of question 6 of Book X, and that is the reason why we assume the work was left incomplete by the death of its author, around 1360. This volume is, by far, the longest work by Buridan. Based on the transcription and translation of book X, made by Kilcullen, Zupko has estimated that the whole *QNE* in a modern edition would amount to about 934 pages in Latin and 1477 pages in an English translation.<sup>10</sup> As a comparison, Buridan's other masterpiece, the *Summula de Dialectica* has (only!) 997 pages in its English translation by Gyula Klima.<sup>11</sup> As is to be expected, the *QNE* contains discussions on topics that are still subject to much debate, namely the will and its relation to the intellect, the nature of human freedom, *akrasia*, practical reason, and the unity of virtues, among others.

Buridan's commentary follows a tradition of commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which had been established about a century earlier, and was particularly marked by the first *quaestiones* on the *Ethics* written by Albert the Great, after the first Latin version of Aristotle's text was prepared by Herman the German, around 1240, from the Arabic paraphrasis by Averroes and after a full translation from the Greek was prepared by Grosseteste.<sup>12</sup> But these were not the first attempts to discuss Aristotle's moral

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<sup>9</sup> Michael (1992).

<sup>10</sup> Zupko (2012), p. 116.

<sup>11</sup> Klima (2001)

<sup>12</sup> A detailed account and edition of the *Nicomachean Ethics* translations into Latin available in the late Middle Ages, ranging from the *Ethica vetus*, to the *Ethica nova* and the different recensions of Grosseteste's full translation are famously found in the *Aristoteles Latinus* volumes (XXVI I-3 fasc. primus-fasc. quintus) edited by Gauthier (1973). See also: Gauthier & Jolif (1958-1959)

philosophy in the Middle Ages. The so-called *Ethica vetus* and *Ethica nova*, i.e., Latin translations of Books II and III, and Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, respectively, had already sparked some solid discussions, mainly among the *magistri artium*. These early translations, now conclusively attributed to Burgundio of Pisa,<sup>13</sup> were the subject of a number of commentaries and expositions on the texts, many of whose authors have yet to be identified,<sup>14</sup> save for Robert Kilwardby, whose authorship of a *Commentary on the Old and New Ethics* has recently been proven by Anthony J. Celano, who has completed the critical edition of the text.<sup>15</sup> This translation by Burgundio is not, of course, without its problems. A more detailed account of the challenges facing translators at that time is expounded on by Bossier,<sup>16</sup> but suffice it to mention the fact that Burgundio chose to use the Latin term “virtus” to translate both ἀρετή and δύναμις (not to mention ἀνδρείᾱ, ἰσχύς, σθένος, and μένος as well).<sup>17</sup> It would be quite an understatement to say that this brought about several difficulties for an apt understanding of the Latin text and its meaning. Luckily, this quagmire and many other translation problems which would have rung out alarm bells to any historian of ancient and/or medieval philosophy nowadays caught Burgundio’s eye as his translations progressed, and he revised a non-negligible number of questionable terminological choices he had previously made by the time the translation of all three books was completed. Ultimately, Robert Grosseteste, in his translation of all ten books of the *Ethics*, was able to borrow from this already-established tradition of translations set by Burgundio, but the *Lincolniensis* allowed himself more leeway for adaptations and use of neologisms (such as “volitus” for βουλευτόν) so as to avoid misunderstandings (e.g., wrongfully taking βουλευτόν to mean “voluntarius” instead).<sup>18</sup> However important, these were but two translation steps in the long tradition of reception of the

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<sup>13</sup> Bossier (1998), pp. 407-410.

<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, a few of these have been edited and published: see the table below.

<sup>15</sup> Yet to be published (expected: 2022).

<sup>16</sup> Bossier (1998).

<sup>17</sup> Bossier (1998), p. 411.

<sup>18</sup> Bossier (1998), pp. 425-426.

*Nicomachean Ethics* leading up to Buridan writing his *quaestiones*, in addition to which we should consider some important commentaries to which the Picardian philosopher would have had access, such as those by Eustratius, Albert and Aquinas. A fuller but non-exhaustive picture of the chronology of the transmission and reception of Aristotle's *Ethics* as relevant to our study is as follows:<sup>19</sup>

<b>End of 12<sup>th</sup> century:</b>	Translation of Books II and III ( <i>Ethica vetus</i> )
<b>End of 12<sup>th</sup> century:</b>	Translation of fragments of Books I, VII, and VIII ( <i>Ethica nova</i> ) – translated by Burgundio of Pisa
<b>1240:</b>	Herman the German translates from the Arabic the commentary of Averroes to the <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
<b>1244:</b>	Herman the German translates the <i>Summa Alexandrinorum</i> , a summary of the <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
<b>Before 1248:</b>	Integral translation of Grosseteste, partly revising the <i>Vetus</i> and <i>Nova (Lincolniensis)</i> <sup>20</sup>
<b>Before 1248:</b>	Translation of commentaries of Aspasius, Eustratius, Michael of Ephesus and anonymous <i>scholia</i> by Grosseteste
<b>Between 1250 and 1252:</b>	Albert the Great composes his commentary of the <i>Ethics</i> , noted down by Thomas Aquinas
<b>Before 1270, around 1260:</b>	Revision of the <i>Lincolniensis</i> by an anonymous author (Moerbeke?)
<b>Around 1270:</b>	Thomas Aquinas composes the <i>Tabula</i>
<b>1271-1272:</b>	Thomas Aquinas writes his <i>Sententia Libri Ethicorum</i>
<b>1323-1325</b>	Geraldus Odonis writes his <i>Expositio cum quaestionibus super libros ethicorum Aristotelis</i>
<b>Between 1344-1360:</b>	John Buridan writes his <i>Quaestiones super decem libros ethicorum Aristotelis</i>

<sup>19</sup> This list is a reproduction of the one by Forrai (2002), p. 148, with some changes.

<sup>20</sup> On Grosseteste's work on translating and commenting on the *Ethics*, cf. Jean Dunbabin (1972).

Moreover, based on an unpublished yet detailed compilation survey made by Valeria Buffon,<sup>21</sup> we can see that by the time Buridan writes his commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics*, a long tradition of Latin commentaries and expositions had already been established, even if not all of these philosophers wrote question commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The status of the reception of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the 13th century could be summarized in the following schema:<sup>22</sup>

Table 1.2: First and second Latin receptions of Aristotle's Ethics

FIRST LATIN RECEPTION (commentaries from Burgundio of Pisa's translation)	SECOND LATIN RECEPTION (commentaries from Grosseteste's translation)
Anonymous of Paris (1235-1240)	Albert the Great, <i>Super Ethica</i> (1250-1252) and <i>Ethica</i> (1265)
Anonymous of Avranches (1235-1240)	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Sententia</i> and <i>STh II IIae</i>
Anonymous of Naples (c. 1235)	(Boethius of Dacia, <i>De summo bono</i> 1270)
Pseudo-Peckham (1241-1244)	Siger of Brabant, <i>Quaestiones morales</i>
Robert Kilwardby (c. 1245)	Anonymous, <i>Questiones super Eth. Nic.</i> , Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek 213. (post 1272)
	Anonymous, <i>Questiones super Eth. Nic.</i> , Paris, BnF, lat. 14698 (ed. Costa, 2010). (ca. 1280)
	Peter of Auvergne, <i>Questiones super Eth. Nic.</i> , Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek 1386, Paris, BnF lat.16110 (ed. Celano, 1986). (ca.1280)
	Anonymous, <i>Questiones super Eth. Nic.</i> , Paris, BnF, lat. 16110. (1285/1290?)
	Anonymous, <i>Questiones super Eth. Nic.</i> , Erfurt, Amploniana, F. 13.
	Giles of Rome, <i>Questiones super Eth. Nic.</i> , Paris, BnF, lat. 16089. (ca.1295/1305)
	Radulphus Brito, <i>Questiones</i> (1295)

<sup>21</sup> Presented in her seminar (team-taught with Paula Pico Estrada and Natalia Strok) "Voluntad y libre albedrío en autores medievales y modernos Agustín, Boecio, Escoto, Buridán, Lutero, Cudworth," at Universidad Nacional del Litoral (Argentina), Fall 2020.

<sup>22</sup> This schema summarizes unpublished data compiled by Valeria Buffon (cf. n. 21 above).

Later, in the 14th century, this wave of commentaries on the *Ethics* would persist with Radulphus Brito's second redaction of the *Questiones in libros Ethicorum* (1301), Guido Terrena's *Questiones super Ethicam Nicomacheam* (1313) Geraldus Odonis' *Expositio cum quæstionibus super libros Ethicorum Aristotelis* (c. 1325)<sup>23</sup> and Walter Burley's, *Questiones in libros Ethicorum* (1334). It is thus about thirty years after Odonis and twenty years after Burley that Buridan would have begun his own work on moral philosophy.

Traditionally, we see claims that Buridan would have been particularly influenced by Albert the Great and by Eustratius, the latter sometimes referred to as “the Commentator” for the *Ethics*. Evidence to this effect has been compiled by Walsh,<sup>24</sup> who counted 66 references to Eustratius and 29 to Albert in the whole of Buridan's *QNE* – compare these to the 113 references to Averroes and a meagre 15 to Aquinas and 14 to Boethius. To these noteworthy remarks, I would add the unsurprising sporadic reference to Grosseteste and the many tacit citations of Odonis, whose text is sometimes quoted almost *ipsis litteris* despite the absence of a nominal reference, as we shall see in some of my analyses in the chapters that follow. To Grosseteste Walsh only attributes 7 references and, to Odonis, 6. All of this data considered along with the historical context (the aftermath of the 1277 condemnations, e.g.) gives us a good idea of why Buridan cites these philosophers, and it also hints at which texts were being more broadly circulated at the University of Paris, where Buridan served as a professor and rector for many decades.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, another set of references worthy of note are those to Seneca and Cicero, by far the philosophers most cited by Buridan, with a count of 186 and 103 references, respectively. Aside from Aristotle, evidently, Seneca

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<sup>23</sup> On this dating, which may seem different from the one found, e.g., in Porter (2009) and Kent (1984), see Chen (2019), pp. 26-33.

<sup>24</sup> All numbers presented here follow Walsh (1966a), p. 28 and Zupko (2012), p. 157.

<sup>25</sup> Buridan seems to have begun his teaching career as an arts master in the mid-1320s at the University of Paris, where he would also be rector twice, in 1328 and 1360. (Cf. Zupko, 2018, §1).

is the only author who is always mentioned in high regard by Buridan and, what is all the more astonishing, with precise quotations. According to Zupko,<sup>26</sup> all 29 references to Seneca in Book X of the commentary correspond verbatim to Seneca's Latin text found in modern editions. This accuracy, Zupko says, is commonly found in Buridan, who cites with equal precision Aristotle and Averroes. This is enough evidence for us to believe that Buridan wrote his commentaries with a copy of the original text (or translations) close by. What we find in Buridan, then, according to Walsh, is an attempt to reconcile Aristotle and Seneca, which is what in a 1966 paper he calls "a harmonistic treatment of Seneca,"<sup>27</sup> in that Buridan would be trying to conform then-novel ideas from Latin Stoicism (represented by Seneca and passed down through some of Cicero's writings) with the received Aristotelianism of the time. The specifics of this "received Aristotelianism," however, were subject to a lot of debate and disagreement among Buridan's contemporaries. Thus, when in doubt, instead of heeding what medieval philosophers and theologians were trying to push at each other across the aisle, the Picardian arts master chose to defer to ancient authorities. Buridan's commentary shows that if we abide by the polarization of philosophers in *antiqui* and *moderni* in ethics, where the *antiqui* are the philosophers from the ancient, pagan traditions and the *moderni* are Buridan's contemporaries or near-contemporaries, many of whom had written *Ethics* commentaries, he would be more inclined toward the *antiqui*, as he accused the *moderni* of adhering "so much to some opinions that they can hear nothing contrary to them however more probable they be than their opinions."<sup>28</sup> As he says in the proemium to the *QNE*:

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<sup>26</sup> Zupko (2012), p. 157.

<sup>27</sup> Walsh (1966a), p. 33.

<sup>28</sup> *QNE* VI, q. 1 §17: "[...] multi namque modernorum et magnorum in tantum aliquibus opinionibus adhererunt quod nihil eis contrarium audire possunt, quantumcumque forte probabilius fuerit suis opinionibus." (my translation)

In this little work, because of my inexperience and the ineptitude of my judgment, I will adhere to the doctrines and authorities of *older doctors* more than to *new arguments*, even when these are somewhat obvious to me. For I have often found myself deceived by novel arguments, but never by older doctrines, especially in moral matter. Because of this, I will correct in this work some things which in other works I believed to be true. For in this science, arguments are drawn from human actions, knowledge of which is not had without much experience.<sup>29</sup>

Buridan is critical of his contemporaries and warns the reader from the very beginning that he might favour interpretations from ancient sources. And, as he specifies in Book VI, q. 15,<sup>30</sup> “older doctors” are ancient philosophers like Aristotle, Seneca, and Cicero. Thus, what Buridan sets out to do is write a commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* based on the authority of ancient philosophers.

According to Walsh,<sup>31</sup> Buridan’s *QNE* allegedly had an important role leading up to well-known Renaissance theories,<sup>32</sup> since this commentary was available to thousands of students in the course of a few centuries – and, namely, during the transition between medieval and modern thought. Nevertheless, we should not be too eager to portray Buridan as a Renaissance thinker or something akin to it, in spite of all apparent novelties we find in his text. Even though references to ancient traditions beyond Aristotle were already starting to make the rounds in Europe in the 14th century,

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<sup>29</sup> “In hoc autem opusculo, propter meam inexperientiam, et ineptitudine mei iudicii, sentiis et auctoritatibus *doctorum antiquorum*, magis quam *novis rationibus*, etiam quantumcunque mihi apparentibus, adherebo. Pluries enim me inveni deceptum rationibus noviter emergentibus, antiquorum autem sentiis nunquam, specialiter in moralibus. Propter quod, in hoc opere aliqua corrigam eorum que alias credidi esse vera. Rationes enim in hac scientia ex actibus humanis sumuntur, quorum noticia non habetur sine experientia multa.” (Transl. Walsh (1966a), p. 26; italics mine).

<sup>30</sup> *QNE* VI, q. 15: “Iterum, hoc manifeste potest appare si aspexerimus ad antiquos Philosophos, Aristotelem, Senecam, Tullium, et ceteros Moralium doctores...” (as quoted in Walsh (1966a), p. 27, n. 10).

<sup>31</sup> Walsh (1966a), p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> The association is due to the perceived “scientific” nature of Buridan’s work (contrasted with the more religious nature of the philosophy of Scotist and Thomists), which may have resonated with Archbishop Laud’s enthusiasm for academic reform.

especially among the first humanists in Italy, this does not mean that Buridan was in any way connected to these traditions or was a sort of precursor to them. As Lines has shown,<sup>33</sup> Buridan seems to have been little influential in Italy to begin with; moreover, we must bear in mind that Buridan followed to the letter standard scholastic practices: the texts I am examining here are part of a traditional long commentary in the form of questions, one of the distinctive features of scholasticism to which Renaissance humanism was reacting. Any novelty in content we come across in Buridan's writings must therefore not be confused with a novelty in method.

Considering these remarks on Buridan's sources, it might at first seem surprising to the reader, especially one who is familiar with Buridan scholarship, to find so many references to and comparisons with Aquinas in my analyses in the following chapters. Most often, especially in what concerns logic and metaphysics, comparisons tend to be regularly drawn between Buridan and Ockham. Yet, we must bear in mind that Ockham never wrote *quaestiones* on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*,<sup>34</sup> and Aquinas is a good basis for comparison due to the popularity of both his and Buridan's teachings, as I have highlighted above. This comparison is also interesting because the two authors seem to be vehemently opposed on a number of issues, and not only because they have different metaphysical starting points, as we shall see. It is thus a worthwhile endeavour to further investigate the extent of these disagreements.

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<sup>33</sup> Lines (2005).

<sup>34</sup> Not in the form of a proper treatise dedicated to the whole *NE*, that is. Surely, in his *Quaestiones Variae*, we find some questions resembling what could have been an attempt to comment on *NE* VI-VII, as Eric Hagedorn explains in the translation notes of his 2021 book. The fact that Ockham did not write a systematic question commentary on the *NE* does not mean, of course, that Ockham did not have a moral theory. He did have one, only it happens to be scattered throughout various works. A compilation of these is now available through Hagedorn's editorial work and translations in *William of Ockham: Questions on virtue, moral goodness, and the will* (2021). I thank him for sharing an early version of his work with me.

One aspect which offers an interesting background to the breadth of their disagreements is that, as Lines says, Aquinas is very critical of Stoic positions, rejecting, for instance, Stoic views on the four cardinal virtues, whereas Buridan welcomes the Stoic observations, e.g., on the general tripartite division of prudence (understood in *QNE* VI, 18 as the reasoning and praxis proper to moral philosophy) into personal, economic, and political,<sup>35</sup> as we shall see.<sup>36</sup> Prudence becomes a foundational point of disagreement between Aquinas and Buridan because it is directly related to the aims of ethics. As Lines rightfully points out, Aquinas argues that ethics, economics and political philosophy are meant to be pedagogically consecutive in that order, with each one of these sciences of human actions broadening on the scope of teachings of its methodological predecessor. Thus, politics, being the last, would be the ultimate end of even our individual efforts aiming at the human good. Buridan, on the other hand, is much less strict about the order in which these disciplines should be studied. He argues that there is no priority of the common with regard to the individual when it comes to the proper locus of morality: “Ethics considers with regard to any one human, in accordance with what is liable to make them happy or better, whatever degree [of happiness or good] they obtain indifferently: be it in the domestic or civil community.”<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, when discussing the proper subject of moral science, Buridan denies that it is God in any way:

[...] it seems to me that the proper subject of this science [i.e., moral philosophy] are humans ordered to those things befitting them, as they are free, or humans as

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<sup>35</sup> *QNE* VI, 18. Cf. also Lines (2005), p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Chapter 7.

<sup>37</sup> *QNE* I, q. 6 (*resp.*): “... Ethica considerat de unoquoque homine secundum quod est felicitabilis seu meliorabilis, quemcumque gradum indifferenter obtineat in communitate domestica vel civili.” (Buridan (1637), p. 19)

they are capable of being happy, that is, regarding how much befits them so as to lead them to a happy life.<sup>38</sup>

Here, Buridan is setting himself against Aquinas, who is not mentioned by name but is definitely in the background, but he does cite and partly follows Albert's reasoning. In fact, Buridan is more prone to following Albert than Aquinas, but he remains in firm disagreement with both Dominicans when it comes to the underlying ontological considerations of the ethical themes being discussed.

In addition to this reconciliation between Aristotle and, mainly, Seneca, which sets Buridan apart from his predecessors (particularly, Aquinas), we also find in Buridan another attempt at a conciliation: according to Zupko,<sup>39</sup> Buridan also tries to find a compromise between two medieval theories that disagreed about the relation between the will and the intellect, namely intellectualism – associated with Aristotle<sup>40</sup> and Aquinas – “according to which the will is always subordinate to the intellect, and the voluntarist tradition of Augustine and Franciscan thinkers such as Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, who held that the will is sometimes capable of acting autonomously.”<sup>41</sup> Buridan's compromise and reservation concerning voluntarism are seen in his stating (along with intellectualists) that human happiness ultimately consists in an intellectual act, “the perfect apprehension of God,” rather than an act of the will, like a perfect will, or loving God perfectly.<sup>42</sup> However, like voluntarists, he highlights the role of the will as a self-determining power to achieve a given end. On that matter, the compromise is not as clear though, since, as Zupko states, “it is more likely that

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<sup>38</sup> *QNE* I, q. 3 (*resp.*): “... videtur mihi, quod homo in ordine ad ea que sibi conveniunt, ut est liber, vel homo ut est felicitabilis, hoc est quantum ad ea que sibi conveniunt, ad ducendum felicem vitam, est subjectum proprium in hac scientia.” (Buridan (1637), p. 11)

<sup>39</sup> Zupko (2011).

<sup>40</sup> The label is very likely wrongfully associated with Aristotle, who did not have a theory about the will and, consequently, did not directly address this question.

<sup>41</sup> Zupko (2018), §7.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *QNE* X, q. 5.

Buridan simply appropriated voluntarist terminology to express what is otherwise a straightforwardly intellectualist account of the will, perhaps to dispel the cloud of heterodoxy which had surrounded intellectualist moral psychology since the Condemnation of 1277.”<sup>43</sup>

It seems that, in the aftermath of the Parisian Condemnations, Buridan could not embrace a full-fledged intellectualism. Consider the 163rd condemned thesis: “[t]he will necessarily pursues that which is firmly believed by reason and it cannot refrain from that which reason dictates. This necessity, however, is not a constraint but the nature of the will.”<sup>44</sup> In order to abide by the prohibition, Buridan does not assert that the will is completely determined by the intellect. Instead, according to him, the will is drawn to the objects the intellect has judged to be good, but that relation is one of information, not one of necessity. At first, it could appear that Buridan is wavering between voluntarism and intellectualism, but a glance at the way Buridan responds to Book III q. 1 and Book III q. 13 allows us to see how he actually seems to follow the intellectualist route. Consider the excerpt below:

And it is clear that [...] if I want to be in Avignon, and I know that I can get there going through Lyon or Dun and I also know the difficulty of the routes, the will, in the absence of anything determining it beyond those things which have been mentioned, can freely refuse one route or the other due to its difficulty, or rather, it could even completely give up what it previously wanted, or it can freely follow either one of the routes, namely this one or that one; or it can even suspend every one of these decisions [*hanc omnem determinationem*] until reason teaches or determines which one is better and which is worse.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Zupko (2018); cf. also Zupko (1995).

<sup>44</sup> “Quod voluntas necessario prosequitur quod firmiter creditum est a ratione; et quod non potest abstinere ab eo quod ratio dictat. Hec autem necessitatio non est coactio, sed natura voluntatis.” In Piché (1999), p. 129 (my translation).

<sup>45</sup> *QNE* III, 1: “Et ita patet quod [...] ego vellem esse apud Avinionem, et scio me posse illic ire per Lugdunum vel per Duonem, et percipio laborem uie; voluntas, absque alio quocumque determinante ipsam preter ea que dicta sunt, potest libere utramque uiam refutare propter laborem, immo etiam totaliter ab eo discedere quod prius uolebat; uel potest libere quamlibet uiam acceptare, scilicet hanc vel illam;

Indeed, Buridan emphasizes the role of the will and what it is capable of, but it seems that all of these possibilities which present themselves to the will are available only until reason teaches or decides on the value of the possibilities at hand. Furthermore, in Book III, q. 13, Buridan answers the question as to whether choice is about ends or means (*eorum que ad finem*). After presenting a few theses on the matter, he critiques them while unveiling his own views:

Against what has been said, many objections come to mind. First, choice is not an act of the will, but of reason, from Eustratius' first proposition in the first Book of the *Ethics*, for he says that "choice is a judgment of humans concerning two goods, putting one ahead of the other." Then, as he says, "[after choice] the motion or impetus follows toward the act," but judgment is an act of reason. But the impetus which follows seems to belong more to the appetite itself. Moreover, he says that choice is like a conclusion of a deliberation. But the ratiocination and the conclusion of ratiocination pertain to the same virtue, and deliberation is the ratiocination of the intellect itself. Therefore, etc. Besides, in the sixth Book of this work, it is said that choice is an appetitive intellection or an intellectual appetite [i.e., the appetite influenced by the intellect]. On this matter, Eustratius says: "we ought to know that the genus of choice is not the intellect absolutely nor the appetite simpliciter but both, mixedly." Therefore, choice is not only in the will but also in reason.<sup>46</sup>

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uel etiam potest hanc omnem determinationem in suspenso tenere donec ratio docuerit uel determinauerit que melior et que peior sit." (Buridan (1637), p. 148, my translation)

<sup>46</sup> *QNE* III, 13: "Contra ea que dicta sunt plures occurrunt instantie. Primo videtur quod electio non sit actus voluntatis sed rationis, auctoritate Eustracii super primam propositionem primi libri Ethycorum, dicit enim quod "electio est de duobus bonis iudicium hominis hoc alteri proponens." Deinde ut dicit "sequitur [autem post electionem] motus seu impetus ad actum", modo iudicium est actus rationis. Impetus autem sequens videtur esse magis ipsius appetitus. Dicit etiam quod electio est tanquam conclusio consilii. Ad eandem autem virtutem spectat ratiocinatio et ratiocinationis conclusio, et consilium est ipsius intellectus ratiocinatio. Igitur et cetera. Item dicitur sexto huius quod electio est intellectus appetitivus uel appetitus intellectivus. Super quo dicit Eustracius: 'oportet inquit scire quod genus electionis non est intellectus simpliciter nec appetitus simpliciter, sed ambo mixtim'. Ergo electio non est solum in voluntate sed etiam in ratione." (Buridan (1637), p. 205, my translation).

Again, we can see evidence of this vocabulary which strongly wavers between prioritizing intellect and will, concluding that choice belongs to both, in a certain sense. Thus, in what concerns the reconciliation between voluntarism and intellectualism, whereas Scotus, Ockham and Buridan all accepted to attribute, “in the very act of choice, the main role to the will, they differ on another matter: Scotus and Ockham estimate that man thinks because he wants to, whereas Buridan attributes a larger role to the intellect.”<sup>47</sup> According to Buridan, the will is only drawn to an object if the intellect has judged it to be good, but the will cannot be drawn necessarily to what has been judged to be good unless it is also good for the will itself.<sup>48</sup>

This is, of course, a perfunctory reading of Buridan’s thesis on choice (and, consequently, free will), but this is in no way a debate I am trying to settle here. In fact, even if the existing literature on Buridan’s ethics is sparse, most of it is dedicated to these questions, which have received a lot of attention from scholars in light of what is probably the best-known challenge posed to the Picardian master’s thesis, i.e. the so-called “Buridan’s ass.” Surely these issues concerning the role of the will and the intellect do crop up, albeit sparsely, in the discussion of the intellectual virtues in Book VI,<sup>49</sup> but they are not developed there.

Concerning this dispute about the priority of the will versus that of the intellect, we cannot neglect to mention that Buridan wrote his *QNE* in part in reaction to Geraldus

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<sup>47</sup> Korolec (1975), p. 72 (my translation).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *QNE* VII, q. 8 (*inter alia*): “Deinde, prout aliquantulum visum fuit in tertio libro, supposita distinctione inter diversos actus voluntatis, puta inter actum complacentie, actum acceptationis et actum motionis aliarum potentiarum ad prosequendum acceptatum, videtur mihi dicendum esse tertio quod si quis iudicaverit aliquid esse sibi bonum, voluntas necessario fertur in illud quoad actum complacentie, et hec sit tertia conclusio, que declarata fuit in tertia questione tertii libri.” (text established by Fabienne Pironet). For more on the relation between the intellect and the will, cf. also *QNE* X, q. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Cf., for instance, *QNE* VI, q. 1, §7: “Et quia inclinatio ad aliquid operandum non proprie pertinet ad intellectum, sed ad appetitum, quoniam ipsius intellectus est iudicium de operationibus, scilicet quid et quomodo sit operandum, sed ipsius appetitus est inclinatio sive tendentia ad illud operandum quod est ratione sententiatum.” (see: Section 3.1.1 of this dissertation)

Odonis, a Franciscan who followed his confreres in endorsing the primacy of the will. Odonis wrote the first full-length commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, in the form of an *expositio* containing *quæstiones*,<sup>50</sup> where previous Franciscans had treated moral issues (including the *topos* of the primacy of the will) mainly in the context of theological discussion. In line with the Friars Minor, Odonis opposes Thomist and Averroist readings of Aristotle.<sup>51</sup> While there may be speculation about why Odonis did not nominally cite Dominicans in his writings,<sup>52</sup> it is quite puzzling that he would not explicitly rely on the received Franciscan tradition,<sup>53</sup> relying instead on Biblical sources, Augustine, and other Patristic sources, as well as sources from antiquity and late antiquity, from whom Cicero stands out with the most citations. This leads us to conclude that Buridan's reliance on the Roman philosopher was not an isolated occurrence. Although reference to Cicero is a common trait of these two famous *Ethics* commentaries circulating in Paris in the 14th century, many aspects of the relations between Odonis and Buridan have been misrepresented and overstated. Walsh does admit, following Faral,<sup>54</sup> that Odonis might have been the standard source for *Ethics* commentaries in the 14th century, and, indeed, this would have been the reason for his earning the nickname "*doctor moralis*." But that does not mean that Buridan would have simply followed his philosophical views heedlessly. Even though Korolec, for instance, wants to emphasize how much Buridan and his Franciscan contemporary have in common,<sup>55</sup> as Walsh points out, Buridan is more likely to have been critical of Odonis' positions and not accepting of them.<sup>56</sup> Odonis, as is now well known, was an opponent of Ockham's, and relied on many sources (namely, Augustine, Avicenna, and Hugh of Saint Victor, in addition to those already mentioned) which are very different

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<sup>50</sup> On Odonis' *Ethics* commentary, see Chen (2019) and Walsh (1976).

<sup>51</sup> Chen (2019), p. 24, in reference to Kent's 1984 dissertation, pp. 609-611.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Chen (2019), p. 41.

<sup>53</sup> The notable near exception being found precisely in Book VI (q. 4), when Odonis mentions "*quidam Doctor*" in a veiled reference to Duns Scotus, as highlighted by Chen (2019), p. 42.

<sup>54</sup> Faral (1950).

<sup>55</sup> Korolec (1975).

<sup>56</sup> Especially Walsh (1976).

from those of Buridan's. For the most part, as Walsh notes, the divergence between Odonis and Buridan is "reminiscent of that between Duns Scotus and William of Ockham,"<sup>57</sup> and, unlike Korolec, Walsh believes "that Buridan did not turn to the commentary of Odonis because of any deep or extensive philosophical affinity."<sup>58</sup> That will also be visible in the discussion of the intellectual virtues. As I show in Chapter 5 on *intellectus*, Buridan quotes Odonis *ipsis litteris* in his objections, without naming him,<sup>59</sup> and harshly discards the Franciscan's views in many instances.

While Walsh and Faral leave open the question about the real motivation behind Buridan's systematic "borrowing" of Odonis's, one important thing concerning philosophers' doctrinal allegiances – be it within their religious orders, when applicable, or in their metaphysical views – surfaces from this investigation:

There can be no question of total philosophical polarization along lines of realism and nominalism, or the *via antiqua* and the *via moderna* for Buridan. Not only is his moral philosophy quite different from that of William of Ockham, but he also borrows happily from a man of significantly different philosophical orientation, and a man at that who is a leading political opponent of Ockham.<sup>60</sup>

Now, considering Buridan's affinities with Ockham, whether the Picardian master's *QNE* is part of a larger, nominalist agenda is highly debatable. Buridan's *quæstiones* on the *Ethics* were considered by some as the standard nominalist commentary to Aristotle's *Ethics* at the time. As we know, Buridan was one of the great authorities of the *via moderna*, even if ethics was not a matter of great debate between the *via antiqua*

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<sup>57</sup> Walsh (1976), p. 267.

<sup>58</sup> Walsh (1976), p. 272.

<sup>59</sup> It is interesting to note that the same phenomenon Walsh observed in his article (esp. pp. 239-244), based on previous remarks by Faral (1950) is attested to here: the order of the arguments and objections is not the same. For a full, detailed comparison between Odonis' and Buridan's questions (as well as Burley's), see Walsh (1976), esp. pp. 246-249.

<sup>60</sup> Walsh (1976), pp. 274-275.

and the *via moderna*. An evidence of that is that there were different professors for each *via* in some other areas, such as metaphysics,<sup>61</sup> whereas in ethics, the same professor taught both *viæ*. Now, although there is no particular claim to ethics commentaries being nominalist or realist, as this division tends to be reserved for ontological matters, some scholars have claimed that Buridan's *QNE* follows a nominalist method or that the Picardian philosopher has a "nominalist ethics."<sup>62</sup> But aside from considerations of ontology, it is quite unclear what could constitute a nominalism in moral philosophy. It is not simply a matter of drawing fine distinctions and analyzing moral concepts, for this would be a gross oversimplification (and imply a misrepresentation of the methods of realist medieval philosophers), with a tendency to forcing the nominalism-realism divide to fit into the analytic-continental divide that has haunted philosophical discussions since the twentieth century. Although Buridan's text can in no way be reduced to or even compared with either an analytic or a continental approach, it can, in a certain sense, be considered a nominalist ethics commentary,<sup>63</sup> but we need to examine how.

There is no question about Buridan's nominalism being generally aligned with Ockham's, even if there are salient differences between the two authors. Nevertheless, when moral theory is concerned, their affinities seem to subside. As we have seen, Buridan seems to be more welcoming of intellectualism, for instance, than any of his Franciscan contemporaries. But could Buridan side with the likes of Ockham in his ontology while endorsing, albeit partially, some moral views held by Dominicans otherwise known for their ontological realism (i.e., Albert and Aquinas)? It surely appears that way. But, then, in what sense can we call Buridan's *QNE* a "nominalist" ethics commentary? Another way this question could be asked, more broadly, is: Could

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<sup>61</sup> Thorndike (1944), pp. 355-360.

<sup>62</sup> Cf., e.g. Klima (2019), Walsh (1966b).

<sup>63</sup> This will be particularly salient in my analyses of the virtues of intellectus and *scientia*, in chapters 5 and 6, respectively.

there be a direct relationship between ethics and nominalism? That certainly looks to be the case to some extent – but that still does not mean that nominalism necessarily entails that all of its upholders must have a common moral theory. Ockham’s moral theory, which can be reconstructed, for the most part, from texts found in the *Reportatio* and the *Ordinatio* is radically different from Buridan’s and, although there is great disagreement from scholars about how much weight to give to the various aspects of Ockham’s moral theory,<sup>64</sup> it does rely heavily on divine command theory and obligations that follow from it, and Buridan’s ethics could not be more alien to that. According to Walsh,<sup>65</sup> unlike Ockham who has an almost deontological view of the good of humans – which, according to him, lies in the fulfilment of obligations – for Buridan, the good of humans is mediated by the nature of things. If a “nominalist ethics” is one resembling Ockham’s, then Buridan’s *Ethics* is not nominalist. However, as Walsh himself adds, “there is another way that a commentary on the *Ethics* can be significantly nominalist than by echoing the so-called voluntaristic authoritarianism of William of Ockham.”<sup>66</sup> Walsh claims that there are two ways according to which an ethical programme can be considered nominalist: (1) because of the author’s refusal to multiply entities, or (2) because of the terminist analyses undertaken by the author.

The main focus of scholarship on Buridan’s moral theory has been on the second criterion, so I will start with it. When we consider nominalism and what impact it could have in a philosopher’s conception of moral philosophy, we find that the theory of *suppositio* has implications for their understanding of key moral concepts. According to Walsh, it seems that “[f]or Ockham [...], goodness is not a property of being, but

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<sup>64</sup> Cf., on the one hand, Holopainen (1991), Maurer (1999), and Osborne (2005), who argue, *contra* King (1999) and McCord Adams (1986 and 1999, for an interpretation focused on the authoritarian aspect of Ockham’s divine command theory, and, on the other, Williams (2013) and Hagedorn (2019), who focus on the contingency of moral norms. I am borrowing this summary from a section (“Recent scholarship”) of Hagedorn’s (2021) introduction.

<sup>65</sup> Walsh (1966b).

<sup>66</sup> Walsh (1966b), p. 12.

rather, the term ‘good’ signifies that something is as it *should be*<sup>67</sup> – and since it is the *will* that determines what something *should be*, the term ‘good’ connotes the will<sup>68</sup> and does not apply to God, as God is not subject to the will. This systematic practice of terminological analysis is what some call a “nominalist method.” Then, according to this “nominalist ethics” of Ockham’s, after parsing out each of the terms being employed in the discussion of the good, for instance, we would have a system according to which, it seems, “goodness is dependent on obligation, obligation on the volition, and volition unbound by reason or anything else.”<sup>69</sup> If we were to follow this train of thought, we could be led to the conclusion that a nominalist ethics is “voluntarist, authoritative and arbitrary,”<sup>70</sup> but this is something that does not necessarily correspond to Ockham’s theory, at least not according to some scholars.<sup>71</sup> What this truly means, though, is that it is very hard to say, in a strong sense, that there could be a specific kind of ethics deduced from nominalist theories about human beings, reality etc., even though nominalism’s elimination of the discourse concerning natures could appear to have a “disintegrative philosophical effect,” to use Walsh’s expression, in moral philosophy<sup>72</sup> – but this is just a matter of appearances and this effect is not truly attested to. Although Buridan is said to have followed a nominalist method in book V (because of the terminist analysis he employs there),<sup>73</sup> we also see that he has an almost Platonic point of view regarding “participated resemblance,” which would be incompatible with a stronger form of nominalism evoked by the first of Walsh’s criteria, i.e. one more concerned with the refusal to multiply entities or, as it were, the refusal of universals – corresponding to the first criterion above. There are two directive principles in Buridan’s theory of the good: (1) “God is the formal cause of all things,”<sup>74</sup> and (2) “the

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<sup>67</sup> Walsh does not include specific quotations here, but he is presumably referring to Ockham’s *OT V*, 353 (concerning what is morally good) and *OT VIII*, 335 (on virtue and right reason), among others.

<sup>68</sup> Walsh (1966b), p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> Walsh (1966b), p. 2.

<sup>70</sup> Walsh (1966b), p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. n. 60 above.

<sup>72</sup> Walsh (1966b), p. 2.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Walsh (1966b).

<sup>74</sup> Walsh (1966b), p. 7.

formal or proximate good of each thing is some participated likeness to the goodness of God.”<sup>75</sup> <sup>76</sup> When these principles are applied to human beings, they come closer to a traditional intellectualist view according to which the most important human obligation is to contemplate the divine essence (so that our intellect can participate in God’s likeness),<sup>77</sup> and not merely act according to obligations, as Ockham might have wanted it on certain accounts.

According to the first criterion, then, and in keeping with the differences we have seen above between Ockham and Buridan concerning the second criterion, the *venerabilis inceptor* would be considered to have a nominalist moral philosophy, while the Picardian arts master would not. Even if we could find commonalities between their views regarding moral knowledge, it would be hard to find a common ground regarding the nature of the good, especially because in Ockham’s framework there could not be a metaphysical mediation such as the one proposed by Buridan with his idea of “participated resemblance,” since, as mentioned above, Ockham does not see goodness as a property of being. Besides, whereas Ockham is a theologian and is preoccupied with the question of divine omnipotence, Buridan does not concede as easily to the limitations of philosophy in moral matters; that is to say, he does not – and he cannot, as an arts master – delve into theology in order to deal with questions which, at the time, were considered too complicated for philosophy, as we see in book X, q. 5, where a lot is delegated to the authority of the theologians.

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<sup>75</sup> Walsh (1966b), p. 7.

<sup>76</sup> As Walsh notes, this seemingly Platonic way of talking does not appear compatible with a nominalist theory.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *ONE* VI, q. 22: “... ut dicit commentator secundo *Metaphysice* manifestum est quod nihil habet aliquid boni et perfecti nisi in quantum participat aliquam dei similitudinem.”

Overall, in Buridan's case, when we call his commentary a "nominalist commentary," we do this perhaps in a more trivial sense than we do for Ockham's, and mostly in reference to the fact that Buridan's nominalism comes up when he talks about "the nature of relations and qualities, about the eternity of objects proper to knowledge,<sup>78</sup> about the unity of the soul,"<sup>79</sup> and when he criticizes "the realist theories of universals and the doctrine of formal distinction,"<sup>80</sup> which are all things that feature in the background of the commentary. But if we want to evaluate whether this is a nominalist commentary *stricto sensu*, we should look for true nominalist purposes in the purely practical, ethical aspects of the commentary, purposes corresponding to the two criteria put forward by Walsh, and those are not as apparent throughout the *QNE*. Notwithstanding, one instance where that is fairly manifest is the very first question Buridan asks in his *Ethics* commentary, namely: if there is a science of moral virtues (*utrum de virtutibus [moralibus] sit scientia*). Regarding that question, unlike what Aristotle says in his *Metaphysics*, Buridan holds that, since we can know human actions, they qualify as objects of a science, as everything which is particular. The only caveat is that the science of moral virtues "has another degree of exactitude and is governed by a different logic."<sup>81</sup> This will be explored in more detail in my account of *prudentia*, in chapter 7.

Another evidence for a refutation of the hypothesis of moral skepticism in Buridan is found in *QNE* VI, q. 1, which I examine in more detail in chapter 3 (3.1.2). There, Buridan says:

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<sup>78</sup> Cf. chapter 6, esp. section 6.5.

<sup>79</sup> Mentioned in chapter 5.

<sup>80</sup> Walsh (1966b), p.5

<sup>81</sup> Korolec (1975), pp. 58-9 (my translation).

Therefore, there needs to be another direction of human actions, to wit, that some principles from the nature of things – not only in speculative but also in practical things – become known to us naturally, that is, only from the natural inclination of the intellect to the truth itself. [...] Therefore, reasoning from these principles, namely those which have their origin in the nature of things (if there were no failure in the form of reasoning), conclusions in accordance with the nature of things are bound to be inferred. Therefore, we do not assent to those conclusions from habituation, but on account of reasoning from principles received from the nature of things through experience.

That is why it appears that the first guide of human actions must be the nature of the things from which practical principles originate.<sup>82</sup>

Here, Buridan – again, *contra* Ockham – seems to abide by a strong moral naturalism, according to which moral knowledge is derived from the nature of things. This point comes up in a discussion about our inclinations and habituations in response to the question concerning the division of virtues, as we will see in chapter 3 (3.1.2), in my discussion on the division of virtues. But before going into Buridan’s text and delving into how virtues ought to be divided, we must turn to what virtues are, to begin with.

### 1.3 Virtue: what, where, whence, whither, which

First, we ought to look at what we mean by virtue. A virtue (*virtus*; ἀρετή, sometimes translated as “excellence”) is a species of *habitus* (ἕξις). A *habitus*, in turn, should be taken here as a settled disposition. In the standard medieval interpretation, “*habitus*” is generally understood in three ways, always in connection to Aristotle’s *Categories*:<sup>83</sup> (a) first, in a post-predicamental sense, it means to have something else; (b) in the predicamental sense (i.e., the strict understanding of *habitus* as presented in the

<sup>82</sup> *QNE* VI, q. 1 §§19-20 (Cf. Chapter 3, 3.1.1).

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Klima (2018), po. 322-323, on Cajetan, *Commentaria in Praedicamenta* (ed. Laurent, 145–146) and Thomas Aquinas, *STI-II*, q. 49, art. 3.

*Categories*), it is the category of habit, the predication of being clad or armed; and finally (c) in a “sub-predicamental sense of the term, insofar as it is subsumed under the category of quality”:<sup>84</sup> that on account of which something is somehow related to something else. Depending on the “somehow” (whether in doing things well or badly), we may either have a virtue or a vice. It is thus in this latter sense that I will most often be using “*habitus*”<sup>85</sup> throughout this dissertation.

In Buridan’s Aristotelian account,<sup>86</sup> a virtue is a psychological quality<sup>87</sup> of a thing and a *habitus electivus*,<sup>88</sup> since the generation of a habitus involves either an act of the will or of the intellective appetite. More specifically, “in metaphysical terms, virtues are qualities of qualities, in the sense that they help either to determine the strength of certain activities of the soul, or else to modify the effect of its passions.”<sup>89</sup> As a quality of a subject, the seat of virtue within someone’s soul is either their intellect, their will or their sensitive appetite, provided that the activity of choice follows the *recta ratio*.<sup>90</sup> Thus, “any power of the soul contributing to human action can be affected by a virtuous quality.”<sup>91</sup> A virtue is, in a nutshell, a settled disposition to what is good, right and/or true and which is habituated from one or many acts. Acts are thus a condition sine qua non for virtues to come about, even if we are already naturally inclined to what is good, right and/or true.

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<sup>84</sup> Klima (2018), p. 322.

<sup>85</sup> See the next chapter for details on my translation choices.

<sup>86</sup> Generally speaking, Buridan followed an account of virtues which was similar to his predecessors and forerunners such as Aquinas, Scotus and Ockham, i.e. one where virtue was understood as a good or truth-oriented disposition generated from an act and strengthened by repetition so that an agent is ever more prone to acting in that same way. The notable dissenting voice here being Henry of Harclay, as noted by Hagedorn (2019), p. 67.

<sup>87</sup> *QNE* II, 8.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. *QNE* I, 1.

<sup>89</sup> Zupko (2003), p. 230.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Zupko (2003), p. 231.

<sup>91</sup> Zupko (2003), p. 231.

So, all virtues are *habitus*, but not all *habitus* are virtues. Virtues are a special case of *habitus*, as we shall see, often one which is about difficult things and follows from acts which leave a trace in us.<sup>92</sup> Now, these virtues, in turn, can also be divided into subspecies. There are several possible ways of classifying virtues, but the most common in medieval philosophy – and the most useful for the issue at stake here – is that between moral and intellectual virtues. A detailed discussion of this distinction will be presented in chapter 3 (3.1.2).

Although, as I have said, there have been no thorough, systematic studies of Buridan's *QNE*, there has been some scholarship on Buridan's ethics (as is clear from all the works I have referenced so far) and some on the Picardian master's account of virtue. Most of these texts, however, account only, or in most part, for moral virtues.<sup>93</sup> To be sure, there have been a few publications focusing on one or another intellectual virtue according to Buridan. But what I propose here is unique in the sense that this dissertation focuses on all five intellectual virtues. I examine each of the intellectual virtues in the pages that follow without losing sight of what brings them together as virtues in general, and as intellectual virtues more specifically. Thus, I will consider the origin of intellectual virtues, the acts upon which each of them depends and that make them virtuous *habitus*, how they get habituated, and where they belong.

#### 1.4 Intellectual virtues

For now, let us say that I will generally take the expression “intellectual virtues” to refer to those virtues originating in the intellect. I will use “intellectual virtue” and

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. for instance, the commentary on *QNE* VI, 11, section 3.4.1 (esp. §§28-30).

<sup>93</sup> Cf., e.g., Zupko (2003), pp. 227-242 and Walsh (1986).

“epistemic virtue” interchangeably, for both formulations refer to a special kind of settled disposition which is generated in the intellect and perfects the way we understand, cognize, know, i.e., it contributes to our cognition broadly speaking. The kinds of cognitions it can perfect vary, and this will also be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

Now that I have established that the starting point of this investigation is the notion of intellectual – or epistemic – virtue, although we might be familiar with this philosophical jargon, some clarifications are in order before we delve into Buridan’s thought.

In the medieval framework of intellectual virtues, we usually find a discussion of five of them, and this is based on Aristotle’s naming five intellectual virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1139b): “Let it be assumed that there are five qualities through which the mind achieves truth in affirmation or denial, namely Art or technical skill [τέχνη], Scientific Knowledge [ἐπιστήμη], Prudence [φρόνησις], Wisdom [σοφία], and Intelligence [νοῦς].”<sup>94</sup> From this Aristotelian presentation, we have the five Latin equivalent virtue names: *ars*, *scientia*, *prudentia*, *sapientia* and *intellectus*, which I am generally translating as craft, knowledge, prudence, wisdom and understanding, respectively.<sup>95</sup> Medieval philosophers inherit this Aristotelian list and tend to follow it. Aquinas, for instance, dedicates the first article of the *ST* I-II, q. 57 to an overall discussion of what an intellectual virtue is, and the following articles to how many intellectual virtues there are and a discussion of each one specifically. In article 1, he concludes that the *habitus* of the speculative intellect are indeed virtues, for even if they do not pertain to the appetitive power of the soul and, therefore, cannot be put to good use in that sense (and thus cannot perfect the appetitive part of the soul), they

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<sup>94</sup> Trans. H. Rackham (1934).

<sup>95</sup> See chapter 2 for a more detailed account of my translations.

enable the intellect to function well, i.e., aiming at the truth, which is the good that is proper to the intellect. Then, Aquinas confirms that there are five intellectual virtues because the virtues of the speculative intellect (understanding, knowledge, and wisdom) cannot be conflated, just as craft and prudence – also confirmed as intellectual virtues, only of the practical intellect – cannot, for they have different natures (as per articles 3 and 4).

The division of virtuous *habitus* in moral and intellectual is also accepted by Albert (in *De Bono* IV), who notices particular difficulties posed by the consideration of prudence as an intellectual virtue which is also articulated with the moral virtues.<sup>96</sup> The difficulty in how to understand prudence becomes especially salient to Albert on account of his sources: in the received translation of the *Ethica vetus*, Burgundio simply transliterates “φρόνησις” as “*phronesis*,” but Albert also accepts the equivalence, which he attributes to Cicero’s *De Officiis*, between *phronesis* and *sapientia*.<sup>97</sup> This leads the *Doctor Universalis* to establish a curious distinction between *phronesis*, an intellectual virtue (in keeping with his sources), and *prudencia*, a moral virtue – which is something we will see in more detail, contrasted with Buridan’s view, in chapter 7.

In addition to Albert and Aquinas, Odonis, as we will see below – despite not having an equivalent question to Buridan’s *QNE* VI, 1, i.e., one especially dedicated to evaluating and explaining the distinction between moral and intellectual virtues – takes this division for granted, for not only does he follow the tradition in dedicating discussions of his Book VI to the virtues of the intellect, but he also acknowledges the distinction more openly in asking, in Book II, for instance, “*utrum virtus moralis sit melior quam intellectualis*” (q. 8). This division is also assumed – not being explicitly addressed but presupposed – in some of Ockham’s discussions, such as in *Ord. I*,

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<sup>96</sup> This is a problem espied by many authors, including Aquinas and Buridan, as we shall see.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Celano (2015), p. 118.

Prologue, q. 7 and *Rep. III*, 12, where he brings up the issue of intellectual *habitus*, marking their distinction from the moral *habitus*, even though Ockham usually uses the term “*virtus*” – unqualified – to refer to the moral virtues.<sup>98</sup> More clearly stated accounts of the distinction, however, were already developed by earlier philosophers, especially by the *magistri artium*. As Zavattero points out, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, one of the anonymous Parisian arts masters, as well as Robert Kilwardby and Pseudo-Peckham had already commented on and ratified Aristotle’s division, even if, then, they believed moral and intellectual virtues to share the same origin and be distinct only in terms of their orientation.<sup>99</sup> In that sense, as Kilwardby argues, the virtues are twofold but not two:

Understand that [the virtues are] twofold and not two, and this is the reason why: because things which differ with respect to their subject and are counted according to their subject are two; while twofold is a duality rooted in one subject. And this is the case for moral [*consuetudinali*] and intellectual virtue, for their perfections are according to the substance of the same subject, as the substance of human intellect, and in concerning this [same] subject [but dually] they can be said to be twofold.<sup>100</sup>

Kilwardby’s position is also original in another sense: like many of his contemporary arts masters and in contrast with *doctores* like Albert and Aquinas and later generations of medieval philosophers (including Buridan), Kilwardby took all virtues to somehow belong to the intellect:

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<sup>98</sup> Panaccio, in personal communication.

<sup>99</sup> Zavattero (2007), pp. 34-42.

<sup>100</sup> Robert Kilwardby, *Commentarii* 2 lect. 1, Cf. 295va: “Intellige quod duplici et non ‘duabus’, et hac ratione: quia duo sunt qui differunt secundum subiectum et ponunt in numerum secundum subiectum; duplex autem est dualitas in uno subiecto radicata. Sic autem est de virtute consuetudinali et intellectuali. Eiusdem enim subiecti secundum substanciam sunt perfectiones, sicut intellectus humani, et respiciendo hoc subiectum possunt dici duplex”. (Zavattero’s (2007, p. 38) transcription, my translation)

And the sufficiency of this division [of virtues] is clear considering the division of the intellect in practical and speculative. The intellectual virtues perfect the speculative intellect, while the moral virtues perfect the practical intellect.<sup>101</sup>

These examples point to an accepted trend in dividing virtues and treating them separately as moral and intellectual. Yet, besides the appeal to the authority of Aristotle, there is no shared view as to why virtues are separated in this way, as the considerations above suggest. For instance, according to Aquinas in *ST* I-II, q. 58, a. 3 – which bears the same driving question as Buridan’s *QNE* VI, 1 – although moral and intellectual virtues alike depend on both reason and on the appetite (as he explains in the previous articles of that same question), moral virtues perfect the appetite, whereas intellectual virtues perfect our speculative or practical intellect. We shall see, however, that even though Buridan abides by the same division, he does not quite follow this reasoning, and that is partly because there seems to be some interdependence between (at least some) moral and (at least some) intellectual virtues, as Aquinas himself notes, in articles 4 and 5, and as Buridan highlights when he draws into play the role of prudence, much like Albert. Nevertheless, this interdependence does not preclude a study such as mine, focused on intellectual virtues only, as it did not for Buridan, when he dedicated Book VI to them. It seems, thus, that we have a number of authoritative sources on the issue of the division of virtues and the fact that intellectual virtues are a species of their own, with a more robust link to the speculative and practical intellect (as compared to the appetite), and which contribute to different kind of cognitive acts, always aiming at the truth and the good. We must simply bear in mind that this division is particularly useful for methodological purposes, i.e., for focusing one’s research efforts, and this strict a separation between these two species of virtues does not actually occur in the human soul according to most medieval philosophers.

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<sup>101</sup> Robert Kilwardby, *Commentarii* 1 lect. 18, Cf. 295ra, Pr f. 11va: “Et patet sufficiencia huius divisionis [uirtutum] considerando divisionem intellectus per practicum et speculativum. Intellectuales enim perficiunt speculativum; morales vero practicum”. (Zavattero’s (2007, p. 40) transcription, my translation)

### 1.5 *Status quæstionis*

As I have mentioned above, for a little over a century there has been increasing interest in Buridan's philosophical views, and whereas scholars used to focus on logic, metaphysics and natural philosophy, more recently there has been growing interest in ethics. Nevertheless, contrary to what Beneduce suggests,<sup>102</sup> not much attention has been paid to the issue of virtues according to Buridan. Indeed, the virtues have received cursory treatment from scholars, but we have yet to see a comprehensive study of this theme comparable to what we have for Aquinas and even Ockham, for instance.

My work here has been developed in a context where increasing attention has been paid to *Ethics* commentaries by other *magistri artium*, many of who were based at the University of Paris in the 13th century. Although none of them was as notorious to contemporary scholarship as Buridan, this existing scholarship allows for a broader discussion of the roles of the writings by these university masters who did not and could not explore theological themes. Moreover, these studies also favour a reconstruction of the reception of the text and translations of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the late Middle Ages, providing us with a fuller picture and a more reliable and structured narrative of some key concepts in moral philosophy at the time. Among these efforts, we find some publications by Iacopo Costa on *Nicomachean Ethics* question commentaries (a book with Radulphus Brito's *questiones*,<sup>103</sup> another one with an anonymous arts master's, for instance)<sup>104</sup> as well as many articles on these texts and their historical-philosophical

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<sup>102</sup> Beneduce (2017), p. 12.

<sup>103</sup> Costa (2008).

<sup>104</sup> Costa (2010).

context. Violeta Cervera Novo<sup>105</sup> and Valeria Buffon<sup>106</sup> have also been working on some arts masters who wrote their *Ethics* commentaries before 1250. All of these accounts, however interesting they might be, unfortunately, do not add much to the conversation on intellectual virtues (with the exception of some views on *prudentia*, in some cases), since these medieval authors were usually only commenting on the first three books of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and their texts contained, at best, a mere mention of the five intellectual virtues.

If we focus on the *doctores*, especially those who wrote commentaries to the whole *Nicomachean Ethics*, we find that scholarship on Aquinas' and Albert's conception of virtues is, as is to be expected, quite rich, but when we focus on the accounts of 14<sup>th</sup>-century philosophers, the amount of studies on ethics and, specifically, on intellectual virtues, dwindles. Even though we find considerable scholarship on Ockham's moral philosophy, for instance, a lot of it is focused on Ockham's voluntarism and his divine command theory, and because Ockham's moral theory is spread out throughout his corpus (a proper *Nicomachean Ethics* question commentary lacking), this also makes it harder for scholars to draw a systematic account of any particular aspect of his ethics. But if we focus on the context ethics teaching at the University of Paris, Aurélien Robert contributed to the scholarship with some examinations of knowledge, craft, and prudence as well as moral logic in the transition from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>107</sup> and Risto Saarinen has undertaken a similar effort focused on the relation between will and intellect, and prudence,<sup>108</sup> all of which bring up Buridan's account but do not focus primarily on it. To be sure, Jack Zupko has written specifically on Buridan and his

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<sup>105</sup> Cervera Novo (2016) and (2018), as well as her 2017 PhD dissertation.

<sup>106</sup> For instance, Buffon (2008), (2011), (2014), (2015), (2017) and her 2007 PhD dissertation.

<sup>107</sup> Robert (2012) and (2017).

<sup>108</sup> Respectively, Saarinen (1986) and (2003).

ethical theory broadly conceived,<sup>109</sup> as have Gerhard Krieger<sup>110</sup> and Jerzy Korolec.<sup>111</sup> But Zupko often focuses on the more metaphysical and psychological aspects of Buridan's philosophy, while Krieger and Korolec, despite their focus on the *QNE*, only provide us with a panoramic view of its goals and the implications of Buridan's general stances on moral philosophy to his metaphysics or natural philosophy.

The most systematic work on Buridan's *Ethics* commentary was undertaken by Walsh, and it set the foundation for most of the research carried out nowadays, including mine. From Walsh's thorough 1976 study, we have a very precise idea of Buridan's sources, which allows us to reconstruct the context of debate and trace Buridan's worries. More precisely related to my endeavour, from Walsh's inquiry we can gauge the extent of Odonis' influence on Buridan in Book VI of the *QNE*.<sup>112</sup> In fact, Book VI is the last one in which Odonis showed great diligence, his efforts clearly waning from the 172 questions dedicated to Books I to VI to only 9 dedicated to Books VII to X.<sup>113</sup> In Book VI of his *QNE*, Buridan seems to have been largely influenced by Odonis' questions, even if he did not always follow Odonis in terms of contents and theses argued for. The correspondence of question formulations from Book VI between Odonis, Buridan and Burley (who also often followed suit) is as follows:<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> For instance, Zupko (2003), ch. 14, (2011) §7, 2012.

<sup>110</sup> Krieger (1986) and (2001).

<sup>111</sup> Korolec (1974a), (1974b) and (1975)

<sup>112</sup> Walsh's study helpfully also provides a comparison with Burley's commentary, which also predates Buridan's. Since he was also likely influenced by Odonis, the identification of commonalities may prove fruitful to further inquiry.

<sup>113</sup> According to Chen (2019), p. 40, "Book VII sees one single question, Book VIII has none, Book IX asks eight questions [...], and Book X again offers only a pure literary commentary without question discussion to follow any *lectio*."

<sup>114</sup> Data source: Walsh (1976), p. 249.

Table 1.3: Correspondence between Odonis', Buridan's, and Burley's *QNE* VI

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN QUESTIONS IN BOOK VI OF GERALDUS ODONIS', JOHN BURIDAN'S AND WALTER BURLEY'S <i>ETHICS</i> COMMENTARIES		
Odonis, q. 1	Buridan, q. 2	
Odonis, q. 2	Buridan, q. 4	Burley, q. 1
Odonis, q. 5	Buridan, q. 3 <sup>115</sup>	
Odonis, q. 7	Buridan, q. 6	
Odonis, q. 10	Buridan, q. 10	Burley, q. 3
Odonis, q. 11	Buridan, q. 11	
Odonis, q. 13	Buridan, q. 12	
Odonis, q. 14	Buridan, q. 14	Burley, q. 6
Odonis, q. 15	Buridan, q. 18	Burley, q. 7
Odonis, q. 16	Buridan, q. 22	
Odonis, q. 17	Buridan, q. 21	Burley, q. 10

In addition to these sentence formulations being the same, Walsh notes minor borrowings from Odonis (in the objections and replies to them) in Buridan's Book VI questions 2, 3, 6, 11, 12, 14, and 21.<sup>116</sup> In addition to these, borrowings in the main body of the question can be tracked in Buridan's *QNE* VI, 10 (Odonis's VI, 10), *QNE* VI, 22 (Odonis' VI, 16).<sup>117</sup> Even more extensive similarities are found in Buridan's *QNE* VI, qq. 4, 18 and 22, corresponding, respectively, to Odonis' Book VI, qq. 2, 5, and 16.<sup>118</sup> Buridan's use of Odonis as a source varies, as Walsh notes:<sup>119</sup> while we occasionally find formulas indicating a certain level of respect, such as "*Aliqui tamen magni Doctores hoc non concedunt: sed dicunt...*" and the rather laudatory "*Quidam*

<sup>115</sup> Buridan's question here does not have the same wording but is a derivation of Odonis'.

<sup>116</sup> Walsh (1976), p. 251.

<sup>117</sup> Walsh (1976), p. 251.

<sup>118</sup> Walsh (1976), p. 252.

<sup>119</sup> Walsh (1976), p. 256.

*doctor satis pulchre (sicut mihi videtur) determinat istam questionem subter hac sententia...*”<sup>120</sup> we most often find “noncommittal references,” signalled through the use of generic reference terms such as “*arguitur*,” “*videtur*,” so one must always be vigilant as not to merely glance over these remarks.

In addition to the extensive groundwork established by Walsh, studies on Buridan’s writings concerning some intellectual virtues specifically have become available in the last decade or so.

*Scientia* was the object of Biard’s 2012 book and *intellectus* was the object of Economos’ 2009 dissertation. These works, however, focused mainly on the active aspect of *scientia* and *intellectus*, and not as much on the dispositional aspect, i.e., they considered *scientia* and *intellectus* as acts and not as *habitus* or virtues. *Prudentia* also received some attention, especially from Krieger and Saarinen<sup>121</sup> a few decades earlier, but the remainder of the scholarship on this subject is inchoate and is, for the most part, limited to explaining Buridan’s rather remarks about prudence in the first books of the *QNE*, particularly in the proemium.

Even if all of these authors have indeed provided some solid foundational work to help us understand Buridan’s virtue theory, there is much more to be discovered in the *QNE*, including, but not limited to, a more extensive account of the five intellectual virtues as Buridan presents them in Book VI, and this is part of the lacuna I aim to begin to fill in the following pages.

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<sup>120</sup> Both tracked by Walsh (1976), p. 256. The latter formulation, Walsh notes, remarkably echoes a compliment Buridan pays to Seneca elsewhere.

<sup>121</sup> Krieger (1986) and (2001), and Saarinen (1986).

## CHAPTER 2

### ABOUT THIS EDITION AND TRANSLATION

In what follows, I propose a working edition and a translation of John Buridan's *Quaestiones super decem libros Ethicorum Aristotelis (QNE)*, Book VI, questions 1, 8, 9, 11, 12, and 22 – which are then followed by some textual commentary and a synthetical discussion. To date, as I have mentioned, these questions have not been edited nor translated from Latin into any modern language. I call this a “working edition” because this is not a diplomatic transcription of the text (since I do not intent to faithfully reproduce the texts found in the manuscripts free of any intervention, I do not follow page formatting, line breaks, etc.) This is also not a semi-diplomatic or paleographical edition because I am intervening in the text to standardize it as much as possible for the benefit of the reader. And this is not a critical edition either, because the number of surviving manuscripts<sup>122</sup> do not allow for this to be a one-person enterprise.

While I call this a working edition, for it is not a mere diplomatic edition nor does it aim at the rigor of a critical edition, it is not without method. For this working edition, I have mainly used three manuscripts: Urb. lat. 198, from the BAV, Lat. 16128, from the BnF, and Rkp. 658 III, from the BJ – all currently available in digitized form – and all of the incunabula available: three different ones printed in Paris (on July 14<sup>th</sup> 1489,

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<sup>122</sup> Michael (1985) and (1992).

March 26<sup>th</sup> 1513, and April 12<sup>th</sup> 1518), and one printed in Oxford in 1637. In addition to these, I was able to consult a number of other manuscripts at the Vatican library: Vat. lat. 2165, Vat. lat. 2166, Urb. lat. 1367, Ross. 785, and Vat. lat. 4557.

While I have mainly worked with the manuscripts which were available online, this does not render this whole enterprise completely moot. From a textual editing, paleographical and codicological point of view, there is nothing in one single manuscript which would guarantee that it be a more reliable source than another one, without having a full stemma set up. Without being able to establish the archetypes and seeing the whole picture, deciding to use one or a few manuscripts on the basis of their being older and/or having a provenance which is closer to where the author would have lived and worked gives us a false sense of soundness and scientificity with which I do not intent to engage. I have, however, participated in a careful effort to collate and make a recension of several manuscripts of this commentary with a group of scholars working on translating the whole of Buridan's *QNE*.<sup>123</sup> We started from Kilcullen's transcription and collation, which included ten manuscripts and printed editions, and we compared it to Urb. lat. 198 and the 1637 early-print edition. We then noted that Urb. lat. 198 was a fairly reliable manuscript, and this is the one I used most often for the final revisions of my working edition, as well as wherever the manuscripts and/or early-print editions seemed to diverge.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> This work was undertaken by Daniel Cairns, Nicolas Faucher, Peter Hartman, Joseph Stenberg, Magali Roques and myself.

<sup>124</sup> As this was not a study carried out by myself alone for the specific purposes of this dissertation, but rather a larger, collective study (see previous footnote) intended for the purposes of an upcoming publication, I will not expand on the details of our collation or recension. But here is a summarized account of some of our findings, so as not to leave the reader in the dark: We compared *QNE* X, qq. 1-3 in Urb. Lat. 198, which is the oldest dated manuscript available, and the 1637 Oxford incunable, which is the most recent incunable edition, with an existing collation from Kilcullen (which used to be available from his website – cf. Kilcullen, J. (1996/1999)), which used 8 other manuscripts and one other early-print edition. According to our observations, Urb. Lat. 198 is a solid and reliable manuscript, containing no important omissions or errors compared to the other manuscripts that Kilcullen had already collated; it also rarely includes additions not found in other manuscripts. Like the other manuscripts, it occasionally includes text that the 1513 Paris incunable (used in Kilcullen's collation and recension)

All in all, this is not a perfectly sound, error-proof, critical edition. What I propose here is merely a gateway into an important philosophical work which has thus far been overlooked. While I do not intend for this to be a definitive edition of Buridan's text, nor for the commentary I present to be the ultimate contribution to the scholarship on Buridan's *QNE*, this is a needed contribution to the scholarship in that, by making a more easily accessible text, more and more scholars will be drawn to studying it and to considering it in their research. Thus, through raising the awareness of and interest in these issues, we can hope that one day a full critical edition will be prepared.

## 2.1 Editorial norms

The transcription for this working edition purports to be as faithful to the text as possible but it disregards any and all of the manuscripts' graphic, orthographic and diacritical features. The following criteria have been adopted:

### 2.1.1 The disposition of the text

I have not included references in brackets to the manuscript folio numbers nor to the incunable page numbers in my edition because, as a working edition, it does not intend

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omits. Urb. Lat. 198 closely tracks Rkp. 658 III. The 1637 Oxford incunable tracks the 1513 Paris incunable closely, omitting text that Paris 1513 omits. However, at least once the Oxford 1637 incunable includes text that Paris 1513 omits. But both of these early-print editions omit text that is included in the manuscripts collated – which is why I used Urb. Lat. 198 to arbitrate between different readings as needed.

to *perfectly* track the text of any one of the sources consulted, but rather to provide an accessible and legible, lightly edited version of the text to the reader who is not yet familiar with the texts I present here.

For ease of reading I have attempted to organise the text in paragraphs following contemporary editorial standards. I have thus ignored the original disposition of the text found in the different manuscripts and early-print editions. Paragraphs of each question have been numbered with Hindu-Arabic numerals in square brackets, to make it clear that the paragraph numbers are not found in any of the medieval or early modern versions of the text. I have only added them to help the reader locate the passages of the text to which I refer in my commentaries.

In my translation, I have chosen to use corresponding textual markers to words such as “*item*,” “*aut*,” and “*sed*” and other markers of enumeration even when they might look superfluous. This was a deliberate choice aiming at mirroring the original intended textual structure and to highlight the Scholastic formulas used by Buridan. Although this might look bromidic or even irksome to the reader, the choice to keep them is grounded on the fact that these are markers of argumentative structure.<sup>125</sup>

### 2.1.2 Abbreviations

All abbreviations have been developed in the Latin text, with no particular indication of it, for ease of reading.

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<sup>125</sup> Cf., e.g., Thakkar (2020), pp. 365.

### 2.1.3 Punctuation and capitalization

Punctuation according to contemporary standards has been added to the Latin text. According to these same standards, capital letters are used at the beginning of each sentence, for proper names, and for honorific titles, even if the manuscripts do not themselves feature such usage.

Quotation marks have been added whenever a citation could be detected or presumed. Whenever the corresponding text could be tracked, its equivalent in modern editions has been referenced as a footnote to the English translation. In cases where the citation is no longer extant or could not be tracked, only the quotation marks remain, as an indication of a possible reference to a hitherto untraceable source.

### 2.1.4 Spelling

The spelling of the Latin text has been normalized and standardized when it varies. The medieval spelling has been prioritized and diphthongs reduced, so *questio* (rather than “*quaestio*” or “*quæstio*”), for instance, was used in the transcription. The same applies for when the diphthong appears as a mark of inflection: I have thus used “*que*” (instead of “*quae*” or “*quæ*”) and its variants (“*qucumque*,” “*quedam*” etc.), as well as “*prudentie*” (instead of “*prudentiae*” or “*prudentiæ*”), “*sapientie*” (for “*sapientiae*” or “*sapientiæ*”), and so on. The only exception are to mentions of Aristotle’s *De Caelo*, where the diphthong was retained so as to match current usage of that title.

I have adopted a post-Ramisian spelling for my transcriptions, so I used “i” and “j”, as well as “u” and “v,” to mark these letters’ vocalic or consonantal use. To that end, I follow a mostly modern standard, even if different witnesses provide different spellings. Thus, all instances *virtus* and *uirtus* become standardized to *virtus*, for example.

#### 2.1.5 Diacritical signs and other markings

No diacritical signs or other text markings have been reproduced in this Latin edition.

#### 2.1.6 Marginalia and correction marks

Only relevant intrusions to the text have been taken into consideration and reproduced in this edition. Because these are quite rare and never significant to the structure of meaning of the text, no indication as to their presence has been made in the edition.

#### 2.1.7 Textual variants

Textual variants have not been reproduced. The text presented in the pages that follow are already representative of my editorial choices. Since the texts of the questions I present diverged ever so gently, appearing mostly in the form of rather obvious dittographies, metatheses or homeoteleuta, I have made no particular indications of

textual variants. Since this is not a critical edition, a critical apparatus has not been provided since not all witnesses could be considered in this edition.

### 2.1.8 Editorial interventions

Any other editorial interventions besides those mentioned in items 2.1.1 to 2.1.7 above have been indicated between square brackets. These have mostly been used parsimoniously, mostly for clarification purposes.

The only textual intervention where I corrected all witnesses appears in *QNE* VI, 11, and its reference mark, an endnote, has been indicated in the Latin text with a superscript Roman numeral. Note that this endnote ought not to be confused with the footnotes, which have been used in the translation to indicate the referenced citations on the text (cf. item 2.1.3 above).

## 2.2 References to ancient and medieval sources

References to Aristotelian works follow standard referential practices and are given in English in footnotes to the English translation, whenever Buridan explicitly refers to these texts. Here are the standard abbreviations used for the works cited:

Table 2.1: Aristotle's works cited

Abbrev.	Work	Abbrev.	Work	Abbrev.	Work
<i>APo.</i>	<i>Posterior Analytics</i>	<i>DA</i>	<i>On the Soul</i>	<i>MM</i>	<i>Magna Moralia</i>
<i>Phys.</i>	<i>Physics</i>	<i>Met.</i>	<i>Metaphysics</i>	<i>Pol.</i>	<i>Politics</i>
<i>DC</i>	<i>On the Heavens</i>	<i>EN</i>	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>	<i>Rhet.</i>	<i>Rhetoric</i>

References to other ancient or medieval authors and texts are also given in the footnotes to the English translation. Most references to other authors are presented in Latin, and are accompanied by an English translation when one is available.

Wherever Buridan seems to make a clear reference to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* specifically, in addition to providing the Bekker reference and English translation of the passages I have tracked, I have indicated the page number of the *Aristoteles Latinus* edition (from Gauthier's 1973 "*recensio recognita*") followed by the Latin text established there, for comparison purposes.

### 2.3 Translation: a few key terms

Specific terminological choices will be addressed in the exegetical and/or synthetical commentaries. Nevertheless, a brief presentation of the rationale for some of my translation choices is in order.

*Habitus*: I have chosen not to translate "*habitus*" as "habit" nor any of the terms currently found in the literature (e.g., custom) to avoid confusion with other terms against which "*habitus*" will be pitted (*mos*, *assuetudo*, *consuetudo*) especially in *QNE* VI, 1.

The five intellectual virtues: We often find these translated quite literally as art, science, prudence, wisdom and intellect. I, however, propose slightly different translations sometimes, for reason which will become clear as Buridan's *quaestiones* are examined.

I use “craft” for “*ars*”, for the same reason many scholars do: “art” tends to make us think of the fine arts, while its medieval scope is much broader, as will be clear in the question itself. Even though I will use “prudence” for “*prudentia*” – against some scholars who prefer the expression “practical wisdom”, contrasting it to “theoretical wisdom” (i.e. *sapientia*, which I translate simply as “wisdom”) – I usually translate “*scientia*”, when the term designates a virtue, as “knowledge” or “scientific knowledge” (and not “science”), and the virtue of “*intellectus*” is translated as “understanding”. Note, however, that I occasionally call “intellect” the power of the soul designated by the word “*intellectus*” (as in “agent intellect”, because “agent understanding” would lead us too far astray from the usual translations) – and for that reason, when the term is used in a context which calls for ambiguity, as in the title question of *QNE VI*, 11, I leave it untranslated, in italics. A more in-depth account of these translation choices will be given in the sections dedicated to the discussion of each virtue.

Finally, as Bossier says, “*les ennuis du traducteur médiéval et du moderne, sans être tout à fait identiques, se ressemblent.*”<sup>126</sup> Even though recent technology has made this sort of enterprise easier in a lot of ways, there is still no foolproof method for translating philosophical texts which are so far from us chronologically – and sometimes even conceptually – in such a way that the translation remains faithful to the (assumed) original intentions of the author while still being fully accessible to the reader who might not know (enough) Latin. Wherever I have failed to strike that balance, I hope I can count on the reader’s grace.

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<sup>126</sup> Bossier (1998), p. 406.

CHAPTER 3  
SELECTED QUESTIONS FROM BURIDAN'S *QNE VI*

3.1.1 Prima questio | Question one

Utrum virtutes humane bene dividantur in morales et intellectuales  
Whether human virtues are aptly divided in moral and intellectual

[1] Ad explanationem libri sexti Ethicorum queritur primo utrum virtutes humane bene dividantur in morales et intellectuales. [1] Regarding the explanation of Book six of the *Nicomachean Ethics* it is first asked whether human virtues are aptly divided in moral and intellectual.

[2] Et arguitur quod non, quia aliquae sunt naturales, vnde circa finem sexti huius dicitur "omnibus enim videtur singulos mores" existere naturaliter, et enim iusti et temperati et "fortes" et alia "habemus confestim a nativitate." Et parum post dicitur et "quemadmodum in opinativo due sunt [2] And it is argued that they are not, because some virtues are natural, whence near the end of Book six [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*] it is said that "it seems to each one that their own custom" exists by nature somehow, for, we are just and temperate and "strong" and "have

species: sollertia et prudentia, sic in morali due sunt: hec quidem virtus naturalis, hec autem principalis.” Hec autem virtus naturalis nec est intellectualis, nec est moralis, cum non fiat nobis ex more. Igitur divisio non erat sufficiens.

other [virtues] at once from birth.”<sup>127</sup> And shortly after it is said that “just as in the opinative [faculty] there are two types [of virtue], ingenuity and prudence, so too in the moral [faculty] there are two: one is natural virtue and the other principal virtue.”<sup>128</sup> But natural virtue is neither intellectual nor moral, since it does not come to us by custom. Therefore, the division was not sufficient.

[3] Item divisio non est bona cuius membra coincidunt, sed sic est hic. Artes enim ex assuefactione generantur in nobis per multiplicatas operationes quemadmodum iustitia vel temperantia, vnde secundo huius dicit Aristoteles quod “edificantes edificatores fiunt et citharisantes cithariste, sicut quidem iusta operantes iusti efficimur, temperata aut temperati, fortia vero fortes” ut manifestum est quod medicus non fiat

[3] Also, a division whose members coincide is not a good one, but such is the case. For crafts are produced in us through habituation by many operations just like justice or temperance, whence in the second [book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*] Aristotle says that “those who build come to be builders and those who play the guitar become guitar players, just as by doing just acts we become just, by doing temperate acts, temperate, courageous acts,

<sup>127</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1144b4-6: “All are agreed that the various moral qualities are in a sense bestowed by nature: we are just, and capable of temperance, and brave, and possessed of the other virtues from the moment of our birth [...]” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 492: “Et enim iusti et temperati et fortes et alia habemus confestim a nativitate.”

<sup>128</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1144b14-16: “Hence just as with the faculty of forming opinions there are two qualities, Cleverness and Prudence, so also in the moral part of the soul there are two qualities, natural virtue and true Virtue.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 492: “Quare quemadmodum in opinativo due sunt species, deinetes et prudentia, sic in morali due sunt, hec quidem virtus naturalis, hec autem principalis [...]”

aliquis per studium solum sed per longam operationum assuefactionem. Ergo cum virtutem ex assuefactione fieri sit ex more fieri, quod est ipsam esse moralem, patet quod artes sunt habitus morales quas tamen ponit Aristoteles habitus esse intellectuales. courageous,”<sup>129</sup> as it is clear that nobody becomes a doctor by study alone but rather by a long habituation of acts. Therefore, since to bring about virtue through habituation is to bring it about through custom, which is to say it [i.e. virtue] is moral, it is clear that crafts are moral *habitus* even though Aristotle posits them as intellectual *habitus*.

[4] Item de habitibus non videtur pertinere ad scientiam moralem nisi de moralibus. Sed omnes concedunt de prudentia pertinere ad moralem. Igitur prudentia est virtus moralis et tamen est intellectualis. Ergo membra coincidunt. [4] Also, *habitus* do not seem to concern moral science, except moral *habitus*. But everybody agrees that prudence pertains to moral science. Therefore, prudence is a moral virtue but also an intellectual virtue; hence, the members coincide.

[5] Item si nullum oporteat ponere habitum virtuosum ad bene operandum in voluntate vel in appetitu sensitivo, tunc omnes humane virtutes erunt intellectuales, sed nullum habitum oportet ponere in voluntate, quia libera est et semper domina sui actus, propter [5] Also, if one must not postulate any virtuous *habitus* to do good in the will nor in the sensitive appetite, then every human virtue will be intellectual. But we must not posit any *habitus* in the will, for it is free and always the master of its acts. That is why it is said in the third book that “we are

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<sup>129</sup> Aristotle, *EN* II, 1103a34-1103b3: “[...] men become builders by building houses, harpers by playing on the harp. Similarly we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 396: “... puta edificantes edificatores fiunt et citharizantes chitariste. Sic autem et iusta quidem operantes iusti efficitur, temperata autem temperati, forcia vero fortes.”

quod dicitur in tertio quod “operationum quorundam a principio usque ad finem domini sumus.” Et iterum ipsa non est innata ferri nisi in bonum vel apparens bonum, ergo si intellectus habeat rectum iudicium, ipsa nunquam male volet. Sufficit ergo in intellectu virtus ipsum determinans ad rectum iudicium absque habitu aliquo voluntatis. Sed nec ad operandum bene requiritur habitus in appetitu sensitivo, quia subicitur voluntati et eum oportet obedire precepto voluntatis. Vnde experimur quod volentes operamur sepe talia in quibus sensus plurimum tristatur ut milites in torneamentis; et apparet de quibusdam sanctis qui cum longo tempore fuissent mali et momento penitentes et conversi statim sine habitu virtuoso faciebant opera optima et valde meritoria. Ideo etc.

masters of some acts from beginning to end.”<sup>130</sup> And the will is not meant to be drawn if not toward the good or the apparent good. Therefore, if the intellect had the right reason, the will would never desire evil, therefore it suffices that there be a virtue in the intellect determining it to the right judgment apart from any *habitus* of the will. And nor is *habitus* required in the sensitive appetite to act well because it is subjected to the will, and it must obey the precept of the will. Whence we experience that we often voluntarily do actions which are unpleasant to the sense of great many people, like knights do in tournaments. And it is also clear from the cases of holy people who carry out excellent and very worthy acts even though for a long time they had been bad and repent and are converted at once, without virtuous *habitus*. Therefore, etc.

[6] Oppositum videtur Aristotelem sentire in primo libro, in secundo et in sexto.

[6] It seems that Aristotle thinks the opposite in the first book, in the second, and in the sixth.

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<sup>130</sup> Aristotle, *EN* III, 1114b31-32: “Our actions we can control from beginning to end [...]” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 420: “Operacionum quidem enim a principio usque ad finem domini sumus.”

[7] Oportet primo scire quod virtus moralis a more dicitur quia ex more fit vt dicitur secundo huius. Sed aliqui dicunt quod mos dupliciter accipitur: Uno modo mos idem est quod consuetudo, sicut dicimus mos est illius patrie; alio modo idem est quod inclinatio naturalis vel quasi naturalis ad aliquid operandum, sicut dicimus quod mos canis est latrare, ergo quod ad talem actum naturaliter inclinatur. Dicunt igitur isti quod virtus moralis dicitur a more prout significat quandam inclinationem naturalem, propter quod Tullius in sua Rhetorica dicit quod virtus est habitus, id est inclinatio habitualis modo nature rationi consentaneus. Et quia inclinatio ad aliquid operandum non proprie pertinet ad intellectum, sed ad appetitum, quoniam ipsius intellectus est iudicium de operationibus, scilicet quid et quomodo sit operandum, sed ipsius appetitus est inclinatio sive tendentia ad illud operandum quod est

[7] It is first necessary to know that moral virtue is named after custom because it comes to be by custom, as is said in the second book. But some say that custom is taken in two ways. In one way, custom is the same as habituation, as we talk about the customs of a given country. In another way, it is the same as a natural or quasi-natural inclination to do something, as we say that the custom of the dog is to bark, hence we say that the dog is inclined to this action naturally. They also say, therefore, that moral virtue is named after custom to the extent that it means some natural inclination, which is the reason why Cicero says in his *Rhetoric* that “virtue is a *habitus*,”<sup>131</sup> that is, a *habitus* in harmony with reason naturally. And because the inclination to do something does not properly pertain to the intellect but to the appetite, since it is proper to the intellect to make a judgment about actions, that is to say, what should be done and how it should be done, proper to the appetite is the inclination or tendency to do what is

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<sup>131</sup> Cicero. *Inv. rhet.* II, 159: “Nam virtus est animi habitus naturae modo atque ratione consentaneus.” (“Virtue is a habit of the mind that concurs with the way of nature of reason.” – Excerpt trans. in Cullen (2006), p. 97.).

ratione sentenciatum. Ideo virtutes ille sole dicuntur proprie morales que sunt in appetitu et non ille que sunt in intellectu. Sicut ergo est bona divisio quod virtutum humanarum quedam sunt in intellectu et alie in appetitu, ita bene dicitur quod alique sunt morales et alique intellectuales.

decided by reason. That is why the only virtues that are rightly called moral are those which are in the appetite and not those which are in the intellect. Therefore, just as it is a good division that some human virtues are in the intellect and others in the appetite, it is well said that some are moral and others are intellectual.

[8] Sed contra illum modum dicendi, videtur esse primo illud quod dicitur secundo huius, ubi cum Aristoteles dixisset quod “virtus moralis” ex more “fieret, non a natura declarans”, hoc postea dixit: “sed innatis quidem nobis, suscipere eas,” perfectis autem per “assuetudinem.” Ergo videtur quod per morem Aristoteles intendebat assuetudinem cum dixit virtutem moralem fieri ex more. Ideo etiam post dicit Aristoteles et “assueti timere vel confidere hi quidem fortes hi autem timidi fiunt.”

[8] But against this way of arguing, there seems to be first that which is said in the second book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where, after Aristotle had said that “moral virtue comes to be from custom, not from nature;” he says, afterwards, “but we are destined to receive them, their being perfected by habituation.”<sup>132</sup> Therefore, it seems that by custom Aristotle meant habituation, since he claims that moral virtue comes to be from custom. And, for this reason, Aristotle also states further down, “it is in becoming habituated to fear or to be assured that some become brave and others cowardly.”<sup>133</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Aristotle, *EN* II, 1103a24-26: “The virtues therefore are engendered in us neither by nature nor yet in violation of nature; nature gives us the capacity to receive them, and this capacity is brought to maturity by habit.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 396: “... set innatis quidem nobis suscipere eas, perfectis autem per *assuetudinem*.”

<sup>133</sup> Aristotle, *EN* II, 1103b1-3: “Similarly we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 397: “...assueti timere vel confidere, hii quidem fortes, hii autem timidi.”

[9] Item cum in secundo huius hoc Aristoteles probare voluisset quod virtutes morales non insunt nobis a natura, dixit sic “moralis vero ex more fit,” ex quo manifestum est quod neque una moralium virtutum natura nobis insit. Nullum enim natura existentium aliter assuescit. Modo ista ratio nulla esset nisi mos pro assuetudine caperetur, et idem exprimit Aristoteles in primo Magnorum Moraliū.

[9] Also, because, in the second book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle wanted to demonstrate that moral virtues do not belong to us by nature; he claims that, in fact, “moral virtues come about from custom,”<sup>134</sup> from which it is clear that not one of the moral virtues belongs to us by nature, for none of what exists by nature is otherwise modified. But this argument would be void, unless “custom” were understood as “habituation,” and Aristotle expresses the same idea in the first book of the *Magna Moralia*.<sup>135</sup>

[10] Item secundum istam opinionem omnis habitus in appetitu inclinans ad aliquid operandum esset habitus moralis quod non est verum, quia dicitur secundo huius quod neque una virtutum moralium natura nobis inest et suppleri potest quod neque ulla malicia. Et tamen in sexto dicitur quod in parte appetitiva sicut in opinativa est ponere et virtutem naturalem et

[10] Also, according to this opinion, every *habitus* in the appetite inclining towards some act would be a moral *habitus*, which is not true, because it is said in the second book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that no moral virtue belongs to us by nature and it can be added that no vice either. And yet, in the sixth [book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*], it is said in the appetitive part, just as in the opinative part, we must posit both

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<sup>134</sup> Aristotle, *EN* II, 1103a17-18: “[...] moral or ethical virtue is the product of habit (*ethos*), and has indeed derived its name, with a slight variation of form, from that word.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 396: “Moralis vero ex more fit.”

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *MM* I, 1185b-39-1186a2.

virtutem principalem, quam quidem virtutem naturalem dicit a natura nobis inesse confestim a natiuitate. natural virtue and principal virtue, and indeed this natural virtue, he says, belongs to us from the moment we are born.

[11] Sed forte quod aliquis objiciet, [11] But maybe someone will object, dicens: domine, tu negas illam virtutem naturalem, que ponitur in appetitu, esse moralem. Contra, quia Aristotelem eam moralem vocare videtur. Dicit enim sic “omnibus enim videtur singulos mores existere natura aliqualiter” etc. Vide quod ipse dicit mores. Dicit etiam post: quemadmodum in “opinativo due sunt species etc. sic in morali due sunt” hec quidem naturalis hec autem principalis. Vide quod ipse dicit in morali. [11] But maybe someone will object, saying: “you, master, you deny that natural virtue, which is placed in the appetite, is moral!” On the contrary, because Aristotle seems to call it moral. For he says that “it seems to everyone that their own custom exists by nature somehow”<sup>136</sup> etc. Notice that he [i.e. Aristotle] himself says “custom.” He then also says that “just as there are two species in the opinative [faculty] etc., likewise in the moral [faculty] there are certainly two: natural and principal.”<sup>137</sup> Consider what Aristotle states in his ethics.

[12] Ad hoc, breviter dicendum est quod inclinationes, quas a nativitate habemus, non sunt mores proprie, sed [12] To this, it must be briefly said that inclinationes which we have from birth are not properly customs, but they are called

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<sup>136</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1144b4-6: “All are agreed that the various moral qualities are in a sense bestowed by nature: we are just, and capable of temperance, and brave, and possessed of the other virtues from the moment of our birth.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 492: “Omnibus enim videtur singulos morum existere natura aliqualiter.”

<sup>137</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1144b14-16: “Hence just as with the faculty of forming opinions there are two qualities, Cleverness and Prudence, so also in the moral part of the soul there are two qualities, natural virtue and true Virtue; and true Virtue cannot exist without Prudence.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 492: “Quare quemadmodum in opinativo due sunt species, deinetes et prudentia, sic in morali due sunt, hec quidem virtus naturalis, hec autem principalis. Et harum principalis non fit sine prudentia...”

mores dicuntur secundum similitudinem, eo quod ad similitudinem morum inclinant. customs due to a resemblance, because, just like customs, they incline.

[13] Alii autem dixerunt quod habitus intellectuales non generantur in nobis ex assuetudine, sed ex naturali inclinatione intellectus ad intelligibile quantum ad principia omnino prima, vel per experientiam quantum ad multa principia que aliter sciri non possunt, vel per doctrinam ratiocinativam deducendo conclusiones ex principiis, unde Aristoteles in hoc sexto dicit quod “iuvenes bene fiunt geometrici et disciplinati in talibus scientiis, sed non prudentes” et, cum dixisset ipsos prudentes non fieri, dedit causam non ex defectu consuetudinis, sed ex defectu experientie. Dicens: “causa autem est quoniam singularium est prudentia que fiunt cognita ex experientia. Iuvenis autem expertus non est. Multitudo enim temporis facit experientiam” et propter idem non [13] Others, on the other hand, have said that intellectual *habitus* are not produced in us from habituation, but rather from the intellect’s natural inclination toward the intelligible regarding absolute first principles, or from experience of the many principles which cannot be known otherwise, or by ratiocinative teachings deducing conclusions from principles; whence Aristotle says in Book six of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that “the youth become geometers and become skilled in such sciences but do not become prudent”<sup>138</sup> and when he said that they do not become prudent, he attributed the cause [of this] not to a defect in habituation but to a defect of experience, saying that “prudence pertains to the singulars which become known by experience. However, the young are not experienced. Experience

<sup>138</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1142a12-14: “[...] although the young may be experts in geometry and mathematics and similar branches of knowledge, we do not consider that a young man can have Prudence.” (Trans. H. Rackham) Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 486: “...geometrici quidem iuvenes et disciplinativi fiunt et sapientes talia, prudens autem non videtur fieri.”

potuit esse aliquis medicus bonus aut takes a great deal of time,”<sup>139</sup> and for the  
 nauigator bonus sine multis same reason there cannot be one good  
 operationibus ex quibus experientia doctor or one good sailor without much  
 accipiatur de casibus particulariter work, out of which experience of particular  
 contingentibus sic etiam nullus fit contingent cases is gained, just as no one  
 bonus chitarista sine multis becomes a good guitar player without  
 chitarisationibus et illud non est ex much guitar practice, and that is not  
 parte intellectus quoniam homo sine through a part of the intellect, since man  
 operatione posset doceri et scire quam can be taught without action and know  
 primo oporteat cordam percutere et which string it is necessary to strike first,  
 quam secundo, sed frequentata and which afterwards, but repeated work is  
 operatio requeritur vt ad se operandum required in order to speed up the work of  
 organum corporale puta manus per the bodily organ – for instance, the hand –  
 assuetudinem agilitetur. by habituation.

[14] Si igitur hoc ita concessum fuerit, [14] If, therefore, this were granted,  
 virtutes intellectuales non erunt intellectual virtues would not be moral, nor  
 morales neque morales intellectuales, would moral virtues be intellectual, and so  
 et ita non coincidunt membra the members of the division would not  
 diuisionis. coincide.

[15] Ille autem virtutes quas in isto [15] However, those virtues which, in  
 sexto vocat Aristoteles naturales non Book six, Aristotle calls natural are not  
 sunt hominibus proprii, dicente proper to humans: as Aristotle said even  
 Aristotele etenim pueris et bestiis children and beasts have natural *habitus*, on

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<sup>139</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1142a14-16: “[...] Prudence includes a knowledge of particular facts, and this is derived from experience, which a young man does not possess [...]” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 486: “Causa autem quoniam et singularium est prudentia, que fiunt cognita ex experientia. Iuuenis autem, expertus non est. Multitudo enim temporis, faciet experientiam.”

naturales existunt habitus, propter quos humane virtutes erunt omnes aut morales aut intellectuales. Et ita licet non quecumque virtutes, tantum humane, id est que hominibus proprie sunt, bene dividuntur in morales et intellectuales, quia membra dividenda non coincidunt et totum divisi ambitum euacuant.

account of which human virtues will be all either moral or intellectual. And thus, although not all virtues are human, that is, proper to humans, they are aptly divided in moral and intellectual because the divided members do not coincide and exhaust the whole realm of division.

[16] Et si non placet ista via, tamen propinqua ei videtur aliquibus esse concedenda. Videtur enim quod non solum potentie non cognitive ipsius anime assuescunt, sed etiam potentie cognitive quod Aristoteles velle videtur secundo Metaphisice dicens nam, “vt consuevimus, ita dignamur dici et que preterea non similia videntur, sed propter consuetudinem minus nota et magis extranea etc.”

[16] And if this way is not satisfying, nevertheless it seems to some that a way close to this one must be granted. Indeed, it seems that not only the non-cognitive powers of the soul itself are habituated, but also the cognitive powers, which Aristotle seems to claim in the second book of the *Metaphysics*, for he says, “what we deem worthy of telling is that to which we are accustomed, and anything beyond that seems not to be similar but rather strange and more extraneous on account of [its not being] familiar”<sup>140</sup> etc.

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<sup>140</sup> Aristotle, *Met.* II, 994b33-995a3: “The effect of a lecture depends upon the habits of the listener; because we expect the language to which we are accustomed, and anything beyond this seems not to be on the same level, but somewhat strange and unintelligible on account of its unfamiliarity” (Trans. H. Tredennick).

[17] Et commentator in prologo tercii Phisicorum dicit: consuetudo est maxima causa impediens a rebus manifestis per se. Quemadmodum enim homo quando fuerit assuetus ad aliquas actiones, licet noceant sibi, erunt faciles ei et credet quod sint utiles. Similiter cum fuerit assuetus credere sermones falsos a puericia, erit illa consuetudo causa ad negandum veritatem. Hoc etiam experientia manifestare videtur, multi namque modernorum et magnorum in tantum aliquibus opinionibus adhererunt quod nihil eis contrarium audire possunt, quantumcumque forte probabilius fuerit suis opinionibus.

[18] Si ergo hoc ita concessum fuerit, tunc manifestum esse videtur quod in potentiis appetitiuis nullus preter eos qui a natura fiunt generatur habitus, nisi per assuetudinem, quia non cognoscunt propter quod neque doctrinam recipiunt nec experientiam. Ideo virtutes huiusmodi potentiarum, si non sint a natura, erunt principaliter

[17] And the Commentator says, in the prologue of the third book of the *Physics*, that habituation is the most important cause preventing things clear in themselves. For instance, when someone is habituated in certain actions, however harmful these actions may be to them, they will be easy for them and they will believe they are useful. Similarly, when they are habituated to believe false propositions since their childhood, this habituation will be the cause for the denial of truth. Even experience seems to make this clear. For instance, many of the modern and the great adhere so much to some opinions that they can hear nothing contrary to them, however more probable they be than their [own] opinions.

[18] Thus, if that were granted, then it would seem clear that in the appetitive powers no *habitus* – besides those that come to be by nature – is produced, except by habituation, because they do not know the reason why nor do they receive teaching or experience. Therefore, virtues of those kinds of power, if they do not come to be by nature [i.e., from birth], they will

assuetudine propter quod vere et proprie morales dicuntur. Sed in intellectiva potentia non solum ex assuetudine, sed principalius ex doctrina vel experientia habitus generantur imo forte videtur intellectualis adhesio que ex consuetudine habetur sit firmior quam illa que habetur ex ratione, tamen non est perfectior nec convenientior ad optime operandum. Quod maxime videtur esse notum in prudentia que est magnorum operum directiva, tanta enim in rebus humanis contingit diversitas ex circumstantiis quod quasi nunquam est eodemmodo operandum, sed oportet secundum exigentiam circumstantiarum, aliud opus vel alium modum concludere ratiocinando per ipsam prudentiam ex practicis principiis quorum principiorum plura est necesse nota fieri per experientiam similium casuum vel proportionabilium. Habitus autem ex assuetudine nobis generatus (cum assuetudo fiat ex similibus operibus) semper inclinatur ad opera similia, propter quod non videtur prudentia per

come to be primarily from habituation, that is why they are called moral [virtues] truly and properly. But in intellective power, *habitus* are produced not only from custom but primarily from teaching or experience. Indeed, it seems perhaps that intellectual adhesio which is had from habituation is stronger than that which is had from reason, yet, it is not more perfect nor more appropriate in order to act well. That seems to be known chiefly from the case of prudence which is the guide of the greatest acts, for so much diversity of circumstances happens in human affairs that hardly ever must we act the same way, but it is fitting to conclude another act or another manner, according to what is demanded by the circumstances, reasoning through prudence itself from practical principles; it is necessary that many of these principles become known by experience of similar or proportional cases. But the *habitus* produced in us through habituation always inclines [us] to similar acts (since habituation comes to be through similar acts), on account of which prudence does not seem to begin in us primarily by

assuetudinem nobis infieri habituation, but rather by experience and principaliter, sed per experientiam et rational teaching.  
doctrinam ratiocinativam.

[19] Item si prudentie conclusionibus [19] Besides, if we agreed by habituation assentiremus per assuetudinem, with the conclusions of prudence, it would sequeretur quod nec prudentia esset follow that neither would prudence be the certa regula operum humanorum, nec right standard of human acts, nor would haberet regulam per quam dirigeretur prudence have a standard by which it could quod est inconueniens. Consequentia be guided, which is improper. The patet quia sicut veris principiis consequence is clear because, just as we possumus adherere per assuetudinem can adhere by habituation to true ita et falsis, sicut dicit Aristoteles in principles, we can also adhere to false ones, secundo Methaphisice, et commentator as Aristotle says in the second book of the in prologo tercii Phisicorum. Oportet *Metaphysics*,<sup>141</sup> and the Commentator in igitur aliter fieri directionem operum the prologue of the third book of the humanorum videlicet quod ex natura *Physics*. Therefore, there needs to be rei quedam principia non solum in another direction of human actions, to wit, speculabilibus, sed etiam in practicis that some principles from the nature of fiunt nobis cognita naturaliter, scilicet things – not only in speculative but also in ex sola naturali inclinatione intellectus practical things – become known to us ad ipsum verum. Aliquando etiam fiunt naturally, that is, from the sole natural nobis nota per experientiam, scilicet inclination of the intellect to the truth itself. quia communiter vidimus ex tali Sometimes, indeed, the principles finally operatione tale vel tale consequi become known to us by experience, that is, malum concedimus tanquam since we readily saw that from such acts principium, quod ex tali opere such or such evil follows, we grant as

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<sup>141</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* II, 994b32-995a6. (I thank Hakan Genc for his help in tracing this reference.)

detrimentum innatum est accidere. Ex his igitur principiis sic habentibus ortum ex natura rei ratiocinando (si peccatum non fuerit in forma ratiocinationis) semper innate sunt conclusiones inferri consone nature rei. Illis igitur conclusionibus non ex assuetudine assentimus, sed propter ratiocinationem ex principiis acceptis a rerum natura per experientiam.

though it were a principle that damage is bound to occur from such actions. Therefore, reasoning from these principles, namely those which have their origin in the nature of things (if there were no failure in the form of reasoning), conclusions in accordance with the nature of things are bound to be inferred. Therefore, we do not assent to those conclusions from habituation, but on account of reasoning from principles received from the nature of things through experience.

[20] Propter quod apparet quod primum directivum operum humanorum debet esse rerum natura, a qua principia practica habent ortum; ideo dicitur septimo Politice “quod nihil bonum est eorum que preter naturam sunt.”

[20] That is why it appears that the first guide of human actions must be the nature of the things from which practical principles originate. For that reason, it is said in the seventh book of the *Politics* that “nothing which is contrary to nature is good”.<sup>142</sup>

[21] Secundum directivum est ipsa practica principia.

[21] The second guide is the practical principles themselves.

[22] Tertium directivum est ratiocinatio per quam ex dictis principiis conclusiones practice deducuntur.

[22] The third guide is the reasoning through which practical conclusions are deduced from the aforementioned

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<sup>142</sup> Aristotle, *Pol.* VIII, 1325b9: “[...] nothing contrary to nature is noble.” (Trans. H. Rackham).

deductur. De hac autem principes. And Seneca talks about this ratiocinatione dicit Seneca epistola reasoning in his letter *Claranum* to Claranum ad Lucillium: “bonum sine Lucillius: “there is no good without ratione nullum est,” quid ergo est ratio reason,”<sup>143</sup> thus reason is imitation of nature imitatio. Hanc ratiocinationem nature. Aristotle remarkably praises this (tanquam prudentia per eam non per reasoning (as prudence inclines and assuetudinem nos ad unum inclinet et determines us by reason, not by determinet) extollit Aristoteles habituation, to this single good) in the letter mirabiliter in epistola quadam ad to Alexander, saying “about this point, as it Alexandrum dicens “ad huc, autem ut is not unclear from the evidence, that we testimonio non immanifestum est, praise those who use reasoning – and who quod eos quidem qui ratiocinatione want to carry out everything with it – as utuntur et cum hac omnia volunt agere being good and excellent. And we hate tanquam existentes bonos et optimos those who do something without reasoning laudamus. Eos autem qui sine as being rough and brute. Furthermore, we ratiocinatione aliquid faciunt tanquam punish people who appear to be bad for existentes rudes et bestiales odimus. their badness, and we cherish people who Per hanc etiam malos ipsorum appear to be good for their virtue. And thus maliciam manifestantes punimus, et we discover the dissuasion of future evils bonos ipsorum virtutes declarantes and we challenge good people to become zelamus. Sic et futurorum malorum better. Furthermore, through this we avoid dissuasionem invenimus, et eventual sadness, and we acquire existentium bonorum provocationem advantages which will not be harmful to ad melius habemus. Et per hanc etiam us”<sup>144</sup> etc.

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<sup>143</sup> Seneca. *Epistolae Morales ad Lucilium*, 66.39 (italics mine): “Et ut quod volo exprimam breviter, materia boni aliquando contra naturam est bonum numquam, quoniam *bonum sine ratione nullum est*, sequitur autem ratio naturam.” (“To set forth my point briefly: the raw material for the good is sometimes contrary to nature, but the good never is, since *no good exists without reason* and reason follows nature.” - Trans. B. Inwood, italics mine.)

<sup>144</sup> Actually, Pseudo-Aristotle. *Epistola ad Alexandrum*: “Ad hoc autem tibi ut estimo non inmanifestum est hoc quod eos qui ratiocinatione utuntur et cum hac volunt omnia agere tanquam existentes bonos et

subventuras tristicias effugimus, et non  
obfuturas nobis utilitates acquerimus”  
etc.

[23] Quartum directivum est [23] The fourth guide is practical  
conclusiones practice per huiusmodi conclusions discovered and concluded  
ratiocinationem inuente et conclude. through reasoning of this sort.

[24] Quintum directivum sunt virtutes [24] The fifth guide are moral virtues that  
morales per assuetudinem inclinantes by habituation incline the appetite to carry  
appetitum ad exsequendum id quod out what was postulated by reason, and  
ratione decretum est et ad always to look for judgment of reason in  
expectandum semper in suis motibus et one’s movements and actions, so that all  
operationibus iudicium rationis, sic our actions are in accordance with nature.  
enim nature consonant omnes nostre  
operationes.

[25] Ergo si assuetudo aliqua concurrat [25] Thus, even though some habituation  
ad habituum intellectualium contributes to the production and  
generationem et confirmationem, confirmation of intellectual *habitus*, they  
tamen non ex assuetudine principaliter are not produced through habituation, but  
generantur, sed per experientiam vel rather by experience or teaching. That is  
doctrinam, propter quod habitus why intellectual *habitus* are not called  
intellectuales non dicuntur morales. moral. On the contrary, moral [*habitus*] are  
deservedly distinguished.

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optimos laudamus. Eis autem qui sine ratiocinatione aliquid faciunt tanquam existentes crudos et bestiales odimus. Per hanc eciam malos ipsorum manifestantes malicias punimus et bonos ipsorum virtutes declarantes zelamus. Sic et futurorum malorum disuasionem per ipsam invenimus et existencium bonorum provocationem in melius habemus. Per hanc eciam superventuras tristicias effugimus et non affuturas per se nobis utilitates adquirimus.” (in Fowler (Ed.) (1978), p. 177).

Sed contra, morales merito distinguuntur.

[26] Tunc secundum secundam viam respondendum est ad rationes. [26] Then, according to the second way, we ought to reply to the [initial] arguments.

[27] Ad primam dicendum est quod ille virtutes naturales non sunt morales, nec sunt intellectuales, sed etiam nec debent dici humane proprie, quia pueris conveniunt et bestiis sicut dictum fuit. [27] To the first one, it must be said that those natural virtues are not moral, neither are they intellectual, and they cannot even be said to be properly human, because they apply to children and beasts, as has been said.

[28] Ad aliam rationem que erat de artibus satis apparet ex positione quod sit dicendum. [28] To the other argument, which was about crafts, what should be said is clear enough from the argument.

[29] Ad aliam que dicebat ad moralem non pertinere nisi de moralibus virtutibus, potest dici quod imo de prudentia, inquamtum ipsa est directiva virtutum moralium modo predicto. De aliis autem habitibus intellectualibus forte non multum spectat ad moralem nisi ad notificandum prudentiam per eius convenientias et differentias ad ipsos. [29] To the other, which said that nothing pertains to moral philosophy, except what is about moral virtues, it can be said rather that prudence also pertains to moral philosophy, insofar as it is the guide of moral virtues, as has been said. Other intellectual *habitus* perhaps do not regard moral philosophy very much, except insofar as they inform prudence by means of similarities and differences between it

[i.e. prudence] and them [i.e. the other intellectual *habitus*].

[30] Ad aliam dicendum est quod et in voluntate et in appetitu sensitivo oportet ponere virtutem moralem non forte necessario ad bene operandum, sicut bene ratio concludit, sed ad firme immobiliter faciliter et delectabiliter bene operandum. Nam sine habitu esset difficile resistere singulis passionibus appetitus sensitivi et esset periculum ne voluntas aliquando se permetteret inclinari apud fortissimos impetus passionum.

[30] To the other, it must be said that we need to put moral virtue both in the will and in the sensitive appetite, perhaps not necessarily in order to act well, just as reason comes to a conclusion well, but rather in order to act firmly, unchangeably, easily and delightfully well. For, without *habitus*, it would be hard to resist every one of the passions of the sensitive appetite and there would be a danger that the will would sometimes allow itself to be inclined to the strongest urges of the passions.

[31] Hec autem que sic dicta sunt, licet habeant apparentiam, tamen non ex toto vera esse videntur, oportet enim ponere differentiam inter habitus et actus illos ex quibus generantur. Videmus ergo quod actus appetitus sive eliciti, sive imperati non generantur per assuetudinem, sed sunt semper in nostra potestate obiecto presente et cognito et non interueniente impedimento extrinseco. Habitus autem in appetitu nostro generantur ex

[31] But these things which have been said, although they may look true, they do not really seem to be altogether true, for we must settle the difference between the *habitus* and those acts from which they are produced. Thus, we see that the acts of the appetite, whether elicited or ordered, are not produced by habituation, but are always in our power, if the object is present and is known and if no extrinsic impediment intervenes. But *habitus* are produced in our appetite from habituation. To this extent,

assuetudine. Pro tanto quia non firmantur et perficiuntur in nobis, nisi per actuum frequentationem, hoc enim vocamus ex assuetudine generari. Ita etiam videtur quod in intellectu actuales conclusionum aut principiorum noticiae non ex assuetudine, sed per experientiam, vel doctrinam, vel huiusmodi viam aliam generantur. *Habitus* tamen qui cessante actuali consideratione maneret non sic, sed firmantur et perficiuntur per frequentatam considerationem, propter quod videmus multos acutissimi ingenii nunquam ad habitum posse peruenire, quia nolunt illam noticiam quam per doctrinam cito et faciliter capiunt frequentare, de quibus dicitur communiter quod quicquid per unam aurem intrat exit per alteram. Videtur ergo quod universaliter habituum generatio proprie sive in appetitu, sive in intellectu sit per assuetudinem, hoc est per actionum seu operationum frequentationem multiplicatam, vel si quis dicat quod per quemlibet actum, etiam per primum aliquid ipsius, *habitus* acquiritur tamen sine

because they are only strengthened and perfected in us by constant repetition of the acts, this is what we call to be produced from habituation. It thus seems that, in the intellect, the actual knowledge of conclusions or principles is produced not from habituation but rather through experience or teaching, or through some other such way. Yet, with the ceasing of the actual consideration the *habitus* would not remain like this, but it is strengthened and perfected by repeated consideration, for which reason we see many persons of the sharpest mind never to be able to attain *habitus*, because they refuse to repeat the knowledge which they grasp readily and easily by learning. It is commonly said of them that whatever comes into one ear comes out of the other one. Thus, it seems that, universally, the very production of *habitus* either in the appetite or in the intellect is by habituation, that is, by the increased repetition of actions or deeds, or if someone said that by whichever act, even by the first of them, a *habitus* is nevertheless acquired without habituation, that is without the repetition of the act, the

assuetudine, hoc est sine actus frequentatione, nec in appetitu, nec in intellectu habitus firmatur et perficitur. *habitus* is strengthened and perfected neither in the appetite nor in the intellect.

[32] Quod autem nos dicimus scientiam acquiri per doctrinam sic habet veritatem, quia ipsa nobis acquiritur per frequentationem actuum qui per doctrinam generantur. [32] And the fact that we say that knowledge is acquired by teaching – this is true in the following way: namely, because knowledge is acquired by us through the repetition of acts which are produced by teaching.

[33] Ex quo patet quod rationes precedentis opinionis nihil interimunt eorum que nunc dicta sunt. Nam a principio nos conclusionibus aut principiis assentimus per ratiocinationem aut experientiam. Et cum huiusmodi ratiocinationes et experientias frequentamus, habitus quidem firmatur in nobis, quo quando volumus prompte ratiocinamur, et quo conclusionem cui sepe per ratiocinationem adhesimus, etiam sine actuali ratione concedimus. Unde concedendum est quod dubiis acquiescere propter consuetudinem acquisitam non ex frequenti ratiocinatione, sed ex frequenti audire [33] From this, it is clear that the arguments for the preceding opinion destroy nothing of what has now been said. For, in the beginning, we assent to principles or conclusions either by reasoning or by experience. And when we repeat this kind of reasoning and experience, some *habitus* is indeed strengthened in us, so that, when we want to, we reason promptly, and therefore we often adhere to a conclusion to which we have frequently adhered by reasoning and, even without actual reason, we grant it. Whence it must be granted that appeasing doubt on account of habituation acquired not through repeated reasoning but only through frequent listening is not proper of prudence, which is why Aristotle

tantum, non est prudentie, propter quod Aristoteles non immerito ratiocinationem extollit. Dicendum est igitur ad questionem propositam quod divisio virtutum humanarum in virtutes intellectuales et virtutes morales appetibiles est bona quod satis apparet in opinione precedente. Aristoteles autem semper per virtutes morales intendebat non virtutes intellectuales, sed precise virtutes morales appetitus; propter quod patet quod, secundum eius intellectum, divisio erat bona. Nec aliquid remanet dubium, nisi quare per virtutes morales voluit magis intelligere virtutes appetitus quam virtutes intellectus, cum utreque per consuetudinem acquiruntur.

[34] Ad quod dici potest quod nomina et verba significant ad placitum. Si igitur priores usi sic erant istis nominibus licuit Aristoteles sic uti eis. Et forte causa talis usus fuit, quia appetitus, ad acquirendum sibi virtutem, pluri indiget exercitatione et maiori assuetudine quam intellectus, vel forte quod nomine moris proprie

does deservedly praise reasoning. Therefore, it must be said to the proposed question that the division of human virtues in intellectual and appetitive moral virtues is good, which is clear enough in the preceding opinion. Indeed, by moral virtues Aristotle always meant not intellectual virtues, but precisely the moral virtues of the appetite, on account of which it is clear, according to his understanding, that the division was good. Nothing remains doubtful, except why Aristotle wanted to understand by moral virtues the virtues of the appetite more than the virtues of the intellect, since each of those two is acquired by habituation.

[34] To which it can be said that names and words signify by convention. Therefore, just as previous thinkers had used those expressions in this manner, Aristotle also allowed himself to use them in this way. And perhaps there was a cause for such use, because in order for the appetite to acquire virtue it requires more practice and greater habituation than the intellect; or perhaps

non utimur pro omni consuetudine, sed pro illa solum que modo nature inclinatur. Appetitus autem cum non cognoscat magis inclinatur modo nature quam intellectus, vel ut quidam dicunt, quia virtutes intellectus nomine proprio secundum communem usum dicte sunt intellectuales, idcirco virtutes appetitus commune nomen morum sibi tanquam proprium assumpserunt, vel ut puto, quia per unicam demonstrationem intellectus dicit verum sine formidine, licet habitus non firmetur, sed appetitus per unicum actum non inclinatur ad opus virtutis immobiliter et sine rebellione. Non sit ergo cura de nominibus, sed nobis vidisse sufficiat quod intellectuales virtutes non sine assuetudine perficiuntur et firmanur. Quomodo autem ad aliam dicendum sit apparet tam ex nunc dictis quam ex dictis in opinione precedente. Hec de questione.

[the cause was] that we do not use the word “moral” properly for all habituation, but only for the habituation which only inclines naturally. And the appetite, since it does not cognize, is more inclined naturally than the intellect; or, as some say, because the virtues of the intellect are called intellectual according to the name proper to them, as per common use; on that account, the virtues of the appetite adopted the common name “moral” as proper to them; or, as I think, because by a single demonstration the intellect says the truth without fear, even though the *habitus* has not been strengthened, but the appetite is not inclined by a single act to an act of virtue unchangeably and without resistance. Let there not be worry about names, but suffice it for us to see that intellectual virtues are not perfected and strengthened without habituation. And in what manner one should respond to the other opinion is clear from what has now been said as much as from what was said in the preceding opinion. That is all about this question.

### 3.1.2 Whether virtues are aptly divided in moral and intellectual

We now know that Buridan's *QNE* Book VI, following Aristotle, is where we find most of the discussion concerning intellectual virtues. Standardly, in this kind of commentary, the first methodological step for discussing any given subject matter is to present its definition and to define its scope and use. This is precisely what Buridan sets out to do with the notion of intellectual virtue in *QNE* VI. Here, in question 1, Buridan asks whether virtues are aptly divided in moral and intellectual (§1). One of the problems which follows is how we assent to practical conclusions: by habituation or by whatever properly intellectual act.

#### 3.1.2.1 Objections and replies

To begin with, Buridan considers the question of whether the division of virtues in moral and intellectual is satisfying, because (I) it seems that the division is not exhaustive, in the sense that there are other types of virtue which are not accounted for: there is, for instance, natural virtue (which Aristotle had called φυσική ἀρετή).<sup>145</sup> Moreover, there is also the objection which states that virtues must be divided, in fact, in natural and main (or principal), rather than in moral and intellectual.<sup>146</sup> Buridan's final refutation of this view is found in §27.

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<sup>145</sup> *QNE* VI, 1 §2.

<sup>146</sup> *QNE* VI, 1 §2. N.B.: As far as the question of natural virtues vs. main virtues goes, it is one which is quickly dismissed: natural virtues apply to children and non-human animals ("beasts"), whereas main virtues, virtues in the proper sense, are those which pertain to (adult) humans. And since, here, we want to deal with proper, (adult) human virtues, natural virtues are not part of the framework of the question, and are therefore left aside. Cf. *QNE* VI, 1 §15 and §26.

Another objection (II) to that division of virtues being a good one states that the division could also not seem apt because there seem to be elements which could be part of both sets and, as Buridan puts it “a division whose members coincide is not a good one.”<sup>147</sup> Here, he talks about the arts, for instance, which seem to be moral *habitus*, but which, according to Aristotle, are part of the intellectual *habitus*. Buridan dismisses this objection on §28. As a further development of this same kind of objection, he brings up prudence, which also seems to be a problem to the proposed distinction, because it seems to count both as a moral and intellectual virtue.<sup>148</sup> Thus, because there seems to be virtues which are members of both groups, we may have reasons to believe that their division, as proposed, is not good. This objection is dealt with in §29.

Finally, there is the objection (III) according to which there can also seem to be one single type of virtue, namely intellectual virtue, because the *habitus* to do good: (a) is not part of the will, because the will is free, (b) is not part of the sensitive appetite, because it is, in turn, subordinated to the will and, therefore, we are left with the fact that (c) the *habitus* to do good must be part of the intellect.<sup>149</sup> We find the response to this objection in §30.

### 3.1.2.2 Possible answers to the main question

After referencing Aristotle’s view against these objections in §6, starting in §7 Buridan examines candidates for actual replies to the main question. According to the first view (i),<sup>150</sup> which ends up being rejected by Buridan, the first thing which we must know is

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<sup>147</sup> *QNE VI*, 1 §3.

<sup>148</sup> *QNE VI*, 1 §4.

<sup>149</sup> *QNE VI*, 1 §5.

<sup>150</sup> *QNE VI*, 1 §7.

that, when we say that moral virtues are *ex more*, that could mean two things: either that we are talking about habituations, such as the customs of a country, or we are talking about natural or quasi-natural inclinations, such as a dog's inclination to bark. Moral virtues, according to Cicero, are *habitus* (i.e. something which is in harmony with reason naturally). Aristotle, however, says that moral virtue is obtained by custom, that is to say, by habituation. So, these virtues begin in us and are perfected by habituation. Elsewhere, Aristotle also says that moral virtues do not come to us by nature; therefore, *ex more* must mean "by habituation," if we consider that we cannot become habituated by nature.

But something about this view does not hold<sup>151</sup> because, while in Book II of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle seems to say that no moral virtue belongs to us by nature, he says, in Book VI, that natural virtues and moral virtues belong to the opinative appetite, and that some natural virtues belong to us by nature, from birth.<sup>152</sup> There, however, we must remember that those inclinations which belong to us by nature are not customs in the proper sense, but they are rather called customs by resemblance. In other words, what is being discussed here are these virtues which we call "moral," which are in the appetite and not in the intellect, and how they come to be. One possibility is that they are natural inclinations, "*habitus* in harmony with reason naturally"<sup>153</sup> – as Cicero claims – which are distinct from the intellect because they are merely inclinations or tendencies, and not judgments, as what is proper to the intellect. Here, we can again think of cases of natural inclinations such as a dog's natural inclination to bark, which is something which belongs to the appetite, but is not a virtue in and of itself, since the intellect did not make a judgment about the action of barking. Now, even though Buridan seems to appreciate Cicero's division of virtues and the relation he proposes between the appetite and the intellect, he will use Aristotle *contra*

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<sup>151</sup> *QNE* VI, 1, §§8-12.

<sup>152</sup> *QNE* VI, 1, §10.

<sup>153</sup> *QNE* VI, 1, §7.

Cicero and emphasize the role of habituation, explaining that Aristotle rejects the claim that moral virtue can be had naturally, and, instead, contends that moral virtue must be acquired by habituation.<sup>154</sup> This does not mean that Aristotle never talks about natural virtue though. As we have seen and will see here in more detail, Aristotle does talk about natural virtue in book six of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (when he contrasts them with principal virtues), associating them with virtues of the appetite. But, according to Buridan, this does not mean Aristotle is contradicting himself. Rather, Buridan says, Aristotle sometimes calls natural virtues customs (*mores*) not in the proper sense, but by resemblance, as they incline us in ways which are similar to the ways habituation inclines us. Here, thus, Buridan has focused on the relationship between moral virtue and *habitus*, and what it means for a moral virtue to be habituated or *ex more*. We have yet to see how intellectual virtues might relate to natural inclination and habituation, which is what Buridan discusses in what follows.

The second proposed solution (ii) to the question,<sup>155</sup> which also ends up being rejected by Buridan, states that intellectual *habitus* are unique in that, unlike moral *habitus*, we do not acquire them through habituation, but rather either by the intellect's natural inclination to the truth or through experience or teachings. This could explain why young people can quickly become skilled in sciences such as geometry, but not prudent: because they lack in experience, not in habituation. So, there is an important difference between moral and intellectual *habitus*: while it is possible to acquire moral virtue by habituation, just as we learn how to play the guitar by the repetition of movements, it is not possible to become prudent in that same way. Prudence, as an intellectual virtue, needs experience, including experience of what is contingent. Hence, because of this fundamental difference between moral and intellectual virtues, the members of the division do not coincide and the proposed division is indeed good. However, what is

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<sup>154</sup> *QNE* VI, 1, §§8-9.

<sup>155</sup> *QNE* VI, 1 §§13-14.

left for us to decide is whether this division is exhaustive,<sup>156</sup> something which Buridan quickly resolves, stating that the other kind of virtue which could be taken into account, viz. natural virtue, is not proper to humans, and is not under consideration in this question, making the proposed division exhaustive and apt for the purposes of Buridan's analysis.

### 3.1.2.3 Buridan's thesis

Nevertheless, Buridan says that some will not be altogether satisfied with the preceding explanation about the fundamental difference between moral and intellectual virtues. He then proposes a third *via* (iii),<sup>157</sup> which adds a nuance to the previous one. This one namely claims that the intellectual powers can also be habituated. In fact, we may say that there are intellectual *habitus* produced by habituation. But in that case, we could be habituated to bad things,<sup>158</sup> so a further explanation is needed. This is why, in §18, Buridan states that in order for intellectual virtues such as prudence to be exercised as such, even in the case of a habituation which leads to the good thing (or the true thing), this habituation must be accompanied primarily by experience and by teachings, and these two are at least as important as habituation. Therefore, what is actually operating in the case of intellectual virtues, even if there are habituations, is reasoning from experience or teachings.

From that point – and here I refer back to Walsh<sup>159</sup> – Buridan concludes with an order of guides, or instances which serve as guides, to human action, which starts at

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<sup>156</sup> *QNE VI*, 1 §15.

<sup>157</sup> *QNE VI*, 1 §§16-18.

<sup>158</sup> *QNE VI*, 1, §17.

<sup>159</sup> Walsh (1966b), p. 6.

Buridan's moral naturalism: the first is the very nature of things, from which practical principles derive;<sup>160</sup> the second is the corpus of practical principles;<sup>161</sup> the third is the reasoning through which we deduct conclusions from those principles;<sup>162</sup> the fourth is the body of conclusions;<sup>163</sup> the fifth is the collection of moral virtues which, by habituations, incline the appetite to follow what is decided by reason.<sup>164</sup>

After presenting these guides, Buridan proceeds to the proper replies to the objections (which have already been noted above).<sup>165</sup> These replies are quite brief and dismissive of views contrary to his own, as he has already discussed most objections in his own reply to the question, when describing the three possible *viæ* of getting to a definite answer.

Now, even these responses to the objections do not appear to be quite sufficient for a robust answer to the question concerning the aptness of division of virtues. Buridan notes that “these things which have been said, although they may look true, they do not really seem to be altogether true, for we must settle the difference between the *habitus* and those acts from which they are produced.”<sup>166</sup>

At this point, a more detailed examination of the distinction between *habitus* and *actus* is in order. What Buridan curiously argues for is that the main difference between the moral and the intellectual realm in relation to virtues is that, while the *habitus* are produced, in the appetite, through habituation, in the intellect the knowledge of principles is given not by *habitus*, but rather by experience or teaching, which must, in

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<sup>160</sup> *QNE VI*, 1, §20.

<sup>161</sup> *QNE VI*, 1, §21.

<sup>162</sup> *QNE VI*, 1, §22.

<sup>163</sup> *QNE VI*, 1, §23.

<sup>164</sup> *QNE VI*, 1, §24.

<sup>165</sup> *QNE VI*, 1, §26-30.

<sup>166</sup> *QNE VI*, 1, §31.

turn, *qua* acts, be perfected by repetition. So, the real difference between moral and intellectual virtues does not lie in the *ex more* character of virtues, but rather on the fact that the *habitus* can be originated in the appetite or the intellect.

But, in §31, Buridan seems to obliterate the difference between teaching and habituation, reducing learning to a “*repetition* of acts which are produced by teaching.”<sup>167</sup> This conflation is important because it leads us to see that the main distinction which Buridan draws at this point in the question is not one between types of *habitus* (in this case, moral and intellectual), but one between *habitus* and *actus*, especially on the intellectual side. While the *habitus* of intellection are produced by habituation, the acts of the intellect are not.

Finally, what is left for us to investigate, according to Buridan, is why Aristotle calls the virtues of the appetite moral virtues, if intellectual virtues also depend on habituation. That is to say, if both can be given *ex more*, why does Aristotle only call “moral” the virtues of the appetite? And that is the case because we can have good intellectual acts (for instance, in the case of geometry or arithmetic) which are not *ex more*, even if the *habitus* can only be perfected and strengthened by habituation. For what concerns good acts of the appetite, they are always made up *ex more*, and, for that reason, we say of the person who actualizes them that she has moral virtues.

Overall, it seems that Buridan presents three possible solutions to the original question: according to the first one (i, above), the difference between moral and intellectual virtues is that habituation is neither sufficient nor necessary for intellectual virtues, whereas it appears as central for moral virtues. In the second (ii, above), moral virtues require habituation, while for intellectual virtue, habituation is, this time, sufficient but

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<sup>167</sup> *QNE VI*, 1, §32 (italics mine).

not necessary. In a final thesis (iii, above), however, he seems to say that habituation is a necessary condition that there be an intellectual virtue, just as it is one for moral virtue, but it is not sufficient. Thus, according to this last argument, which is the one Buridan endorses, the difference between moral and intellectual virtues is not in the realization of habituation, i.e. it is not in the *ex more* character of virtue, but rather in the act, and in the distinction between *habitus* and act.

The division of virtues in moral and intellectual is, therefore, a good one, and, although virtues can indeed be thus distinguished, this does not mean they are completely independent. We find a contemporary echo of this viewpoint, for instance, in Roger Crisp's position, according to which

[w]e should nevertheless retain a distinction between moral and epistemic virtues. Moral virtues are closely related to the happiness of the agent and others in her society, or polis. Epistemic virtues may also be central to happiness on some conceptions of that notion, but conceptually they find their place in what we might call the epistemic enterprise—that is, within activities and practices that involve the acquisition of knowledge or understanding. This distinction reflects that commonly drawn between practical reasons or values, and epistemic reasons or values.<sup>168</sup>

As is to be expected in the Aristotelian tradition, and as Buridan suggests in his text, it is prudence that links moral and intellectual virtues, as we shall see in more detail in chapter 7. It is for that reason, as I have previously noted, that he also spends a great number of questions of book VI of the *QNE* discussing the nature and role of prudence. Nevertheless, this distinction between virtues, however conceptually important it may be, must not distract us from the fact that one of the ultimate goals of ethics is providing an account of how we become better persons and what human happiness consists in,

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<sup>168</sup> Crisp (2010), p. 29.

and, as Buridan states in *QNE X*, q. 4, “the virtue of the active soul [...] is the aggregation of moral virtue and prudence, and neither one taken separately...”<sup>169</sup>

### 3.2.1 Octava questio | Question eight

Utrum ars sit virtus

Whether craft is a virtue

[1] Arguitur quod non, quia secundo huius dicitur quod “virtutes nec sunt passiones nec potentie” sed in nono Metaphysice dicit Aristoteles “artes esse potentias”. Dicit enim “aliquas potentiarum nobis esse acquisitas disciplinatu”, scilicet artes. Ideo etc.

[1] It is argued that it is not, for in the second [book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*] it is said that “virtues are not affections nor powers”<sup>170</sup> and in the ninth book of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle says that “crafts are powers.”<sup>171</sup> In fact, he says that “some of our powers are acquired through learning,”<sup>172</sup> namely crafts; therefore etc.

[2] Item nulle virtutes debent prohiberi, cum virtus habentem perficiat et opus eius bonum reddat, sed aliq̄ue artes prohibentur. Ergo etc.

[2] Also, no virtue should be forbidden, since virtue perfects the one who has it and makes their work good. But some crafts are forbidden. Therefore, etc.

<sup>169</sup> *QNE X*, q. 4, in Hyman & Walsh (1983), p. 773 (Trans. J. J. Walsh).

<sup>170</sup> Aristotle, *EN II*, 1105b20-21: “A state of the soul is either (1) an emotion, (2) a power, or (3) a disposition; virtue therefore must be one of these three things.” and 1106a: “If then the virtues are neither emotions nor powers, it remains that they are dispositions.” (Trans. H. Rackham, modified). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 402: “Si igitur neque passiones sunt virtutes neque potencie, relinquitur habitus eas esse.”

<sup>171</sup> Aristotle, *Met. IX*, 1046b3-5: “Hence all arts, i.e. the productive sciences, are potencies; because they are principles of change in another thing, or in the artist himself *qua* other.” (Trans. H. Tredennick).

<sup>172</sup> Aristotle, *Met. IX*, 1046b36-37: “[...] it is impossible to possess these arts without learning them at some time and having grasped them.” (Trans. H. Tredennick).

[3] Item “omnis virtus, cuius utique fuerit virtus, et illud bene habens perficit et opus eius bene reddit” secundo huius, sed ars non reddit opus bene, sed bonum: domificator enim per artem domificatoriam facit domum in se bonam et firmam, qui tamen aliquando male agit, quia ad malum finem. Dictum enim fuit in questione precedenti quod aliquando contingit eundem effectum fieri secundum artem, et contra prudentiam. Igitur etc.

[4] Item “virtus hominis est secundum quam homo dicitur bonus homo” ut patet secundo huius, sed homo non dicitur secundum artem bonus homo, quia multi artifices sunt valde mali homines.

[3] Also, “each virtue, at any rate has a [twofold effect] on the thing to which it belongs: it both makes the thing itself good and makes it do its work well,”<sup>173</sup> [as is said] in the second book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*]. But craft does not make it so that someone performs their function well but rather it causes them to produce good work. In fact, through building a builder makes a house in itself good and firm, even though he sometimes acts badly, for [he sometimes acts] toward a bad end. It has been said in the preceding question that it is sometimes the case that a certain effect is had following craft, and [acting] against prudence. Therefore, etc.

[4] Also, “a virtue of humans is that according to which a human is called a good human,”<sup>174</sup> as is clear in the second book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*], but a human is not said to be good with respect to a craft, for

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<sup>173</sup> Aristotle, *EN* II, 1106a15-17: “It must then be premised that all excellence has a twofold effect on the thing to which it belongs: it not only renders the thing itself good, but it also causes it to perform its function well.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 402: “... *virtus omnis* cuius utique fuerit virtus, et id bene habens perficit et opus bene reddit...”

<sup>174</sup> Actually, the discussion of good *simpliciter* and good *secundum quid* appears in Aristotle, *EN* VII (1152b) but is present as a theme for discussion of book II of a number of medieval treatises on the *Ethics*.

many craftsmen are rather bad human beings.

[5] Item virtutis non est virtus, quia sic procederetur in infinitum, sed artis est virtus, ut dicit Aristoteles. Igitur etc. [5] Also, there is no virtue [in the use] of a virtue, for this would go on infinitely. But there is a virtue [or vice in the use] of craft, as Aristotle says.<sup>175</sup> Therefore, etc.

[6] Oppositum vult Aristoteles. [6] Aristotle suggests the opposite.

[7] Dicenda sunt duo. Primo, quod omnis ars est virtus quedam. Secundo, quod nulla ars est virtus hominis secundum quod homo. [7] Two things must be said. First, that every craft is a virtue of some sort. Second, that no craft is a virtue of a human being as a human being.

[8] Prima conclusio sic probatur: virtus definitive vel descriptive est qui “habentem perficit et eius opus bene reddit,” ut patet secundo huius. Sed omnis ars est huiusmodi: probatio, quia habens artem proprie est intellectus factivus, quem in quantum est factivus artes perficiunt, ut notum est de se. Opus autem [8] The first conclusion is proved in this manner: a virtue according to its definition or according to its description is one which “perfects the one having it and makes their work good,”<sup>176</sup> as is clear from the second book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*]. And all crafts are like this. And that is proved in this manner: having craft is proper to the factive intellect, which, insofar as it is factive, is

<sup>175</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1140b22: “Moreover, we can speak of excellence in Art.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 482: “Set tamen artis quidem est virtus.”

<sup>176</sup> Aristotle, *EN II*, 1106a15-17: “It must then be premised that all excellence has a twofold effect on the thing to which it belongs: it not only renders the thing itself good, but it also causes it to perform its function well.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 402: “... *virtus omnis cuius utique fuerit virtus, et id bene habens perficit et opus bene reddit...*”

intellectus factivi ut factivus duplex est, scilicet interius et exterius. Interius est ratiocinatio ad iudicium de factibilibus, cuius operis bonitas est veritas, ad quam ars determinat intellectum factivum. Opus autem exterius ab interiori opere natum est regulari. Ideo et eius bonitas nata est, ortum habere a bonitate operis interioris, propter quod Aristoteles vult quod ars reddit opus intellectus factivi bonum et bene se habens. perfected by craft, as is known by itself. And the work of the factive intellect as factive is twofold, namely, internal and external. Internally, it is the ratiocination aiming at judgment about things that can be made, whose goodness of work is truth, to which truth craft determines the factive intellect. And the external work is bound to be regulated by the internal work. Therefore, the goodness of the external work is also bound to have its beginning in the goodness of the internal work. That is why Aristotle suggests that craft makes the work of the factive intellect good and according to what is good.<sup>177</sup>

[9] Item virtus attenditur secundum maximum et optimum opus in quod potentia potest, at intellectus factivi, secundum quod est factivus est verum dicere circa factibilia et ad hoc ars determinat intellectum igitur. [9] Besides, virtue is directed with respect to the greatest and best work of which a power is capable, but it is [the greatest and best work] of the factive intellect, insofar as it is factive, to say the truth about things that can be made. Therefore, to that end, craft also determines the intellect.

[10] Secunda conclusio probetur sic. Illa non est virtus hominis secundum [10] The second conclusion is proved in this manner: a virtue which does not make

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<sup>177</sup> Cf. Aristotle *EN VI*, 1140a21-22: “Art, therefore, as has been said, is a rational quality, concerned with making, that reasons truly.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 481 *et passim*. E.g.: “Ars quidem igitur ut dictum est habitus, *habitus* quidam cum ratione vera factivus est...”

quod homo, que non reddit hominem bonum hominem simpliciter, et patet secundo huius, sed ars non reddit hominem simpliciter bonum hominem: quia multi sunt docti artifices et experti, qui sunt mali homines. Puta intemperati aut iniusti. Nec mirum quia per artem domificatoriam et secundum artis exigentiam potest domus fieri in se bona, firma et pulchra propter malum finem, sicut propter bonum, et ita male humana malitia.

humans good humans without qualification is not a virtue of humans as humans, and this is clear in the second book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*].<sup>178</sup> But craft does not make humans good humans without qualification, for there are many learned and expert craftsmen who are bad humans. Think of the intemperate or the unjust. And this is not surprising, for through the craft of building and with respect to the demand of that craft one can make houses which are themselves good, firm and beautiful for bad ends as well as for good ends, and badly through human badness.

[11] Item virtus hominis attenditur secundum maximum opus et optimum in quod homo potest, sed optimum opus in quod homo potest non est circa factibilia, circa que est ars, sed vel circa agibilia, vel circa speculabilia, cum circa obiectum nobilius debeat esse opus nobilius et melius. Ideo etc.

[11] Also, human virtues are directed with respect to the greatest and best work of which a human is capable. But the best work a human being can do is not regarding things that can be made, which is what craft is about, but either about things that can be done or things that can be contemplated, because a nobler and better work should be about a nobler object.<sup>179</sup> Therefore, etc.

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<sup>178</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *EN* II, 1106a22.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *EN* VI, 1140a17-19.

[12] Item virtus alicuius non debet attendi secundum eius partem inferiorem vel viliorem, sed vel secundum se totum, vel secundum partem nobiliorem et excellentiorem a qua totum maxime natum est nominari. Sed intellectus factivus est pars inferior quam intellectus activus vel speculativus. Ideo etc. Dicam igitur quod singulis partibus vel potentiis in homine habentibus alias et alias operationes attribuende sunt alie et alie virtutes proprie determinantes eas ad ultima opera in que possunt: alia enim est virtus oculi, alia manus. Sed nulla virtus partis vel potentie particularis deberet dici virtus totius simpliciter, nisi virtus partis seu potentie principalissime. Si tamen totum non habeat potentiam distinctam a potentiis singularibus partium, tunc non est inconueniens virtutem partis principalissime toti simpliciter attribuere, quia sicut dicit Aristoteles nono huius “quemadmodum civitas principalissimum esse videtur, sic et homo et omnis alia congregatio.”

[12] Also, someone’s virtue must not be directed with respect to their inferior or least worthy part but either to that someone as a whole or with respect to their most noble and excellent part – the part by which the whole ought to be named. But the factive intellect is an inferior part compared to the active or speculative intellect. Therefore, etc. I will say, consequently, that to each single human part or power that has a different operation must be attributed a different virtue determining it to the ultimate work of which it is capable. For instance, the virtue of the eye is different from the virtue of the hand. But no virtue of a part or of a particular power [of the human being] should be called a virtue of the whole without qualification, except for the virtue of the most principal part or of the most principal power. However, if the whole does not have a power distinct from the singular powers of the parts, then there is no problem in attributing, without qualification, the virtue of the most principal part to the whole, for, as Aristotle says in the ninth book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*], “[as in] the state [the sovereign] seems to be the most important thing, so it is with man and with any other composite

Igitur quelibet ars est virtus, non hominis secundum quod homo, sed intellectus factivi in ordine ad obiectum illius artis, ut ars domificatoria intellectus domificativi, et sic de singulis. whole.”<sup>180</sup> Therefore, any one craft is a virtue, not of human beings as human beings, but belonging to the factive intellect, ordered to the object of its craft, just as the craft of building belongs to the building intellect, and likewise for each craft.

[13] Ad rationes igitur respondendum. [13] We must thence respond to the arguments.

[14] Ad primam dicendum quod virtus nec est passio neque potentia proprie, sed est dispositio vel habitus potentie determinans potentiam ad optimum eius opus. Quandoque tamen utimur large nomine potentie, extendendo ipsum ad habitus vel dispositiones verarum potentiarum, et ita artes et omnes virtutes possunt dici potentie. Sic enim dicit Aristoteles primo Rhetorice quod “virtus est potentia acquisitiva bonorum et servativa et potentia benefactiva multorum.” Vel dicendum cum [14] To the first one, it must be said that virtue is neither properly an affection nor a power but it is a disposition or habitus of a power determining that power to its best work. However, we sometimes use the name ‘power’ in a broad sense, extending it to the habitus or dispositions of true powers, and thus crafts as well as all virtues can be called powers. So indeed Aristotle says in the first book of the *Rhetoric* that “virtue is a power to acquire good things and a power to maintain and do many good things.”<sup>181</sup> Or it must be said that, since virtues and badnesses are determinations of [our]

<sup>180</sup> Aristotle, *EN IX*, 1168b32-34: “But as in the state it is the sovereign that is held in the fullest sense to be the state, and in any other composite whole it is the dominant part that is deemed especially to be that whole, so it is with man.” (Trans. H. Rackham, with minor changes). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 555: “Quemadmodum autem et civitas principallissimum maxime esse videtur, et omnis alia constitutio, sic et homo...”

<sup>181</sup> Aristotle, *Rhet. I*, 1366a35-1366b1: “Virtue, it would seem, is a faculty of providing and preserving good things, a faculty productive of many and great benefits [...]” (Trans. J. H. Freese).

virtutes et malicie sint powers directed toward opposite things, determinationes potentiarum ad craft is called a virtue insofar as it opposita se habentium, ars dicitur determines the factive intellect to judge truly virtus inquantum determinat about things which can be made. But intellectum factivum ad vere because – with respect to external work – iudicandum circa factibilia. Sed quia craft is directed toward opposite things, in ordine ad opus exterius ars se habet since just as a doctor can heal through ad opposita, quoniam sicut per artem medical craft, a doctor can also kill, for that medicine medicus potest sanare, ita reason, crafts like these are called powers potest interficere, ideo artes ut sic and in order to operate well without vocantur potentie et indigent ad qualification they require another virtue simpliciter bene operandum alia determining them, namely prudence or a virtute determinante eas, videlicet moral virtue. Therefore, Aristotle rightly prudentia aut morali virtute; ideo says that “there is [such a thing as] a virtue enim bene dicit Aristoteles quod [in the use of] of craft.”<sup>182</sup> “artis erat virtus.”

[15] Ad aliam dicendum quod nulle [15] To another one, it must be said that no artes prohibentur ea ratione qua sunt craft is prohibited on account of their being virtutes, scilicet determinantes virtues, namely on account of being things intellectum ad verum iudicium, sed ea determining the intellect to true judgment, ratione qua possumus eis male uti but [craft is rather prohibited] because we quoad operationes exteriores per can use it badly as regards external nostram maliciam. Non igitur propter operations because of our badness. se prohibentur, sed propter nostram Therefore, crafts are not prohibited on maliciam, ne eis armemur “sevissima account of their being virtues, but rather on

<sup>182</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1140b22: “Moreover, we can speak of excellence in Art [...]” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 482: “Set tamen artis quidem est virtus.”

enim est iniustitia habens arma”, account of our badness, lest we be armed  
 primo Politice. with them. “Injustice armed is at its  
 harshest,”<sup>183</sup> [as Aristotle says] in the first  
 book of the *Politics*.

[16] Ad aliam dicendum quod ars [16] To the other, it must be said that, craft  
 reddit interius opus intellectus factivi results in the good of the internal work of the  
 bene se habens, sed non determinat factive intellect, but does not perfectly  
 perfecte opus exterius, nec ipsum determine the external work, nor its appetite,  
 appetitum ad simpliciter bene se to be directed to the good without  
 habere, sed ad hoc indiget virtute ut qualification. Rather, to do that it requires a  
 dictum est. virtue, as has been said.

[17] Alia ratio bene probat quod ars [17] Another argument rightly shows that  
 non est virtus hominis secundum craft is not a virtue of humans as humans.  
 quod homo.

[18] Ad ultimam dicendum est quod [18] To the last one, it must be said that there  
 artis non est virtus in quantum ipsa est is no virtue [in the use of] of craft insofar as  
 virtus, scilicet in quantum determinat craft is itself a virtue, i.e. insofar as it  
 intellectum ad verum iudicium, sed determines the intellect to true judgment.  
 bene indiget virtute quoad opus But craft surely requires a virtue with respect  
 exterius, ad hoc quod ordinetur ad to external work, so that it is ordered to the  
 bonum finem, quia sic erat good end, for in this respect it could be  
 oppositorum, et magis habeat modum ordered to opposites, and it has more the  
 potentie quam virtutis, ut dictum est.

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<sup>183</sup> Aristotle, *Pol.* I, 1253a34: “For unrighteousness is most pernicious when possessed of weapons [...]”  
 (Trans. H. Rackham).

mode of a power than that of a virtue, as has been said.

### 3.2.2 Whether craft is a virtue<sup>184</sup>

#### 3.2.2.1 Arguments showing that craft is not a virtue

In *QNE VI*, 8, Buridan examines the question of whether craft is a virtue. There are several reasons why it does not seem to be one. First (§1), according to the authority of Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1105b), there seem to be three sorts of things in our intellect: affections,<sup>185</sup> powers and habitus, and a thing cannot be two of these at the same time.<sup>186</sup> Considering that, in the *Metaphysics* (1046b), Aristotle seems to be clear about the status of craft as a power, rather than a an affection or a habitus, that means that craft is not a virtue, since virtue is a species of habitus – namely, a praiseworthy habitus or settled disposition for acting well.<sup>187</sup>

Another characteristic of virtues, according to the objections (§2), is that they ought not to be forbidden, for why would anyone want to impose a limitation on virtue and,

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<sup>184</sup> A slightly different version of this text was published, along with a modified version of chapter 4, in Medeiros Ramos (2021).

<sup>185</sup> I am using the word “affections” as a translation of the Latin term “*passiones*”. In Aristotelian scholarship, the term *πάθη* has received several translations. In this specific passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Rackham translates it as “emotions,” Ross translates it as “passions,” while Irwin prefers “feelings.” While these translations all capture a sense of what is being expressed, none captures a broader idea linked to the ontological status of virtue as a particular type of accident, as an accidental property. My choice of the term “affection” is an attempt to better capture the ontological correlate of “action” (such as found in the *Categories*) while also being a plausible term to use in the context of the *Ethics*.

<sup>186</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1105b20-21.

<sup>187</sup> Cf., e.g., Aristotle, *Met.*, 1022b and *NE* 1103a.

therefore, in the appropriate performance of an activity? Some crafts, however, seem to be restricted, as Buridan notes. Here, we can think of witchcraft or necromancy as sorts of crafts which were prohibited or strictly limited in the Middle Ages. If there are cases where we set limits to certain crafts or even forbid that they be exercised, and if virtues ought not to be curtailed or prohibited, this must be an indication that craft is not a virtue.

Moreover, according to Aristotle, virtues dispose us to carry out our doings and makings in a good manner (§3), meaning that virtues dispose us to two kinds of things: (a) to good action as an activity, and (b) to good work as an effect of that activity. But craft does not seem to comply with the first kind of disposition. It seems to produce good work, in the sense that it can cause the final product of the work to be good – but that says nothing about the manner in which that work has been carried out. Craft, unlike virtue, whose value depends on the agent and on how an activity is brought about, is valued for its resulting work, the products of its making. We can use craft to aptly perform actions aiming at bad ends, or we can use craft to carry out actions while, for instance, disregarding the counsel of prudence or ignoring the *recta ratio*. That is why we call someone who builds firm and good houses a skilled housebuilder (i.e., skilled or virtuous with regards to the *ars domificatoria*), e.g., regardless of their occasionally (or often) acting in a bad manner in general. In those cases, craft does not seem to dictate anything at all about how one acts or ought to act, or about how an activity is to be carried out; it only refers to the final product of the activity. We can also think of a skilled proponent of the *ars oratoria*, writing an undeserved encomium. The writing can be considered good in the sense that it conforms to the rules of good prose composition (grammar, syntax, style etc.) and that it manages to leave its recipient with a sense of satisfaction, self-confidence and self-respect, albeit false. The work of the craft as an effect has thus been achieved, but we can still say the orator has acted badly, for flattery would hardly be considered a good thing, one to which we

ought to aspire and be disposed to. In writing undeserved accolades, possibly for some ulterior benefit, the writer is likely acting against the counsel of prudence or against some moral virtue (to wit, justice and truthfulness). In that sense, craft does not seem to qualify as a virtue according to the conditions proposed by Aristotle (1105a), namely that the agent act with knowledge, deliberately choose the action for itself (and not, say, in light of some ulterior gain nor by coercion), and that the action come from some sort of settled disposition.

This is how we come to the fourth objection presented in Buridan's *quæstio* (§4). Beyond the case of the rhetorician mentioned above, the difference between a craft and a virtue seems to be clearly observed in the case of skilled craftsmen and ingenious persons, who are considered good in relation to the things they make and produce, but who are not necessarily seen as good people absolutely, or might even be seen as bad people overall, for the way they act in general. It would seem that they might be good *secundum quid*, i.e., specifically pertaining to that one aspect in which they are skilled, but not good *simpliciter*, i.e. absolutely, concerning the whole of their being human. Thus, again, the craft or skillset by which we can be called good at something but not a good person in general does not seem to meet the threshold of virtue. Suffice it to think of Pheidias and, on the one hand, his statue of Zeus at Olympia, considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world and, on the other, his alleged theft of gold and supposed impiety.<sup>188</sup> Although Pheidias might thus be portrayed as an extremely *skilled or virtuous sculptor*, would he be called a *virtuous human being*? That does not seem to be the case. Thus, according to this line of reasoning, craft cannot qualify as a virtue.

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<sup>188</sup> The accounts of the accusations made against Pheidias and of their legitimacy vary, but here they are taken at face-value for the sake of the example.

Now, even if we grant, on account of what has been said above, that craft is not really a virtue, we could still say that there could be a certain virtue or vice in the use of craft (§5),<sup>189</sup> in the sense that there might be an excellence or a badness stemming from a production from craft. That is to say, although the conditions as to what counts as a virtue proposed by Aristotle are not *necessarily* fulfilled by craft on its own, they *could* be fulfilled in specific instances of a production from craft, when a virtue is added to it (and not a vice, of course), meaning that the virtue of craft is in its use and not in the very virtue. And then the last of the objections faced by Buridan surfaces, for although Aristotle says that there is a virtue in the use of craft,<sup>190</sup> he also says “there is no virtue [in the use] of a virtue, for this would go on infinitely” (§5); thus, craft cannot qualify as a virtue. This objection tracks an objection found in Aquinas’ treatment of the issue: “[...] there is no virtue of a virtue. But ‘there is a virtue of craft,’ according to the Philosopher [1104b]. Therefore, craft is not a virtue.”<sup>191</sup> Since Aristotle claims that there cannot be a virtue of a virtue, as this would lead to an infinite regress, and, according to Aristotle, there is indeed a virtue of craft, that is an indication that craft cannot be a virtue. And thus, we come to the end of the objections, which seem to give Buridan much to contend with.

### 3.2.2.2 Buridan’s arguments that craft is a virtue

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<sup>189</sup> To clarify this issue of “*virtus virtutis*,” in my translation and commentary I am relying on Irwin’s translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* for what he supplies in 1140b22-24 to make sense of “...ἀλλὰ μὴν τέχνης μὲν ἔστιν ἀρετή...,” i.e. “[...] there is a virtue <or vice in the use of> craft [...]” (Irwin (2019), p. 106).

<sup>190</sup> *EN* VI, 5. 1140b22.

<sup>191</sup> Aquinas, *ST* I-II, q. 57, a. 3 (obj. 2), trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, with minor changes.

Although the arguments above might seem plausible at first and a lot of them rely on the interpretation of the authority of Aristotle, Buridan points out that Aristotle himself suggests the opposite conclusion (§6), namely he actually suggests that craft *is* indeed a virtue. Buridan then proposes two theses to support that idea (§§7-12). “First, that every craft is a virtue of some sort. Second, that no craft is a virtue of a human being as a human being.”<sup>192</sup>

As a reaction to the first thesis, we might ask ourselves what exactly Buridan means by “a virtue *of some sort*”. Why does Buridan formulate it in that way, instead of simply saying that *craft is a virtue*? As has been said above – and as had been said in book II of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1106a) – a virtue is that by which a person becomes good, and which renders their work equally good.<sup>193</sup> So, for craft to be considered a virtue, it has to fit that description, i.e., perfect the person having it and yield good work. And it does just that, according to Buridan; therefore, it is a virtue. But *how* does craft do that? We must consider this in light of the compelling objections described in the preceding section, which seem to have demonstrated that even if craft has good work as its result, it does not necessarily perfect us – one of the two conditions is not met. Although Buridan parses out his two theses one at a time, they must be understood as necessarily intertwined. The two theses stated above could be translated into a single proposition, namely that craft is a virtue because it is the habitus of the internal work of the factive intellect. But his proposition can be understood in two ways: while the first thesis claims that craft is a virtue because it is the habitus of the *internal work* of the factive intellect, the second claims that craft is a virtue because it is the habitus of the internal work *of the factive intellect*. This difference in emphasis must now be clarified.

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<sup>192</sup> Buridan, *QNE VI*, 8, §7.

<sup>193</sup> Buridan, *QNE VI*, 8, §8.

What Buridan explains at first (§§8-9) in his *respondeo* is that craft is proper to the factive intellect (*intellectus factivus*), which it perfects (§8). In fact, the work of the factive intellect is twofold. Internally, it concerns judgments about things that can be made (*factibilia*) in view of good work that is somehow related to the truth. And craft actually determines the factive intellect to this truth. Externally, the work of the factive intellect derives from the internal work, which ultimately means that the work of the factive intellect is dependent on craft either way: immediately, when it is internal; and mediately through the internal aspect, when it is external – for the goodness of the external work begins in the goodness (and truth-directedness) of the internal work.<sup>194</sup>

It is in our proper understanding of the structure of craft and how it relates to the intellect that we can fully grasp the sense in which it is an intellectual virtue. When we think about the *artes*, it is usual to observe in the scholastic framework that some are called mechanical and some are called liberal. The former are those whose end is work, “effection,” leading to the accomplishment of an external work (in our example of the *ars domificatoria*, the external work accomplished would be a house), and the latter are those whose end is activity,<sup>195</sup> leading to internal work, for instance, truth. The subject of the so-called liberal (or “freeborn”) *artes* is some agent’s intellect, which is directed to some object. This object, in turn, is something contingent and mutable. The internal work of craft is thus to refer that intellect to the true and good, directing the agent in their work with right reason. Although the internal work of craft might seem worthier of the name “virtue,” whereas the external work could be compared to the work of chance (in that it may or may not follow what is proposed by its internal correlate), that is not really the case. First because, whereas the effects of mere chance are fleeting, in

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<sup>194</sup> Buridan, *QNE* VI, 8, §8.

<sup>195</sup> The distinction between “effection” and “activity” concerns particular aspects of an operation. The first one refers to what properly pertains to craft, and the other refers to the kind of operation more commonly associated with prudence, their pre-operative correlates being the *factibilia* and *agibilia*, respectively.

both kinds of *artes* something remains, firmly: the transformation of the material object in the mechanical craft in one case and the disposition to being directed to the right kind of intellectual activity in the case of the liberal arts, whereby we acquire a mental habitus directing us to reason truly. And second because the external work requires the internal work, and is thus likewise mediated by and requires its truth-directedness.

Thus, craft, regardless of its being taken as an *ars mechanica* or an *ars liberalis*, is involved in the perfection and truth-aiming of the factive intellect. And this brings us to another standard definition of virtue which we find in other questions if one were to systematically examine the whole of Buridan's colossal commentary on the *Ethics*: that virtue is also defined as being the cause of the best work of which a power is capable.<sup>196</sup> If, along with that, we consider what has just been said about the factive intellect – i.e., that it says the truth about things that can be made – then craft seems to determine the (factive) intellect, directing it to its best work.<sup>197</sup> Thus, it would fulfil the two conditions mentioned above and qualify as a virtue of some sort, with respect to its internal work.

The second thesis (§§10-12), which, as I had suggested, presents itself as a sort of complementary reiteration of the first, helps us further understand why craft is a virtue *of some sort*, and not simply a virtue without further qualification, and how it can still be counted among human virtues even if it is not a virtue of humans *qua* humans. Here, Buridan turns to book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1152b) and to the distinction between human beings who are good *secundum quid* and those who are good *simpliciter*. Indeed, as we have seen, craft does not make humans good without qualification. It seems to only make good craftspeople or artisans, for even through the

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<sup>196</sup> Cf., for instance, Buridan, *QNE* VI, 9 §11, and *QNE* VII, 5: “Item, sciendum est quod virtus dupliciter accipitur: uno modo proprie, scilicet pro habitu perfecto, videlicet *inclinante et determinante potentiam ad optimum opus in quod ipsa potest*; alio modo large, pro quolibet habitu inclinante et determinante potentiam ad opera laudabilia.” (Buridan (1637), p. 581, emphasis mine). This idea can be originally traced back to Aristotle, *EE*, 1218b.

<sup>197</sup> Buridan, *QNE* VI, 8, §9.

craft of building, as Buridan says, one can build a house badly on purpose, or one can build houses which are good, firm and beautiful, but for bad reasons and/or with bad aims.<sup>198</sup> Here we can think of a contractor commissioned to build concentration camps knowingly: even if the buildings perfectly suit their purpose and follow the tenets of good architecture and engineering, the builder might not be considered a virtuous human being without qualification. In this sense, because it is only concerned with the final product and not with the practice itself, craft does not seem to qualify as a virtue quite in the same sense as the other four intellectual virtues, or any of the moral virtues.

Moreover, virtues are directed to the best work of which agents or those agents' powers are capable, as has been said above. But craft is only about lowly things (and not about acting – and the *agibilia* – as is proper of *prudentia* and the moral virtues, neither about contemplating, as is proper of *scientia*, *intellectus* and *sapientia*).<sup>199</sup> In addition, craft acts on the factive intellect, which is also inferior in comparison to the active (or operative) and the speculative intellect to which those four other virtues are connected. Now, a virtue, understood as an excellence, ought not to be directed to the lowest or least worthy of our parts, but, instead, to our noblest part, the part by which we are named by metonymy.<sup>200</sup> Once again, craft does not seem to qualify as a virtue quite in the same sense as them, for it only pertains to our non-essential parts. As Buridan explains it in §12, a virtue of a part cannot always be conflated with a virtue of the whole. He acknowledges that we ought not to call those virtuous dispositions which do not concern the whole human being but only particular parts – such as the eye or the hand – habitus that make us good human beings *simpliciter*, except for when the part concerned is its main part, namely, the contemplative intellect in the case of humans. Hence, because craft refers to an inferior or less worthy part of our soul, it does qualify as an intellectual virtue, only not a virtue of a human being *as a human being*. When

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<sup>198</sup> Buridan, *QNE VI*, 8, §10.

<sup>199</sup> Buridan, *QNE VI*, 8, § 11.

<sup>200</sup> Buridan, *QNE VI*, 8, § 12.

we say that craft is a virtue, it is thus not a virtue of the human being as a whole, but a virtue of the factive intellect, and although it is not a virtue of humans “*secundum quod homo*,”<sup>201</sup> it is still a virtue.

This is a point where Buridan and Aquinas are at odds with one another. For Buridan, *ars* is somewhat a minor virtue because it is only a virtue of the factive intellect, and needs the aid of another virtue for it to count as a virtue of a human being qua human being. And the virtues which could have this supplementary role are moral virtues, i.e., the virtues pertaining to the appetitive part of the soul, or prudence, which is the intellectual virtue acting as the manager of moral virtues. For Aquinas, on the other hand, craft and the appetite are in no way related. According to him,

[craft] is nothing but “the right reason about certain works to be made.” And yet the good of these things depends, not on a human’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. Craft, therefore, properly speaking, is an operative habit [*sic*]<sup>202</sup>.<sup>203</sup>

For Aquinas, craft does not at all pertain to the appetite. The virtue of craft resides simply in the effection and has no bearing beyond the factive intellect. For Buridan, however, there is a link between the craft and the appetite, albeit not a necessary or determining one, as he makes clear in his reply to the third objection, when he says that “craft results in the good of the internal work of the factive intellect, but does not perfectly determine the external work, nor its appetite, to be directed to the good

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<sup>201</sup> Buridan, *QNE* VI, 8, §7.

<sup>202</sup> Although Aquinas seems to conflate operative and factive habitus here in the *ST* (following the conflation of *intellectus agens* and *intellectus factivus*), in his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* he takes into account the distinction between the two, namely that the operative intellect deals with moral choices whereas the factive intellect, properly concerned with *ars* and the *habitus factivus*, in dealing with the making of things, represents the lowest part of the intellect. Cf. Aquinas, *Ethicorum ad Nicomachum*, lib. VI, lectio III (in: *Deus, Homo, Ethica*, pp. 857-858).

<sup>203</sup> Aquinas, *ST* I-II, q. 57, a. 3, *respondeo* (Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, with minor changes).

without qualification. Rather, to do that it requires a virtue, as has been said.”<sup>204</sup> From Buridan’s point of view, although craft is a virtue of the internal work of the factive intellect,<sup>205</sup> in order for it to be mainly associated with the agent’s actual production – i.e., with the external things made or produced – and for it to be an operative habitus, it must be able to guide the external work of the factive intellect and, thence, engage with the appetite.

But Aquinas expands on his own view, reinforcing the strict separation between *ars* and the appetitive power:

[Even if it is an operative or factive habit, craft] 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 they be joyful or angry: even as neither does this matter in a craftsman, as we have observed. And so craft has the nature of a virtue in the same way as the speculative habits, in so far, to wit, as neither craft 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.<sup>206</sup>

For the Angelic Doctor, thus, craft is a factive habitus which has in common with the speculative habitus – and is therefore considered amongst them – the fact that it makes it easier for the factive intellect to act promptly regarding its objects, but that is independent of the practical or moral consideration about that habitus being used in an optimal manner, one which perfects the appetite. For Buridan, however, you can have it both ways, i.e., craft can be an intellectual virtue and it can be relevant to the appetite. This is precisely why, for the Picardian arts master, craft and prudence have this peculiar status among intellectual virtues in that although they originate in the intellect,

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<sup>204</sup> Buridan, *QNE VI*, 8, § 16.

<sup>205</sup> Buridan, *QNE VI*, 8, §8.

<sup>206</sup> Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 57, a. 3, *respondeo* (Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, with minor changes, italics mine).

both are said to be habituated in a way that is similar to the virtues of the appetite.<sup>207</sup> In this broader sense, i.e., considered in its appetitive bearing and habituated in the manner of appetitive virtues, craft as a virtue of humans qua humans does not merely require that one put to work a certain skillset that follows the canon of a particular mechanical art, for instance, but that this skillset be put to work with right reason taken as a measure of good work in general, and not merely good craftsmanship. With this moral aspect aside – which only applies to a broad consideration of craft, understood in conjunction with a moral virtue or prudence – when we consider craft alone, in its purest sense, it is not only to be counted amongst virtues in general but, more specifically, as noted, amongst intellectual virtues because it originates in the human intellect. Thus, craft is a virtue of some sort, i.e., a virtue *of the factive intellect*, even if it cannot be *stricto sensu* labeled a virtue of human beings qua human beings.

### 3.2.2.3 Buridan's replies to the objections

Although we now have a grasp of Buridan's theses on the matter, we still ought to deal with the set of arguments presented in the beginning, aiming to deny that crafts are virtues. In §§14-18, Buridan does just that.

As a reply to the first objection (§1), we have the idea (§14) that a power, initially, can be directed to one of two opposites. But a craft always judges truly and well, so it is only directed toward truth and goodness. Because of that, craft cannot be considered a power, and it must rather be taken as a virtue. There is no such a thing as a "bad craft" according to Buridan. Here, it may help to look at Aquinas' consideration that

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<sup>207</sup> Cf. Buridan, *QNE* VI, 1, §24.

*[w]hen anyone endowed with a craft produces bad workmanship, this is not the work of that craft, in fact it is contrary to the craft: 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, so it is with craft: 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 craft.<sup>208</sup>*

Although we have seen excerpts where Buridan disagrees with Aquinas, they concur on the fact that craft cannot be ordered to a bad end on its own. Bad workmanship is, unlike the objection suggests, contrary to craft,<sup>209</sup> and not the result of craft as a power which got swayed in the bad direction. What Buridan explains is that in its *internal* operation (as a virtue) craft always judges well and truly about the *factibilia*. If that internal act of judgment results in an equally good and truthful external operation, this creates a truth-oriented settled disposition (*habitus*) of craft, i.e. once the intellect is directed and an act is accomplished, that act leaves a trace in the agent, disposing them to act in a similar manner in similar circumstances. That is fundamentally the work of a disposition, not that of a power. Now, insofar as it needs to judge truly internally, as has been said, and then put to work externally, Buridan will add in a way that is reminiscent of Aquinas' excerpt just above that craft requires the aid of a virtue (§14). What Buridan is qualifying here is that it is only with respect to its *external* work that craft is directed to opposites. But it is with respect to its internal work that it is called a craft. Thus, two different things are being referenced here. Buridan can thus qualify Aristotle's assertion that crafts are powers (*Met.* 1046b): properly speaking, crafts are *habitus*. They can, however, be called powers, in a less strict sense, insofar as, by themselves and with respect to the external work, they can sway toward the good and the bad – just as medicine can be used to heal or to kill. It is in that sense that they

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<sup>208</sup> Aquinas *ST* I-II, q. 57, a. 3, ad 1 (Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, with minor changes, italics mine).

<sup>209</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *EN*, 1140a.

require, as suggested by Aquinas, an additional virtue guiding it to the right reason. In a certain sense, thus, one could say there is a virtue of craft insofar as once its external work is aided by prudence or one of the moral virtues, the agent becomes disposed to act in one way.

To the second objection (§2), claiming that no virtue is forbidden but some crafts are deliberately prohibited – thus, that crafts cannot all be virtues – Buridan replies (§15) that restrictions are not imposed on crafts as virtues per se, for, as we have seen, there is no such thing as a “bad craft.” Prohibitions are set, instead, to whatever might make humans act in a vicious or malicious manner. For instance, if we must set limits to the practice of medicine, it is not because the craft which is the result of the practice of medicine might be bad, but rather because this practice, if misused, might end up being harmful and its habitus might end up leaving a trace on the individual inclining them to doings that tend to badness rather than the good, creating, rather, a vice. What we are forbidding, thus, when we impose restrictions on craft, is not the virtue itself, but rather the human behaviour, i.e., the external operation, which could lead to vice.

Buridan’s reply (§16) to the third objection (§3) has been explained in the previous section, when, in opposition to Aquinas’ understanding of the role of craft in the intellect and its absolute separation from the appetite, we described Buridan’s description of the relation between the internal and external work of the factive intellect and its possible effects of the appetite.<sup>210</sup> What is worth adding here is that craft is necessary but not sufficient to direct us, as human beings, to the good absolutely. In order to do that, as the responses to the objections above have suggested, craft requires something else, another virtue, to actually guide it, externally, towards its good end. That is to say that if the external work perfectly conforms to the internal work of the

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<sup>210</sup> For Buridan’s text, cf. *QNE* VI, 8, §16.

factive intellect, a disposition could be formed in the agent, prompting them to act in a similar manner in similar circumstances. However, the external work does not necessarily conform to the internal work. In fact, there are cases where the external work is not virtuous even if it conforms to the internal work. And this is because the ultimate good aimed at in the operations of a virtuous agent come from their moral judgment, and not merely from the operations of the factive intellect. So, a certain understanding of the good must accompany the agent's reasoning in cases of virtuous actions – and this is the sense in which craft requires a virtue. However, craft is still a key, necessary virtue in that no skilled work can be performed by another virtue alone, without craft.

In his reply to the fourth argument (§4), Buridan recalls that it has been rightly shown that “craft is not a virtue of humans as humans,” (§17) as we have seen in the second part of his response to the main question (in the second half of the previous section). Craft must then be understood merely as a virtue of the factive intellect and not as a virtue of humans qua human.

Finally, in response to the fifth argument (§5) claiming that craft is not a virtue, he says (§18), recalling and expanding on a key aspect from his reply to the first argument, that with respect to its internal work, craft guides the intellect to judge truly. In that sense, it is a virtue and because, indeed, there is no virtue of a virtue, in that same sense, one cannot say there is a virtue of craft. However, when its external work is concerned, craft needs another (moral or practical) virtue, so that it can be ordered to the good. With regards to its external work, in its being able to waver between opposites, craft acts as a power, as it were, and it is in that sense that one could say that there is a virtue of craft, as this would be somewhat tantamount to saying that there is a virtue of a power, which would not entail the infinite regress denounced by the objection.

### 3.3.1 Nona questio | Question nine

Utrum prudentia sit virtus intellectualis

Whether prudence in an intellectual virtue

[1] Nono queritur utrum prudentia sit virtus intellectualis. [1] Ninth, we ask whether prudence is an intellectual virtue.

[2] Et arguitur quod non: quia habitus intellectuales videntur posse amitti per oblivionem sed “prudentia non est oblivio”, ut dicit Aristoteles etc. [2] And it is argued that it is not, because intellectual *habitus* seem to be able to be lost by forgetting, but “there is no forgetfulness of prudence,”<sup>211</sup> as Aristotle says etc.

[3] Item “virtutes morales distinguntur contra intellectuales” secundo huius. Sed prudentia videtur esse virtus moralis auctoritate Seneca, quod simul determinavit de temperantia et prudentia, fortitudine et iustitia tanquam prudentia esset virtus moralis, sicut et alie tres. [3] Also, “moral virtues are distinguished from intellectual virtues”<sup>212</sup> in the second [book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*]. But prudence seems to be a moral virtue on the authority of Seneca, because he dealt with temperance and prudence, courage and justice at the same time,<sup>213</sup> as if prudence were a moral virtue just like the other three.

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<sup>211</sup> Aristotle, *EN* VI, 1140b29-30: “But yet Prudence is not a rational quality merely, as shown by the fact that a purely rational faculty can be forgotten, whereas a failure in Prudence is not a mere lapse of memory.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 483: “Signum autem quoniam oblivion talis quidem habitus est, *prudentia* autem non est.”

<sup>212</sup> Aristotle, *EN* II, 1103a14-15: “Virtue being, as we have seen, of two kinds, intellectual and moral [...]” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 395: “Dicimus enim harum has quidem intellectuales, has autem morales.”

<sup>213</sup> Cf. Seneca, *De virtutibus cardinalibus*.

[4] Et confirmatur quia videtur quod ad moralem non pertineat principaliter determinare de virtutibus nisi de moralibus et si quis de aliis determinet, hoc est intentione secundaria, prout scilicet secundum conuenientiam et differentiam virtutum moralium ad alias virtutes innotescunt nobis virtutes morales. Sed omnes morales de prudentia determinauerunt; ergo ipsa est virtus moralis.

[4] And this is confirmed because it seems that it does not pertain to morality to mainly deal with virtues, unless they are moral virtues, and that if one deals with other virtues, that is due to a secondary intention, to the extent that moral virtues become known to us according to the similarity and difference of moral virtues to other virtues. But all moral philosophers dealt with prudence. Therefore, prudence is a moral virtue.

[5] Item Aristoteles, volens ostendere quod suspicio et opinio non sunt virtutes, adducit istud medium quod “suspicionem et opinionem contingit falsum dicere”, igitur ille habitus non est virtus quo contingit falsum dicere. Sed habitu prudentie contingit falsum dicere, videlicet propter invincibilem alicuius circumstantie ignorantiam quod etiam apparet de legislatoribus qui secundum prudentiam leges ferre videntur. Et tamen aliquando leges

[5] Also, Aristotle, wishing to make clear that conjecture and opinion are not virtues, introduces the middle premise that “conjecture and opinion sometimes lead to speaking falsely,”<sup>214</sup> and therefore, that a *habitus* which sometimes leads to speaking falsely is not a virtue. But the *habitus* of prudence sometimes leads to speaking falsely; for instance, because of an invincible ignorance of some circumstance, which is also apparent in the case of those legislators who seem to legislate according to prudence.

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<sup>214</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1139b17: “conception and opinion are capable of error.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 480: “...suspicionem enim et opinionem, contingit falsum dicere.”

fuerunt universaliter, tamen “non est possibile recte dicere uniuersaliter”, sicut dicit Aristoteles in quinto huius. At times, however, laws were formulated universally where, nevertheless, “it is not possible to speak correctly in a universal way,”<sup>215</sup> as Aristotle says in the fifth [book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*].

[6] Et iterum quia habitu iudicante de his que latent contingit falsum dicere. Prudentia autem sepe iudicat de his que latent, quoniam “prudentia est circa singularia et contingentia” ut dicitur in hoc sexto. Constat autem quod non omnia singularia circa que ipsa iudicat sunt in presentia sensus, ut si prudentia ratiocinetur de inimicis inuadendis vel repellendis non oportet inimicos esse presentes: “sed contingentia (cum sunt extra sensum) latent utrum sunt aut non sunt”, sicut dicit Aristoteles in hoc sexto. Et similiter undecimo Metaphysice dicit Aristoteles et [6] And again, because the *habitus* that judges those things which escape notice sometimes leads to speaking falsely, and prudence often judges about things that escape notice, given that “prudence is about singular and contingent things,”<sup>216</sup> as is said in the sixth book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*]. And it is clear that not all singular things about which prudence judges are present to the senses, as, if prudence were to reason about enemies invading or fleeing, it would not be necessary that the enemies be present; “but contingent things, when they are beyond the senses, escape notice whether they exist or not,”<sup>217</sup> as Aristotle says in the sixth book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*].

<sup>215</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1137b14-15: “[...] yet there are cases which it is not possible to cover in a general statement.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 474: “...lex quidem universaliter omnis, de quibusdam autem non possibile est recte dicere universaliter.”

<sup>216</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1141b15-16: “Nor is Prudence a knowledge of general principles only: it must also take account of particular facts, since it is concerned with action, and action deals with particular things.” (Transl. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), pp. 484-485: “Neque est prudentia universalium solum, set oportet et singularia cognoscere; active enim, accio autem circa singularia.”

<sup>217</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1139b21-22: “[...] when a thing that can vary is beyond the range of our observation, we do not know whether it exists or not.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 480: “...contingentia autem aliter cum extra speculari fiant *latenter*, si sunt vel non *sunt*...”

Commentator quod “singularia cum recedunt a sensu possunt corrumpi”. Likewise, Aristotle and the Commentator say in the eleventh book of the *Metaphysics* that “singulars, when they withdraw from the senses, can be corrupted.”<sup>218</sup> Therefore, Ideo non remanebit de his certa cognitio sed estimatio tantum. about them no certain cognition remains, but only an estimation.

[7] Item “opinio et suspicio non sunt virtutes” ut dicit Aristoteles, sed prudentia sepe non transcendit certitudinem opinionis aut suspicionis: quod patet, quia iustus iudex nullum fert iudicium nisi prius determinatum per prudentiam et conclusum, quandoque tamen iudex ad iudicii determinationem nullas habet nisi probabiles vel suspicabiles coniecturas solam opinionem vel suspicionem generantes. Ideo etc. [7] Besides, “opinion and conjecture are not virtues,”<sup>219</sup> as Aristotle says, but prudence often does not transcend the certitude of opinion or that of conjecture, which is clear because the just judge makes no judgment unless it has been determined and concluded beforehand by prudence; yet, sometimes the judge has nothing to determine his judgment, except for probable or supposable conjectures which generate only opinion and conjecture. Therefore, etc.

[8] Oppositum dicit Aristoteles hic et in principio Magnorum Moraliū. [8] Aristotle says the opposite here [in the *Nicomachean Ethics*]<sup>220</sup> and in the beginning of the *Magna Moralia*.<sup>221</sup>

<sup>218</sup> Actually: Aristotle, *Met.* VII, 1040a3-4: “For things which perish are obscure to those who have knowledge of them when they are removed from the sphere of their perception [...]” (Trans. H. Tredennick, with minor changes).

<sup>219</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *EN* VI, 1139b17.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. esp. Aristotle, *EN* VI, 1139b25-1140b29.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *MM* I, 1185b6 and 1197a2-20.

[9] Dicendum est primo quod prudentia est habitus intellectualis. Secundo quod ipsa est virtus. [9] It should first be said that prudence is an intellectual *habitus*. Secondly, it should be said that it is a virtue.

[10] Primum patet quia per prudentiam nihil aliud intelligimus quam habitum determinantem animam ad verum dicendum circa agibilia, sed verum dicere spectat ad intellectum non ad appetitum seu aliam anime potentiam. Ideo etc. [10] The first point is clear because by “prudence” we understand nothing other than the *habitus* determining the soul to say the truth about how we can act, but saying the truth concerns the understanding not the appetite nor another power of the soul. Therefore, etc.

[11] Secunda conclusio probatur quia omnis habitus determinans potentiam aliquam ad eius opus optimum est virtus illius potentie, “virtus” enim “attenditur secundum maximum in quod potentia potest”, ut dicitur primo de Caelo. Ideo etiam dicitur septimo Physicorum quod “virtus est dispositio perfecti ad optimum”, scilicet ad optimum (eius) opus, sed quedam anime potentia est intellectus practicus seu activus, et prudentia [11] The second conclusion is proved because every *habitus* determining a certain power to its best work is the virtue of that power, for a “virtue is directed to a certain power the best it can,”<sup>222</sup> as it is said in the first book of *On the Heavens*. Therefore, also in the seventh book of the *Physics* it is said that “a virtue is a disposition of the perfect to the best,”<sup>223</sup> namely to the best work of a power. And the practical or active intellect is a certain power of the soul, and prudence determines it [i.e. the intellect] to its best

<sup>222</sup> Aristotle, *DC* I, 18-29: “[...] possibility in the strict sense must be defined with reference to the maximum aimed at.” (Trans. W. K. C. Guthrie).

<sup>223</sup> Aristotle, *Phys.* VII, 245a13-16: “[...] excellence is a kind of perfection, since a thing is said to be perfect when it has acquired its appropriate excellence, for it is then in most complete conformity to its own nature [...]” (Trans. P. H. Wicksteed & F. M. Cornford).

determinat ipsum ad eius optimum work and, that is, to reason correctly about opus, scilicet ad recte ratiocinandum what can be done and to say the truth about circa agibilia, et vere dicendum de eis it as much as it is possible. Therefore, prout est possibile. Ergo prudentia est prudence is a virtue. virtus.

[12] Propter solutionem prime [12] By means of a solution to the first rationis sciendum est quod ex hoc argument, it should be known from this that obliuio circa quosdam intellectuales forgetfulness about certain intellectual habitus contingere videtur: quia tales *habitus* seems to happen, because such habitus non sepe transeunt in actuale *habitus* do not often turn into actual deeds. opus: geometre enim non obliuiscitur For the geometer does not forget geometry if geometriam si sepe circa he often examines geometrical things, but it geometricalia speculetur. Possibile is possible, while having some speculative autem est ut habens aliquam knowledge or some craft, not to take it into speculativam scientiam vel aliquam account often. For example, it is possible for artem non sepe consideret circa illam. a geometer or for a builder to become a Verbi gratia geometer vel merchant and to abandon all consideration of domificator possibile est ut fiat the work of housebuilding or geometry. That mercator et totius opus domorum vel is why forgetting happens more easily in this geometrie considerationem relinquat. case. But prudence is connected to moral Propter quod faciliter in his accidit virtues by a necessary connection, as can be obliuio. Sed prudentia connexa est said, and it is active about objects of all virtutibus moralibus necessaria moral virtues. That is why it is necessary for connexione sicut dicitur potest et est the prudent person to operate according to activa circa obiecta omnium virtue continuously throughout her whole moralium virtutum. Propter quod life, unless perhaps this is hindered by an necesse est prudentem operari illness which takes away the use of reason.

continue secundum virtutem per totam vitam, nisi forte prohibeatur infirmitate tollente usum rationis. Adsunt enim semper nobis obiecta prudentie et moralium virtutum, circa que oportet operari et exercere opera prudentie et virtutum moralium. Non est autem possibile virtuosum non operari bene quandocumque oportet si potest: quia non esset virtuosus. Hec est enim propria ratio virtuti quod ipsa semper operamur quod oportet et quando, sic de aliis circumstantiis. Patet igitur quod prudentie non est obliuio, non ex eo quod non sit habitus intellectualis, sed ex eo quod necesse est prudentem continue secundum eam operari. Hanc enim rationem dedit Aristoteles secundo huius: de permanentia virtutum et suarum operationum “sunt” enim “permanentiores (ut dicit) disciplinis et specialiter honorabilissime, propter maxime et

For the objects of prudence and of moral virtues are always present to us, objects in accordance to which it is right for us to act and exercise the work of prudence and moral virtues. And it is not possible for the virtuous person not to act well whenever it is right if they can, because it would not be virtuous. For that is the very idea of virtue: because, through it, we always do what is fitting when it is fitting, and likewise for other circumstances. It is therefore clear that there is no forgetting of prudence, not because it is not an intellectual *habitus*, but because it is necessary for a prudent person to act continuously according to prudence. Indeed, Aristotle gives this explanation on the permanence of virtues and their operations in the second [book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*], namely: “They are more lasting,” as he says, “and nobler than the disciplines, on account of their being more intense and on account of people continually living a happy life according to them,”<sup>224</sup> for this argument

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<sup>224</sup> Aristotle, *EN* II, 1100b12-17: “[...] none of man’s functions possess the quality of permanence so fully as the activities in conformity with virtue: they appear to be more lasting even than our knowledge of particular sciences. And among these activities themselves those which are highest in the scale of values are the more lasting, because they most fully and continuously occupy the lives of the supremely happy [...]” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 389: “... permanentiores enim et disciplinis *hec* videntur esse; earundem autem honorabilissime permanentiores propter maxime et maxime continue vivere in ipsis beatos.”

maxime vivere in ipsis continue is similar to the one that there is not a  
 beatos” hec enim assignatur ratio eius possibility of forgetting about it.  
 quod est non fieri circa ipsa  
 obliuionem.

[13] Ad primam igitur rationem [13] Therefore, to the first argument, it  
 dicendum est quod prudentia non est should be said that prudence is not a moral  
 virtus moralis prout morales contra virtue insofar as moral virtues are  
 intellectuales distinguuntur sed distinguished from intellectual virtues, but  
 concedi potest moralis secundum prudence can be considered to be a moral  
 connexionem, quia moralibus virtue by connection, because it is  
 necessario connexa est. Potest etiam necessarily connected to moral virtues. It can  
 concedi moralis directive quia dirigit even be considered to be moral in a directive  
 omnes virtutes morales in suis way, because it guides all moral virtues in  
 operationibus; non enim inclinant their operations, for they only incline moral  
 virtutes morales nisi in id quod virtues to that which is ordered by prudence.  
 prudentia decretum est. Propter quod That is why defining prudence pertains to  
 de prudentia maxime determinare moral philosophy.  
 pertinet ad moralem.

[14] Ad aliam rationem videtur [14] To the other argument, Eustratius seems  
 Eustratius duplicem assignare to assign a twofold argument. The first is that  
 rationem. Prima est, quod “licet ars et “although sometimes craft and prudence  
 prudentia quandoque decidant a vero detach from the truth because of the variation  
 propter obiectorum contingentium of contingent objects, yet they say the truth  
 variationem, tamen ut in pluribus in most cases. And therefore, they must be  
 verum dicunt. Et ideo inter habitus counted among truthful *habitus*.”  
 veridicos reponuntur.”

[15] Sed ista solutio non videtur sufficere quoniam tunc opinio consimiliter esset habitus veridicus et esset ponenda virtus, quia (ut in pluribus) opinione verum dicimus. Item ista solutio videtur concedere quod prudentia quandoque contingat falsum dicere, quod Aristoteles negare videtur dicens “sint utique, quibus verum dicimus et nequaquam mentimur circa non contingentia vel etiam contingentia aliter habere scientia et prudentia est et sapientia et intellectus.”

[15] But this solution does not seem to suffice since, then, opinion would likewise be a truthful *habitus*, and it would be counted as a virtue since by means of opinion we say true things in most cases. Besides, this solution seems to grant that prudence sometimes leads to speaking falsely, which Aristotle seems to deny by saying that: “at any rate, those [states of mind] by which we say the truth and by no means are deceived about non-contingent or even about otherwise contingent things are knowledge, and prudence and wisdom and understanding.”<sup>225</sup>

[16] Alia solutio eius est quod “ars et prudentia quantum est ex se sunt habitus veridici. Quod autem aliquando dicant falsum non est ex eis sed ex instabilitate contingentis circa quod versantur”; dicunt enim quod “prudens semper recte et vere ratiocinatur, excidit autem a fine multotiens quem proposuit a

[16] Another solution of Eustratius’ is that “craft and prudence taken in themselves are truthful *habitus*. That they sometimes say false things is not because of what they are in themselves, but because of the instability of the contingent things that they deal with.” For they say that “the prudent person reasons correctly and truly, but they very often fail the end which they had set for themselves

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<sup>225</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1141a4-6: “If then the qualities whereby we attain truth, and are never led into falsehood, whether about things invariable or things variable, are scientific Knowledge, Prudence, Wisdom, and Intelligence [...]” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 483: “Si utique quibus verum dicimus et nequaquam mentimur circa non contingentia vel et contingencia aliter habere, scientia et prudentia est et sapientia et intellectus...”

principio non ut ipse falsum dicens, from the beginning not because they are  
 sed ut subiectis ipsis commutatis. speaking falsely, but because of a change in  
 Non igitur ille vituperandus quoniam the very subject. Therefore, they should not  
 fine non potitus est, sed laudandus be blamed for not having attained their end,  
 quidem, quoniam bene ratiocinatus but indeed they should be praised for  
 est.” Ars igitur et prudentia habitus reasoning well.”<sup>226</sup> Therefore, craft and  
 sunt secundum seipsos veridici; quod prudence are truthful *habitus* by themselves.  
 finem autem quandoque And the fact that they sometimes attain their  
 consequuntur quandoque non, end at other times not, it is not due to the  
 habituum non est, sed instabilitatis habitus, but to the instability of contingent  
 contingentis. Sic autem non est de things. It is not so for opinion. Indeed,  
 opinione. Sibi enim secundum according to it, the objects of reason are not  
 seipsam non ratione obiecti convenit, appropriate to it, as through opinion at some  
 ut ipsa quandoque falsum dicamus, time or another we say false things, which is  
 quod ex hoc apparet quia sepe falsas clear from the fact that we often have false  
 habemus opiniones circa impossibilia opinions about impossible things being  
 aliter se habere. Etiam circa deum. otherwise than they are [i.e., the opinion that  
 impossible things exist], and even about god  
 [i.e., that god does not exist].

[17] Et iterum alia solutio potest dari [17] And yet another solution can be given  
 quia virtus potentie attenditur because the virtue of a power pertains to the  
 secundum optimum opus in quod best work of which the power is capable, not  
 potentia potest non simpliciter sed without qualification, but according to what  
 secundum exigentiam obiecti et is required by the object and to the matters

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<sup>226</sup> Eustratius, *EN VI*, 19. This passage is not extant in modern editions, but is also quoted in, e.g., Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quaestiones Ordinariae*, q. 3: “Similiter etiam prudentia vere et recte ratiocinatur, excidit autem a fine quem proposuit a principio onn ut ipse falsum dicens, sed ut subjectus ipsi commutatis et transcendentibus.” (Eds. Hoffmans & Pelzer, p. 126).

circumstantiarum incidentium; non involved in the circumstances. For the virtue  
 enim attenditur oculi virtus in of the eye is not applied in perfectly  
 discernendo perfecte colores in discerning colours in the dark; on the  
 obscuro: immo quandoque maior contrary, it is applied whenever the virtue of  
 esset virtus oculi qui possit in the eyes which can perceive confused  
 obscuro percipere colores confuse colours in the dark is greater than that of the  
 quam oculi qui distingueret colores in eyes which would distinguish colours in the  
 lucido. Similiter non oportet dicere light. We cannot say, similarly, that through  
 quod maiori virtute natura producat a greater virtue nature produces a correct  
 rectum, quam monstrum; immo thing rather than a monster. On the contrary,  
 contingere potest quod maior sit it could be the case that the virtue of nature  
 virtus nature producendo monstrum is greater in producing a monster, i.e., when  
 scilicet cum rectum producere non it cannot produce something correctly,  
 potest, quia ab extrinseco impedita. because it is obstructed by something  
 Non attenditur igitur virtus nature extrinsic. Therefore, the virtue of nature does  
 in faciendo perfectum sed in faciendo not pertain to doing perfect things, but in  
 de possibilibus quod melius est doing, from possible things, that which is  
 circumstantiis contingentibus best, considering contingent circumstances.  
 attenditis. Sic etiam neque virtus nostri Thus, our intellect also does not always  
 intellectus attenditur in semper pertain to virtue judging truly what is worse  
 iudicando vere quid sit peius aut or better, or best without qualification, but in  
 melius aut melius simpliciter, sed in its truly judging what is worse or better with  
 vere iudicando quid sit peius aut respect to what is possible according to the  
 melius secundum quod est possibile thing being considered, through considered  
 secundum materiam subjectam, things which are those which are in our  
 suppositis hiis que cognoscere est in power to know, and only through that which  
 nostra potestate, et modo eo quo ea is in our power to consider. If, therefore, at  
 cogitare est in nostra potestate. Si some point a conclusion which has been

igitur conclusio inuenta per prudentialem ratiocinationem aliquando decidat a vero propter inuincibilem aliquorum in facto consistentium ignorantiam, hoc non obstat quin prudentia sit virtus activi intellectus.

[18] Et per hoc etiam respondetur ad ultimam rationem. Illo nanquam casu quamvis de agibili non possemus firmiorem habere cognitionem quam per probabiles vel suspicabiles coniecturas solam in nobis opinionem vel suspicionem generantes, tamen prudentia secundum talem noticiam concluderet hoc autem illud esse agendum vel fugiendum. Ideo non est inconueniens aliquando rationes solam opinionem vel suspicationem generantes spectare ad virtutem activi intellectus. Sed circa ea de quibus est in potestate intellectus firmam et infallibilem habere noticiam demonstratiuam, opinio vel suspicio vel alius quicumque habitus quo contingeret dicere falsum, non

[18] And with this too the last argument is replied to. In that case, insofar as we cannot have a firmer cognition about what we can do, but only a cognition by probable or supposable coniectures generating in us coniectures and opinions, prudence would still conclude according to these cognitions, that this should be done or avoided. For that reason, it is not inconvenient every now and then to consider only an opinion or a supposition generating reasons to the virtue of the active intellect. But opinion or conjecture or another *habitus* whatsoever by which it is possible to say false things about those things of which the intellect has the power to have a firm and infallible demonstrable cognition would not be virtues of the intellect, but only knowledge, understanding and wisdom [would be such virtues of the intellect].

esset virtus intellectus, sed solum That is all about this question.  
 scientia intellectus vel sapientia. Et  
 hec de questione.

### 3.3.2 Whether prudence is an intellectual virtue

In the ninth question of this sixth book of his *Ethics* commentary, Buridan starts dealing with the specific case of prudence, which will also be of particular interest to him in a number of other questions of the commentary.<sup>227</sup> Here, it is asked whether prudence is an intellectual virtue. The issue at stake here had already been alluded to in question 1:<sup>228</sup> can prudence count as an intellectual virtue if it acts as the manager of moral virtues? In question 9, Buridan broadens that discussion and takes the issue one step back, adding an examination of whether prudence can count as a virtue to begin with.

#### 3.3.2.1 Arguments showing that prudence is not an intellectual virtue

Once again, the text begins by presenting the objections, namely the reasons why one would not consider prudence to be an intellectual virtue or a virtue at all. The first objection (§2) brings up the idea that an intellectual habitus is liable to be forgotten, but one does not forget prudence. So, it would seem that prudence is not an intellectual virtue. Just think about the use of equations and/or theorems we learn in secondary

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<sup>227</sup> In book VI alone, different aspects of prudence are addressed in qq. 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, but prudence had already been the subject of significant study in Book I, for instance.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. *QNE* VI, 1, especially §4, §§18-19 and §29, as well as the previous commentary section dedicated to the discussion of that question.

school, for example. Whereas it is conceivable that we forget how to use those, it does not seem equally plausible that we forget how to act according to the precepts of practical reason – at least not in the same way.<sup>229</sup>

The second objection (§3) goes back to the issues raised in question 1, and argues, on the authority of Seneca, that instead of being labeled an intellectual virtue prudence should count as a *moral* virtue, alongside courage, temperance and justice. This can be based on passages such as this one, from Seneca's *Letters to Lucilius*: "If we had the privilege of looking into a good man's soul, oh what a fair, holy, magnificent, gracious, and shining face should we behold – radiant on the one side with justice and temperance, on another with bravery and prudence!"<sup>230</sup> as well as on Ambrose's discussion of what he calls *virtutes cardinales* in his commentary to Luke 6:20: "We know that there are four cardinal virtues, viz., temperance, justice, prudence, and fortitude."<sup>231</sup> The discussion of the cardinal virtues had become standard by Buridan's time, and prudence is oft seen represented alongside those three moral virtues in medieval art, usually in the form of a medallion-shaped picture, with each virtue depicted by a woman: prudence often portrayed with a book, justice holding scales, temperance with outstretched hands, and courage armed. This pictorial representation

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<sup>229</sup> Granted, there could be cases of atypical moral judgment following traumatic brain injury, but these are exceptional and will not be considered here, although Buridan does allude to cases where "an injury takes away the use of reason" ("[...] prohibeatur infirmitate tollente usum rationis [...]"), in *QNE* VI, 9 §12.

<sup>230</sup> Seneca, *Letters to Lucilius* CXV, 3: "Si nobis animum boni viri liceret inspicere, o quam pulchram faciem, quam sanctam, quam ex magnifico placidoque fulgentem videremus, hinc iustitia, illinc fortitudine, hinc temperantia prudentiaque lucentibus!" (Trans. M. Gummere, modified).

<sup>231</sup> As quoted by Aquinas in *ST* I II, 61 a. 1: "Sed contra est quod Ambrosius dicit super *Lucam*, exponens illud, 'Beati pauperes spiritu: Scimus virtutes esse quatuor cardinales, scilicet temperantiam, iustitiam, prudentiam, fortitudinem.'" (Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province). It is also interesting to note how Aquinas continues his *sed contra* in this question concerning whether moral virtues that should be called cardinal (or principal) virtues, namely: "Haec autem sunt virtutes morales. Ergo virtutes morales sunt cardinales." Based on this latter excerpt, we could be inclined to infer that Aquinas would then argue that prudence is a moral virtue, but he clarifies this point in his response, where he says: "Huiusmodi autem sunt virtutes morales, et inter intellectuales sola prudentia, quae etiam quodammodo moralis est secundum materiam, ut ex supra dictis patet."

is usually found on stained glass and murals in churches, for instance, as well as book illustrations.<sup>232</sup> This common-place depiction is representative of a view which is confirmed by the authority of Seneca, which we have seen above: that prudence finds a more “natural” place for itself amidst moral virtues than among intellectual virtues. Moreover (§4), as another objection points out, moral philosophy deals with moral virtues specifically, and not with virtues in general. Now, considering that all moral philosophers write about prudence, prudence should be considered not as a virtue of just any kind, but a *moral* virtue. Here, Buridan’s reference seems to be what Zupko calls “all the moral philosophers who were neither Jews nor Christians,”<sup>233</sup> more specifically, pagan philosophers associated with late Stoicism, namely Cicero and Seneca.<sup>234</sup> If those philosophers did not necessarily dedicate a lot of their writings to intellectual virtues, preferring to focus on moral virtues, and if they wrote extensively about prudence (as they did), then perhaps we should see prudence under this moral light only.

A third objection (§5) claims that, in fact, prudence is not a virtue at all, and it does so by establishing the similarities between conjecture, opinion and prudence. The reasoning here is as follows: all three (suspicion, opinion, and prudence) are considered to be *habitus*. Now, a virtue, being a perfection of a disposition, must aim at truth or at the good. So, a *habitus* which sometimes leads to speaking falsely is not a virtue. According to Aristotle, conjecture and opinion sometimes lead one to speaking falsely and, thus, are not virtues, as established in book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1139b). Those two *habitus* cannot be considered virtues because they may shy away from the

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<sup>232</sup> Cf., for instance, the Cambrai gospels, from the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, featuring an image depicting a ruler in the middle, surrounded by the four cardinal virtues: Cambrai, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS. 327, f. 16v (except that here temperance is holding a torch and a jug). These details, and a lot more on the subject of the virtues in medieval art can be found in Katzenellenbogen (1964), especially pp. 31 & ss. The Cambrai image is reproduced on p. XVII.

<sup>233</sup> Zupko (2012), p. 165.

<sup>234</sup> Cf. also: Ingham (2007), pp. 147-150.

truth because of an “invincible ignorance of some circumstance.”<sup>235</sup> But prudence could also lead someone to speaking falsely. This is apparent in the case of legislators, who use prudence to formulate universal laws even when it is not possible to make universally correct claims. In those cases, if legislators may happen to make incorrect or false claims on the base of prudence, this would mean that prudence is not a virtue. This example of the legislator reminds us of Buridan’s discussion of the distinction between *ius naturale*, natural laws common to all beings, and *ius gentium*, the positive law which only applies to humans.<sup>236</sup> Positive laws are not deductively derived from natural law, and depend on the legislator. They are not, therefore, universal nor necessary. Indeed, in an ideal scenario, Buridan points out, our souls are naturally drawn, by means of our reasoning, to accepting any positive law that is in accordance with the natural law, but there are also “those precepts which Aristotle calls ‘*iura legalia*,’ namely because they have no force by nature, but instead only because they have been established by law.”<sup>237</sup> So, much like conjecture and opinion – as well as prudence, the argument goes – these precepts of the positive law could be false. This means that prudence could also lead someone to err and to speak falsely and, just like conjecture and opinion, it should, therefore, not be considered a virtue.

Moreover (§6), prudence is often about hidden things, or things which escape notice, which contributes to the possibility of its leading someone to speaking falsely. Because prudence is about contingent and singular things and not all of these things are always present to the senses, prudence is about hidden things which may or may not presently exist. And, according to Aristotle and Averroes,<sup>238</sup> when these singulars are not present to the senses, they can be corrupted. We cannot have certain cognitions about things

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<sup>235</sup> Buridan *QNE* VI, 9, §5.

<sup>236</sup> Buridan *QNE* V, 19.

<sup>237</sup> Buridan *QNE* V, 19: “[...] illa precepta vocantur apud Aristotelem iura legalia, quia scilicet non ex natura vim habent, sed solum quia a lege posita sunt [...]” (Buridan (1637), p. 439)

<sup>238</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* VII, 1040a.

undergoing corruption, and that is why we cannot be certain about hidden things – and so we cannot have certain cognition about some of the matters that prudence deals with. And, again (§7), if prudence does not go beyond the certitude of opinion and/or conjecture, since it works from assumptions (much like a judge or a legislator, as we have seen), it would have the same status as those two: it would be a *habitus*, in the sense of an acquired disposition, but not a virtue, in the sense that it would not always aim at truth and, therefore, would not be perfective of humans.

So far, we seem to have two main sets of arguments claiming that prudence is not an intellectual virtue: one that claims it is actually a moral virtue, and another one according to which prudence is not a virtue at all.

### 3.3.2.2 *Sed contra*

On the other hand (§8), Aristotle says that prudence is an intellectual virtue in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Magna Moralia*.<sup>239</sup> Considering this, Buridan will argue (§9) that not only is prudence an intellectual *habitus*, but it is also a virtue.

### 3.3.2.3 Buridan's arguments that prudence is an intellectual virtue

First, we shall see how and why prudence is an intellectual habitus (§10). It is an intellectual habitus following the distinction established in question 1:

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<sup>239</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *EN* VI, 1139b25-1140b29 and Aristotle, *MM* I, 1185b6 and 1197a2-20.

(P1) Prudence is a habitus determining the soul to say the truth about conducts;  
 (P2) saying the truth concerns the intellect;  
 therefore, (C) prudence is an intellectual *habitus*.

Moreover, as we have also learnt from QNE VI, 1, it is an intellectual *habitus* because of where it originates as a *habitus*: its origin is not in the appetite (in which case it would be a moral virtue), nor in any other power of the soul, but rather in the intellect.<sup>240</sup> Although Buridan does not mention it here, Seneca's view would be compatible with his own. According to Zupko, in book X, *quaestio* 4, Buridan clearly states that

Seneca “knew well how to distinguish” between moral virtue and prudence, and that in “that beautiful little book of his called *On the Four Cardinal Virtues*,” Seneca (actually Martin of Braga) calls both moral virtue and prudence ‘virtues or kinds of virtue’ (*virtutes seu virtutum species*), i.e., moral virtue is a virtue of the soul qua practical appetite and prudence is a virtue of the soul qua practical intellect.<sup>241</sup>

So, even though he does talk about prudence along with other *habitus* which are moral, Seneca himself understood prudence to be part of a different kind of virtue, due to its privileged, genetic relation to the intellect and not to the appetite.

Once we have established that prudence originates in the intellect and therefore counts as an *intellectual habitus*, we have to see whether this habitus can count as a virtue.

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<sup>240</sup> Cf. QNE VI, 1.

<sup>241</sup> Zupko (2012), pp. 167.

This is how we come to the next argument (§11), which states that a virtue is a *habitus* determining a power to its best work, a disposition to the best. Now, since prudence directs the intellect (or the “practical or active intellect,” as Buridan puts it) to its best work and to say the truth about conducts, it should indeed count as a virtue, and not simply a *habitus*. Unsurprisingly, this comes from a traditional understanding of *virtus* as translating the Aristotelian idea of ἀρετή, i.e. an excellence or a *dispositio perfecti ad optimum*, as Aquinas had said,<sup>242</sup> quoting book VII of the *Physics*.<sup>243</sup>

#### 3.3.2.4 Buridan’s replies to the objections

Having stated his claim about the status of prudence as an intellectual virtue, we turn to the replies to the objections from the beginning. At first, Buridan replies to the first set of objections, i.e., those about prudence not being an intellectual virtue (§§2-4). In §12, we find the answer to the very first objection: If it were indeed the case that we can forget intellectual habitus, and if we cannot forget prudence, then prudence would not be an intellectual habitus, and, therefore, could not count as an intellectual virtue. But Buridan explains that the ability to be forgotten is not a defining feature of intellectual *habitus*. In fact, he goes on to explain, the reason why we sometimes do forget intellectual *habitus* has nothing to do with their nature, but is simply that they do not turn into actual work (“*tales habitus...non sepe transeunt in actuale opus*”), such as when one changes professions and forgets the skills they had once learnt, for want of practice. But since prudence has a necessary connection to moral virtues, it cannot be forgotten due to a lack of practice, as it is always active whenever moral virtues are concerned. Thus, a person who is prudent, always being presented with the objects of

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<sup>242</sup> Aquinas, *ST Ia IIae*, 55, 2.

<sup>243</sup> Aristotle, *Phys.* VII, 246a-247a.

prudence and of moral virtue, will always remain prudent so long as they retain their use of reason. It is in this sense that Buridan says, in §13, that prudence is not a moral virtue in the sense of the distinction between moral and intellectual virtues we have seen in the first *quæstio* of this book, but in the sense that it is a virtue which has a strong, necessary connection to other, moral virtues. More than that, as we have seen, prudence acts as a guide or directive of moral virtues, inclining them to their (best) operations. And that is also why we usually talk about prudence when we talk about morality, just as Cicero and Seneca did, as has been pointed out in the objection. Nevertheless, just because prudence is often associated with moral virtues does not mean that it is itself a moral virtue.

From §14 on Buridan starts tackling the second set of objections (those presented on §§5-7), namely the ones that conjure a likeness between the *habitus* of prudence to those of conjecture and opinion on account of their analogous contingent relation to the truth. Buridan examines three candidates for solutions to this set (§14, §16, and §17). The first two are based on Eustratius: following the first, Buridan says that because both prudence and craft are about contingent things, those two *habitus* say the truth in most cases, but not always. But, as Buridan himself notes, this solution is not satisfactory: if we play fast and loose with the truth-criterion a *habitus* has to fulfil to be an intellectual virtue, and require it to be directed at the truth *often* but *not always*, then opinion would also count as intellectual virtues – a conclusion which we want to avoid, since, according to the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1141a, and as Buridan quotes in §15), we always have truth and are never deceived about invariable or variable things through knowledge, understanding, *prudence* and wisdom. Thus, you cannot have your cake and eat it too, i.e., you cannot say that prudence sometimes leads us to speaking falsely while also saying that we always have truth through it. The second proposed solution (§16), also attributed to Eustratius, is that the reason why prudence and arts occasionally lead us to say false things is not because of their nature, but because of

the instability of their objects, which are contingent things. That is not the case for opinion, which errs not simply because of its objects, but because we do not reason well and properly through it. Through opinion, Buridan says, we could be led into saying that impossible things exist, or that God does not. And that happens in the case of opinion not because of the instability or contingency of the objects (since God and *impossibilia* are not unstable or contingent in regard to their existence), but rather because of a failure of reason, i.e. a failure in the *habitus* itself, which would mean that that *habitus* is not a perfective one and, thus, not a virtue. Prudence, in turn, is different: the *habitus* can only err because of a change in its object(s) but not because of a failure inherent to the intellectual *habitus*.

In addition to these two solutions, Buridan offer a third one (§17), which is a more nuanced version of the two Eustratian accounts. This one deals with an explanation about what a virtue is, namely a power pertaining to its best work and according to the demands of the object in a given set of circumstances. This is what Buridan parses out with the eye analogy: that virtue should not be taken absolutely or without qualification, but in a certain respect. Thus, by analogy, the virtue of the eye does not lie in its perfectly seeing colours in the dark (because this would be impossible to the human eye), but rather the virtue that can discern colours in the dark is greater than the virtue that only does this in the light. Thus, *virtus* is to be defined not according to its absolute greatest power of production, but rather according to its ability to do the best thing possible given a certain set of circumstances, i.e., virtue is relative to its object and circumstance.<sup>244</sup> The same goes for nature: when faced with some extrinsic obstruction

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<sup>244</sup> Here, one could be led to ask to what extent this analogy holds considering that one could distinguish the soul's principal powers (i.e., those which pertain to the soul as a whole) from the soul's instrumental powers (i.e., "those which assist the soul in its operations in various parts or organs of the body, such as the power of the eye to receive the species of colours and thereby, along with the common sense, to generate visual sensations" – Klima (2018), pp. 328-329, but Buridan ultimately denies that the soul is distinct from its powers – cf. *QDA* II, 5.

which would preclude it from producing something correctly, the virtue of nature lies in producing anything at all, even if it is a monstrosity, and not something *perfectly* natural. Likewise, in the case of prudence, its virtue is not in its always judging truly what is better or worse without qualification, but in judging correctly what is better or worse according to the subject matter at hand and to the things which are actually within our power to do. If the intellect fails because of some extrinsic “invincible ignorance,” that does not make prudence less a virtue, as it would still lead the intellect to perform its best job in light of the matter at hand and of what it is actually able to perform. Whatever the case may be, because prudence would still direct the intellect to perform its best work possible, it would still count as a virtue, and one of the intellect at that.

Finally, in §18, Buridan needs to further explain why and how prudence is different from conjecture and opinion, namely, why and how the former counts as an intellectual virtue whereas the latter two do not. Prudence does seem to give us a firmer cognition of our conducts than the suppositions of opinion and conjecture: prudence can still conclude a course of action to be taken from those imperfect cognitions. The failure of the power, in that case, would not be in the consideration of these conjectures, but to take them to be firm and infallible – which prudence does not. Whereas we might wrongly take conjecture and opinion to be firm, infallible knowledge, prudence only takes uncertain cognition into account as a placeholder, when firmer, more certain cognition is not available, and acts guiding other virtues accordingly, avoiding things like self-deception. Buridan does not deny that opinion and conjecture can indeed inform the understanding, but insofar as they can be false (as they do not require certainty),<sup>245</sup> they can only be considered to *belong* to the understanding, to knowledge

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<sup>245</sup> Even if opinion is taken to be a *habitus adhesivus*, alongside knowledge (cf. *QAPo.*, I, 32: “Notandum est quod scientia et opinio sunt habitus adhesivi quibus aliquis adheret sive assentit aliquibus conclusionibus.”), it is not a virtue (as opposed to *scientia*, which is one). Cf., for instance *QAPo.*, I, 2: “per hoc differt scientia ab opinione, scilicet quia scientia requirit certitudinem, quam opinio non

or to wisdom, but are not themselves virtues properly speaking, as their work depends on the work of those virtues. The case of prudence is different, because it does its own work, acting on the intellect.

Another interesting point one must consider, in light of the fact that prudence deals with singular, contingent propositions is that, as Biard points out, the premises of those propositions, although they cannot be demonstrations in the proper sense of the term, can be “the starting point for reasonings in the domain of craft and prudence, reasonings about *factibilia* or *agibilia*.”<sup>246</sup> Let us examine this in light of what Aquinas says regarding the main difference between speculative reason (i.e., speculative or contemplative knowledge, as that of metaphysics or wisdom) and practical reason (associated with prudence):<sup>247</sup>

[...] since the speculative reason is busied chiefly with the necessary things, which cannot be otherwise than they are, its proper conclusions, like the universal principles, contain the truth without fail. The practical reason, on the other hand, is busied with contingent matters, about which human actions are concerned: and consequently, although there is necessity in the general principles, the more we descend to matters of detail, the more frequently we encounter defects. Accordingly then in speculative matters truth is the same in all men, both as to principles and as to conclusions: although the truth is not known to all as regards the conclusions, but only as regards the principles which are called common notions. But in matters of action, truth or practical rectitude is not the same for all, as to matters of detail, but only as to the general principles: and where there is the same rectitude in matters of detail, it is not equally known to all.<sup>248</sup>

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requirit,” and *SL*, VIII, 4, 5, p. 111: “Et aliud ex parte nostra, scilicet quod assensus noster sit firmus, scilicet sine dubitatione seu formidine ad oppositum; et hoc etiam requiritur ad scientiam, quia assensus dubitativus et formidinalis non transcendit metas opinionis.” For further references and more details on this point cf. Biard (2012), pp. 22-30, whence the preceding references were also taken.

<sup>246</sup> Biard (2012), p. 190 (my translation).

<sup>247</sup> It is important to note, however, that *prudentialia* and *ratio practica* are connected but not synonymous, as Albert highlights in *De Bono* 443, and Aquinas in *Super Ethica* (compare *lectiones* 7 to 2 and 9 of book VI).

<sup>248</sup> Aquinas, *ST Ia IIae*, 94, 4.

The fact that there is not one single, universal standard against which practical reason or prudence can be measured must not preclude it from operating according to a certain standard. To circle back to what I had mentioned earlier, with regard to the third objection, practical reason must conform to natural law.

As we see in book V of the *Ethics* commentary, Buridan follows Aquinas and says that, just like for the understanding there are first principles which are evident to everyone (such as the principle of non-contradiction),<sup>249</sup> there are also first principles of morality, called *communissima*, which constitute the foundation of the moral order. From these principles, other principles derive, syllogistically<sup>250</sup> – and this derivation is possible precisely because of the work of prudence. Thus, the *communissima* and the principles derived from it are both part of the *iura nature*, because our souls are naturally inclined to them because they are ordered by reason. As Buridan puts it, “nothing in human acts is good and, consequently, just, except insofar as it conforms to right reason.”<sup>251</sup> Hence, the common principles of practical reason are those which we see in a standard Aristotelian framework, namely, that we seek good and avoid evil.

This is how practical reason finds its foundation: not simply from a general account of human actions, but based on a theory of moral goodness which sets goodness or beatitude as the human end. But the first principle of moral action is the natural law. Although Buridan does not explicitly establish any ties between prudence and natural law in book VI of his commentary, he does tackle the issue of natural law in book V,<sup>252</sup> just before going into considerations of the intellectual virtues.

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<sup>249</sup> We will address this issue when we examine *QNE* VI, 11, in the following section.

<sup>250</sup> Much like intellectual principles are derived, as I shall explain in my discussion of Buridan’s *QNE* 11.

<sup>251</sup> *QNE* V, 19: “[...] nihil in humanis actibus est bonum, neque per consequens iustum, nisi prout est consonum recte rationi.” (Buridan (1637), p. 439)

<sup>252</sup> A detailed discussion of Buridan’s idea of natural law can be found in García-Huidobro (2015), pp. 434-445.

Without getting into further details concerning Buridan's natural law theory, what has been said so far should account for some of the main defining issues concerning prudence, which I shall investigate in further detail in the commentary to q. 22, where I also address issues pertaining to theoretical wisdom. Now, the specifics of understanding and knowledge, the remaining two key intellectual virtues under consideration in my survey should become clearer as we look into questions 11 and 12.

#### 3.4.1 Questio undecima | Question eleven

Utrum intellectus sit virtus

Whether *intellectus* is a virtue

<p>[1] Arguitur quod non, quia intellectus est una potentia anime et virtus “non est passio nec potentia” ut dicitur secundo huius. Et si dicatur quod ibi equivocatur de intellectu quoniam intellectus aliquando capitur pro potentia intellectiva, aliquando proprio habitu principiorum per se notorum et indemonstrabilium et primo modo non est virtus, sed secundo modo, contra, quia potentia</p>	<p>[1] It is argued that it is not, because understanding is a power of the soul, and “virtue is neither a power nor an affection,”<sup>253</sup> as is said in the second book [of the <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>]. Should someone say that there is equivocation here about understanding, since “understanding” is sometimes taken for an intellectual power, and sometimes taken for a <i>habitus</i> of principles known by themselves and indemonstrable, and that in the first way it is</p>
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<sup>253</sup> Aristotle, *EN* II, 1106a12-13: “If then the virtues are neither emotions nor capacities, it remains that they are dispositions.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 402: “... neque passiones sunt virtute neque potencie...”

per se sufficienter determinata ad actum non indiget habitu sibi superaddito respectu illius actus. Sed potentia intellectiva est per se determinata sufficienter ad dicendum verum “circa prima principia in tantum quod circa ea mentiri non potest” quarto *Metaphysice*, et in secundo dicit Aristoteles: “In foribus<sup>i</sup> quis delinquet?”

not a virtue, but rather in the second, it can be replied that a power sufficiently determined by itself to an act does not need a *habitus* superadded to itself with respect to that act. But the intellective power is sufficiently determined by itself to say the truth “about the first principles insofar as it could not lie about them,”<sup>254</sup> as Aristotle says in the fourth book of the *Metaphysics*. And in the second book of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle says: “Who will miss this [proverbial] door?”<sup>255</sup>

[2] Item “circa difficile est omnis ars et virtus” secundo huius, sed verum dicere circa prima principia non est difficile cum sint per se note, ergo intellectus quo dicimus verum circa principia non est virtus.

[2] Also, “all arts and virtues are about difficult things”<sup>256</sup> according to the second book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*], but to say the truth about first principles is not difficult since they are known by themselves; therefore, understanding, by which we say the truth regarding principles, is not a virtue.

[3] Item nulla virtus inest nobis a natura sed intellectus quo verum dicit

[3] Also, we have no virtue by nature, but we have understanding – by which the soul says

<sup>254</sup> Aristotle, *Met.* IV, 1005b11-12: “[...] and the most certain principle of all is that about which one cannot be mistaken [...]” (Trans. H. Tredennick) (I thank Hakan Genc for his help in tracking this reference.).

<sup>255</sup> Aristotle, *Met.* II, 993b5: “Thus in so far as it seems that Truth is like the proverbial door which no one can miss [...]” (Trans. H. Tredennick).

<sup>256</sup> Aristotle, *EN* II, 1105a9: “[...] but virtue, like art, is constantly dealing with what is harder, since the harder the task the better is success.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 400: “Circa difficilium autem semper et ars fit et virtus; et enim bene melius in hoc.”

anima circa principia innatus est nobis a natura, unde Commentator secundo *Metaphysice* dicit quod “principia fiunt nobis naturaliter cognita”, et primo *Physicorum* dicitur quod “innata est nobis via ex notioribus nobis in notioria natura,” hec autem via non videtur aliud esse quam habitus principiorum.

what is true about principles – from birth, whence in the second book of the *Metaphysics*, the Commentator says that “principles are naturally known to us,”<sup>257</sup> and in the first book of the *Physics* it is said that “the natural way for us to do this is from what is best-known to us toward what is best known by nature,”<sup>258</sup> and this way seems to be nothing else but the *habitus* of principles.

[4] Item omnis virtus est circa quod contingit errare, ad hoc enim ponitur virtus ne potentia erret circa obiectum suum. Si igitur intellectus non possit errare non indiget virtute. Sed circa prima principia non contingit errare. Igitur etc.

[4] Also, every virtue is about something about which error is possible, for virtue is put to the task so that a power does not err about its object. If, therefore, understanding cannot err, it does not require virtue. And about first principles error is not possible. Therefore, etc.

[5] Oppositum dicit Aristoteles. Sciendum est quod omnis demonstrationis aliqua oportet esse principia indemonstrabilia que tamen oportet esse scita et credita magis quam conclusiones demonstrationum: sicut dictum est in

[5] Aristotle says the opposite. It should be known that every demonstration requires there to be some indemonstrable principles, which, nevertheless, must be known and believed more than the conclusions of the demonstration, as was said in the first book

<sup>257</sup> Cf. Averroes, *Met.* II, com. 1 (ed. Iuntina VIII f. 14rb): “[...] prima principia sunt naturaliter cognita a nobis [...]”

<sup>258</sup> Aristotle, *Phys.*, I, 184a17-18: “Now the path of investigation must lie from what is more immediately cognizable and clear to us, to what is clearer and more intimately cognizable in its own nature [...]” (Trans. P. H. Wicksteed & F. M. Cornford).

primo posteriorum. Et non oportet dicere sicut aliqui dicunt quod talia principia que sunt indemonstrabilia sunt unum tantum aut duo aut pauca sicut illa que posita sunt in quarto *Metaphysice*. Imo tot oportet esse principia indemonstrabilia vel plura, quot sunt conclusiones demonstrabiles saltem quarorum una non demonstratur per aliam, quod sic patet. Sint due conclusiones A et B quarum neutra per aliam demonstratur. Oportet quamlibet esse demonstratam per duas premissas. Eadem autem premissae eandem inferunt conclusionem immediate nisi forte fuerint transposite. Si autem fuerint transposite tunc conclusiones erunt differentes solum sicut *convertens* et *conversa*. Premissae igitur demonstrantes A vel erunt ambe eadem premissis demonstrantibus B vel ambe diverse vel una eadem et altera diversa; si ambe sint eadem tunc eadem erit conclusio ut dictum est, quod est of the *Posterior Analytics*.<sup>259</sup> And it is not fitting to say, as some do say, that such principles, which are indemonstrable, are just one or two or few, as those which are posited in the fourth book of the *Metaphysics*.<sup>260</sup> On the contrary, there must be as many or more indemonstrable principles as there are demonstrable conclusions, at least one of which cannot be demonstrated by another, as is clear thus: Let there be two conclusions, A and B, neither of which can be demonstrated by the other. It is necessary that each one of them be demonstrated by two premises. But the same premises immediately yield the same conclusion, unless perhaps they were to be transposed. But were they to be transposed, then the conclusions would be different only as *convertens* and *conversa*. Therefore, the premises demonstrating A either will be both the same as the premises which demonstrate B, or they will be both different, or one will be the same and the other one different. If both are the same, then the conclusion will be the same, as was said, which is contrary to what was supposed. But if both were

<sup>259</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *APo.* I, 2, 71b20-23.

<sup>260</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* IV, 1004b30-34.

contra positum. Si autem ambe fuerint diverse vel altera earum, tunc habeo quod A et B demonstrabuntur per quattuor aut saltem per tres diversas premissas, que si sint indemonstrabiles habebitur propositum, scilicet quod dictarum duarum conclusionum erunt indemonstrabilia tria aut quattuor principia. Si autem fuerint demonstrabiles, procedentur de demonstrationibus earum sicut prius et habebitur intentum.

[6] Oportet igitur videre primo qualiter fiant nobis nota indemonstrabilia principia.

[6] Therefore, it is first necessary to see in which way indemonstrable principles are made known to us.

[7] Secundo videbitur an ad verum dicendum circa ea ponendus sit habitus in intellectu distinctus ab intellectiva potentia.

[7] Second, we will see if a *habitus* to say the truth about first principles, one which is distinct from the intellective power, should be set in the understanding.

[8] Tertio videbitur an talis habitus sit virtus.

[8] Third, we will see if such a *habitus* is a virtue.

[9] Quantum ad primum sciendum est quod loquendo large de

[9] As to the first, it should be known that speaking broadly about demonstration –

demonstratione prout demonstratio se insofar as demonstration extends to extendit ad prudentiales vel artium prudential demonstrations or to the ratiocinationes quibus concludimus reasonings of the crafts by which we hoc singulare faciendum esse vel non conclude if this singular ought to be done or faciendum, prosequendum vel not, ought to be pursued or ought to be fugiendum in isto loco vel in illo et avoided in this place or in that one, and now nunc vel tunc, principia or then – the indemonstrable principles of demonstrationum indemonstrabilia demonstrations are not only universal, but non solum sunt universalia, sem also singular. For it is not possible, from etiam singularia. Non enim est universal premises, to syllogistically come possibile ex premissis universalibus to a singular conclusion. For if I knew that conclusionem singularem concludere every human is capable of laughter, I could sillogistice. Si enim sciam quod not conclude that this designated object is omnis homo est risibilis, non capable of laughter, unless I knew that the concludam quod hoc demonstratum designated object is a man. That is why it est risibile, nisi scivero quod hoc was said in the first book [of the demonstratum sit hoc. Propter quod *Nicomachean Ethics*] that there is dicitur primo huius quod “rationes ex [cognition] from and about them, namely his sunt et de his scilicet actibus singularly existing human acts, “for actions humanis singulariter existentibus.” and productions have to do with “Actus enim et generationes sunt singulars,”<sup>261</sup> as is said in the first book of circa singularia,” ut dicitur prohemio the *Metaphysics*.  
Metaphysice.

[10] Sunt igitur principiorum [10] Therefore, among the indemonstrable indemonstrabilium quedam principles, some are universal, some are

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<sup>261</sup> Aristotle, *Met.* I, 981a17-18: “[...] actions and the effects produced are all concerned with the particular.” (Trans. H. Tredennick).

universalia, quedam singularia. singular. And singular principles are made  
 Singularia autem communiter nota known to us ordinarily either through the  
 fiunt nobis aut sensu aut memoria aut senses or memory or experience. For  
 experimento. Verbi gratia sensu fit instance, the senses make known to us that a  
 nobis notum hunc hominem moveri, man is moving, that this fire is hot. Memory,  
 hunc ignem esse calidum. Memoria in turn, makes known to us that this man ran,  
 vero notum est nobis hunc hominem that this fire was hot, that this man ate  
 cucurrisse, ignem tunc fuisse rhubarb and then purged bile. And  
 calidum, hunc hominem comedisse experience makes it obvious that this fire  
 reubarbarum et tunc fuisse purgatum a which we have not yet felt is hot, that this  
 colera. Experimento autem fit rhubarb purges bile. For what we see in  
 manifestum quod iste ignis quem many singulars of which we have memory,  
 nondum sentimus est calidus, quod we know by experiential virtue that this is or  
 hoc reubarbarum est colere will be the case in other singulars which are  
 purgativum. Quod enim videmus in similar in all respects. At last, the  
 multis singularibus quorum understanding forming a universal concept  
 memoriam habemus, hoc in many singulars in this way accepts the  
 experimentali virtute cognoscimus universal principle as a whole, such as that  
 esse vel fore in aliis consimilibus all fire is hot, and all rhubarb purges bile.  
 singularibus. Tandem autem  
 intellectus formans universalem  
 conceptum in multis huiusmodi  
 singularibus assumit sibi universale  
 principium tanquam totum ut quod  
 omnis ignis est calidus, quod omne  
 reubarbarum est colere purgativum.

[11] Et si queras quot oportet esse sensationes, memorias aut experientias ad tale principium esse creditum et notum, ad hoc respondet Commentator secundo *Physicorum* conmento octogesimo, dicens quod “iudicium universale non acqueritur in pluribus rebus nisi post magnam considerationem de pluribus individuis,” et dicit quod “hoc diversificatur secundum magis et minus, secundum naturam principii et naturam considerantis.”

[12] Propter quorum evidentiam rememoranda sunt dubia aliquorum circa predicta. Videtur enim quibusdam nullum tale universale, videlicet quod sit nobis notum per experientiam, esse principium indemonstrabile. Primo quidem non est principium: quia non est per se manifestum. Secundo non est indemonstrabile: quia licet non sillogistice, tamen inductive

[12] In view of the evidence of which, we must return to some doubts that some have about what has been said above. To some, there seems to be no such universal indemonstrable principles, i.e. those which are known to us through experience. First, indeed, they are not principles, because they are not obvious by themselves. Second, they are not indemonstrable, for although they are not [demonstrated] syllogistically, they are demonstrated inductively. For the

<sup>262</sup> Averroes, *Phys.* II, 80: “Iudicium enim universale non acquiritur in pluribus rebus nisi post maximam considerationem de pluribus individuis.” (Trans. Michael Scotus, f. 45v, ll. 34-36/section 181).

<sup>263</sup> Averroes, *Phys.* II: “Et hoc diversatur secundum magis et minus secundum naturam principii et naturam considerantis.” (Trans. Michael Scotus, f. 45v, ll. 36-38 /section 181).

demonstratur. Dicit enim Commentator says in the second book of the Commentator ii *Physicorum* *Physics*, eightieth comment, that “there is conmento octogesimo quod “aliquis some demonstrative mode of induction,”<sup>264</sup> est modus inductionis even induction in which all particulars are demonstrativus:” etiam in qua non not listed, since we sometimes acquire inducuntur omnia particularia universal certitude from the consideration of quoniam acquerimus nobis aliquando many singulars before all singulars are universalem certitudinem ex completed. And he says that “according to consideration multorum this, induction has a way into singularium antequam compleantur demonstration.”<sup>265</sup> This seems to be simply omnia singularia. Et dicit quod that a universal proposition becomes known “secundum hoc inductio habet to us through experience in many singulars. introitum in demonstratione”. Hoc autem nihil aliud esse videtur quam quod universalis propositio nobis fiat nota per experientiam in multis singularibus.

[13] Item ex hoc videntur differre [13] Also, it seems that principles, of which principia quorum est intellectus a there is understanding, differ from conclusionibus, quarum est scientia, conclusions, of which there is knowledge, ars vel prudentia, quod principia fiunt craft or prudence, because principles become nobis naturaliter cognita. known to us by nature. And conclusions Conclusiones autem nobis ex become known to us from things previously precognitis innotescunt. Cum igitur known. Therefore, since that universal

<sup>264</sup> Cf. Averroes, *Phys.* II, 80: “Et iste syllogismus est in forma hypothetici et potentia eius est potentia inductionis et iste modus inductionis est demonstrativus [...]” (Trans. Michael Scotus, f. 45v, ll. 27-30 /section 181).

<sup>265</sup> Averroes, *Phys.* II, 80: “Et secundum hoc induction habebit introitum in demonstratione.” (Trans. Michael Scotus, f. 45v, ll. 32-33/section 181).

illud universale quod nobis fit cognitum per sensum, memoriam aut experientiam vel inductionem non sit nobis naturaliter cognitum, sed ex precognitis acquisitum, videtur quod nullum tale debet dici principium, nec ipsius est intellectus, sed scientia, ars, vel prudentia.

which is known to us through the senses, or through memory, or through experience or through induction is not known to us naturally, but is acquired from things previously known, it seems that such a thing [i.e., that universal] should not be called a principle, nor is there understanding of it, but rather there is knowledge, craft, or prudence.

[14] Item de principiis singularibus dubitatur utrum sint in sensu vel in intellectu. Nam si dicatur quod in sensu, tunc ipsorum non erit intellectualis habitus de quo querebamus, propter quod de ipsis nihil esset ad propositum. Nec etiam sufficit ea esse in sensu cum non sensus sed intellectus sit ille qui secundum scientiam, artem vel prudentiam ratiocinatur ex principiis. Si autem dicas quod sunt in intellectu, sed tamen a sensu eorum certitudo accepta est, tunc non videtur quod eorum cognitio vel habitus cognoscitivus debet dici intellectus quoniam non ex alio videtur alicuius cognitio vel habitus dici intellectus, nisi quia sumitur ab ipsius intellectus

[14] Also, doubts are raised about singular principles: about whether they are in the senses or in the understanding. For, if one says that they are in the senses, then there would be no intellectual habitus of them, which is what we are investigating, and on account of that there would be nothing about them regarding the issue under discussion. Nor would it even suffice for them to exist in the senses, since it is not the senses, but rather the understanding which reasons from principles according to knowledge, craft, or prudence. And if you say that they are in the understanding but that their certitude is received from the senses, then it does not seem that the cognition of the principles or the cogniscitive *habitus* should be called understanding, since the cognition of something or its *habitus* is called

natura non ab alio certitudinem. Et iterum cum intellectus subtilior sit, et potior sensu non videtur quod intellectus ex certitudine sensus debeat sibi certitudinem assumere, sed potius econtra; propter quod videmus quod errorem sensus sepe corrigit intellectus.

understanding simply because its certitude is acquired from the nature of the intellect itself and from nothing else. Moreover, since understanding is subtler and more powerful than the senses, it does not seem that understanding should acquire from the certitude of the senses its own certitude, but rather the contrary. That is why we see that the understanding often corrects the errors of the senses.

[15] Ad hec autem et omnia huiusmodi dubia dicendum est secundum Eustratium, quod “sensus, seu sensualis inductio, seu experientia non constituunt causaliter intellectivam cognitionem, neque eius certitudinem, sed solum ministerialiter, representando species rerum sensibilibus ipsi intellectui,” intellectus autem agens qui facit de potentia in intellectis actu intellecta ut dicit Commentator tertio *De Anima*; quem intellectum agentem videtur Lincolniensis primo *Posteriorum* vocare “verum

[15] To these and to all similar doubts it must be said, following Eustratius, that “neither the senses, nor sensitive induction, nor experience causally constitute intellective cognition nor its certitude, but only in an auxiliary manner, representing the species of sensible things to the understanding,”<sup>266</sup> but rather it is the agent intellect which transforms what is potentially understood into something understood in act as the Commentator says in the third book of the *De Anima*,<sup>267</sup> which agent intellect Grosseteste, in the first book of the *Posterior Analytics*, seems to call “the true doctor, who illuminates inside the mind and reveals the

<sup>266</sup> Reference not extant in *Commentaria in aristotelem graeca &c.*

<sup>267</sup> Averroes, *DA* III, comm. 17.

doctorem, qui mentem interius illuminat, et veritatem ostendit”. Sic igitur quecumque nobis credita fuerint apud intellectum per sensum, aut sensibilem inductionem, aut experientiam absque alia ex principiis aliis prioribus intellectuali ratione, debent dici intellectualia principia, et indemonstrabilia, quorum cognitio vel habitus intellectus nominatur, quia cognita non sunt, et credita principaliter, nisi ex naturali lumine intellectus.

[16] Neque obstat quod talia principia inductione previa cognoscuntur, quoniam inductio gratia forme non de necessitate concludit. Nunquam enim per inductionem compleri possunt omnia singularia, cum sint infinita, unde si tu sic arguas, iste ignis calefacit, et iste, et ille et sic de aliis, ergo omnis ignis calefacit, oportet quod tu dicas quomodo tu scivisti quod sic esset de singulis quos tu accipis in premissis. Tu non potes

[16] And it is not a problem that such principles are known through prior induction, since induction, due to its form, does not conclude out of necessity. Indeed, it will never be possible to enumerate all singulars through induction, for they are infinite. Whence, should you argue thus: this fire is hot, and this one, and that one and so forth, therefore all fire is hot, then you should say how you knew that it is so in the singulars which you considered in the premises. You cannot say that it is so by the

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<sup>268</sup> Grosseteste, *APo.* I, 1, 35-6: “[...] sed verus doctor est qui interius mentem illuminat et veritate ostendit.” (in Rossi (1981), p. 94).

dicere quod per sensum, quia singulos nunquam sensisti; et iterum si tu ita novisti de singulis, aut tu novisti eos omnes seorsum secundum eorum rationes singulares et proprias quod est impossibile, vel secundum eorum communem rationem, et tunc illud esset cognoscere quod omnis ignis calefacit, et ita conclusio acciperetur in premissis. Igitur apparet quod inductio de necessitate nihil concludit gratia forme sed intellectus precipiens in multis singularibus ita esset, et nullam videns rationem propter quam non ita debeat esse in aliis cogitur ex eius inclinatione naturali ad verum concedere quod ita sit in aliis, et sic tandem in ipso universalis principii credulitas firmatur.

[17] Sic igitur est intelligendum, quod inductio habet introitum in demonstratione, non quia certificat simpliciter, sed ministerialiter solum, sicut dictum fuit. Utrum autem tale principium sic per inductionem, seu per experientiam acceptum debeat

senses, because there are singulars of which you have never the experience. Moreover, if indeed you did have a cognition of those singulars, either you knew all of them separately, according to their singular and proper explanations – which is impossible – or according to their general explanation – and then that would be to know that all fire is hot, and in that manner the conclusion would be present in the premises. Therefore, it is clear that induction concludes nothing out of necessity, due to its form, but the understanding, having noticed that in many singulars it is so and seeing no reason why it should not be so in other cases, is forced from its natural inclination to the truth, to grant that it is so in others, and the belief in this universal principle becomes firm.

[17] It should thus be understood that induction has a way into demonstration, not because it provides certitude absolutely, but only ministerially, as has been said. As to whether such a principle thus received by induction, or by experience, should be said to be cognized by itself or not, one may say

dici per se notum, vel non, dici potest quod nulla sunt complexa principia per se manifesta per privationem omnis previe noticie, tam complexe quam incomplexe, quoniam semper oportet per primam intellectus operationem terminos simpliciter apprehendere priusquam per secundam operationem eos componere, vel dividere.

[18] Sed complexorum principiorum quedam sunt quorum termini quantum ad rationes dicentes quid nominis, se manifeste includunt, ita quod ipsis notis, statim apparet intellectui quod supponunt pro eodem, vel etiam se manifeste excludunt, ita quod ipsis notis statim apparet quod non supponunt pro eodem. Et talia principia sunt intellectui notis terminis per se manifesta per privationem cuiuslibet previe noticie complexe, sive in sensu, sive in intellectu, nisi forte illa complexa noticia requiratur ad notificandum quid nominis terminorum, huiusmodi forte

[18] But among complex principles, some are such that their terms obviously include each other with respect to their nominal contents, in such a way that once they are cognized, it is immediately clear to the understanding that they supposit for the same thing, or such that their terms obviously exclude each other, in such a way that once they are known, it is immediately clear that they do not supposit for the same thing. And once their terms are cognized, such principles are obvious by themselves to the intellect [even] in the absence of any previous complex cognition, either in the senses or in the intellect. Unless, perhaps, this complex cognition is required to make the nominal definition of terms known; then,

principia sunt, ens est ens, albedo est color, homo est animal, vel etiam albedo non est nigredo, rationale non est irrationale, mortuum non est vivum, non contingit idem simul esse et non esse, necesse est quodlibet esse vel non esse, et sic de multis aliis principiis, tam communibus quam specialibus.

perhaps in this way, the following are principles: a being is a being, whiteness is a colour, man is an animal, or again: whiteness is not blackness, a rational being is not irrational, a dead person is not alive, it is not possible that the same thing at the same time is and is not, it is a necessity that something is or is not – and the same goes for many other principles, both common and specific.

[19] Alia autem sunt complexa principia, quorum termini quantum ad rationes dicentes quid nominis nec manifeste se includunt, nec manifeste se excludunt, carent tamen medio per quod tale principium possit ex manifestioribus necessario concludi.

[19] But there are other complex principles, whose terms with respect to their nominal contents neither obviously include each other nor obviously exclude each other, but rather require a middle term by which such a principle can be necessarily concluded from what is more obvious.

[20] Dico igitur quod ad hoc quod talia principia in veritate sua fiant intellectui manifesta, indigent quod fuerit in sensu previa noticia complexionis terminorum. Et illorum principiorum quedam fiunt statim intellectui credita ex una sensatione previa, alia ex paucis, alia autem indigent multis previis sensationibus, et memoria, et experientia, sicut

[20] Therefore, I say that in order for such principles to become clear to the understanding in their own truth, they require that there be, in the senses, a previous cognition of a combination of terms. And some of these principles become immediately believed by the understanding through a single previous sensation, others through a few, and others yet require many previous sensations, as well as memory and

dictum fuit. Ista tamen principia dicuntur per se manifesta per privationem principiorum complexorum priorum per que possint de necessitate concludi, et huiusmodi forte principia sunt tam singularia quam universalia, ut quod iste ignis est calidus, iste homo currit, iste asinus currit, omnis ignis est calidus, omne rheubarbarum purgat coleram, iste equus est quadrupes, et sic de aliis. Et hoc sit dictum de primo articulo.

experience, as has been said. However, these principles are said to be clear by themselves because of the absence of the prior complex principles through which they could be concluded out of necessity, and in this way principles of this sort are certainly both singular and universal, such as: this fire is hot, this man is running, this donkey is running, all fire is hot, all rhubarb purges bile, this horse has four legs, and so on. And let this be all that is said about the first article.

[21] Quantum ad secundum est rememorandum quod principiorum quedam sunt quorum rationes dicentes quid nominis terminorum, sic manifeste se includunt, vel excludunt, quod notis terminis intellectus necessario veritati assentit, et non potest dissentire. Alia autem sunt quorum rationes terminorum non sic manifeste se includunt, vel excludunt. Propter quod, cum talia principia primo intellectui offeruntur, intellectus non necessario assentit veritati eorum, sed potest dissentire.

[21] Concerning the second article, we must remember that, among the principles, there are some whose terms with respect to their nominal definition include each other clearly or exclude each other clearly, in such a way that, when their terms are cognized, the understanding necessarily assents to the truth and cannot dissent. But there are others whose nominal definitions do not include or exclude each other clearly in such a way. Because of that, when such principles are first presented to the understanding, the understanding does not necessarily assent to their truth but can dissent. That is why it is

Propter quod circa primum modum principiorum non contingit errare, quia cognoscuntur notis terminis, circa secundum autem contingit.

[22] Igitur quantum ad secundum modum principiorum non videtur esse dubium, quin ad prompte faciliter et firmiter dicendum verum indigeamus habitu acquisito superaddito intellective potentie, quoniam potentia circa ea circa que innata est dirigere et errare, non est seipsa sine habitu superaddito determinata sufficienter ad firmiter et prompte et faciliter dirigere, et nunquam errare.

[23] Sed quantum ad primum modum principiorum dicunt aliqui quod in intellectu preter potentiam intellectivam nullus ponendus est habitus ad dicendum verum circa ea. Cuius ratio videtur esse, quia in potentia nullus est ponendus habitus superadditus, nisi propter alterum duorum, quorum primum est, ut potentia se habens ad opposita

not possible to err about first-mode principles, for these are cognized when the terms are cognized, but it is possible to err about second-mode principles.

[22] Therefore, concerning second-mode principles, there seems to be no doubt that, in order to be able to say the truth promptly, easily and firmly, we need an acquired *habitus* in addition to the intellective power, since, with respect to those [principles] about which it is capable by nature to steer straight or to err, the [intellective] power is not of itself sufficiently determined to firmly, promptly and easily steer straight and never err without the superadded *habitus*.

[23] But concerning the first-mode principles, some say that we should not posit in the understanding, in addition to the intellective power, a *habitus* to say the truth about them [i.e., about first-mode principles]. The reason for that seems to be that the superadded *habitus* can only be posited in the power, for one of two reasons, the first of which is: just as that power with relation to opposites is determined by the

determinetur per habitum ad unum oppositorum magis quam ad alterum, ut appetitus per fortitudinem determinatur ad expectandum et sustinendum pericula sicut oportet, per timiditatem autem ad fugiendum. Secundum est, ut potentia ad unum certum opus determinata, transeat in illud opus firmiter, et perfecte, prompte et faciliter. Intellectus autem propter nullum istorum circa dicta principia videtur indigere habitu superaddito, quoniam statim a principio cum talia principia sibi occurrunt, notis terminis, ipse per seipsum sic est determinatus ad dicendum verum prompte et faciliter, quod statim assentit eis, et non potest eis dissentire.

*habitus* to one of the opposites more than to the other, so is the appetite determined by courage to expect and to confront danger as is fit, or [is determined] by cowardice to flee. The second reason [for not positing a habitus to say the truth about first-mode principles in the intellect] is that, as a power already determined to a certain deed, it goes over to that deed firmly and perfectly, promptly and easily. And for none of these two reasons does the intellect seem to need a superadded habitus with respect to the said principles since, from the beginning, when such principles themselves occur to the intellect immediately when their terms are known, the intellect is thus determined by itself to say the truth promptly and easily, because it assents to them and cannot dissent from them.

[24] Alii autem dicte ratione assentientes dicunt in intellectu nullum ponendum esse habitum acquisitum ad verum dicendum circa huiusmodi principia. Concedunt tamen in eo ponendum esse habitum non acquisitum, sed naturaliter in

[24] And others, agreeing with the aforementioned arguments, say that no acquired *habitus* to say the truth about principles of this sort should be placed in the understanding. But they grant that a *habitus* must be placed in it [i.e., in the understanding]: not one which is acquired, but one which exists by nature in the

situm intellectui, quem quidem understanding, which they in fact call “agent  
dicunt intellectum agentem. intellect.”

[25] Alii autem vocant ipsum [25] And others call it the very light of the  
intelligibile lumen, quod in anima understanding, which [, they say,] was  
humana simul creatum est cum ipsa created in the human soul at the same time  
anima ab intellectu divino, as the soul itself by the divine intellect, just  
quemadmodum gravitas et levitas as heaviness and lightness are created at the  
simul cum formis gravium et levium same time as the forms of heavy and light  
generantur. Ad quam intentionem things. It is in this sense that the  
Commentator dicit sexto *Physicorum*, Commentator says, in the sixth [book of the]  
quod “dans formas dat omnia Physics that “giving the form, it gives all the  
consequentia formam.” things which follow from the form.”<sup>269</sup>

[26] Alii autem eidem rationi [26] And others, agreeing with that same  
assentientes concedunt in intellectu argument, grant that an acquired *habitus* to  
ponendum esse habitum acquisitum say the truth about the said principles must  
ad dicendum verum circa dicta be placed in the understanding, but they say  
principia, sed illum habitum nihil that such a habitus is nothing but the  
aliud esse dicunt quam noticiam, vel cognition, either actual or habitual, of the  
actualem vel habituaalem terminorum terms of the principles themselves.  
ipsorum principiorum.

[27] De his autem opinionibus hoc [27] About these opinions, however, it must  
concedi debet quod ad noticiam be granted that, for an intellectual cognition  
intellectuaalem principiorum of complex principles, the agent intellect is

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<sup>269</sup> This passage does not seem to be extant in Averroes’ commentaries of *Phys.* VI (or nowhere in Averroes’ extant *Physics* commentaries). It actually seems to correspond to something found in other medieval authors’ discussions of *Phys.* VIII or *Met.* VIII, 2, 1043a2-4.

complexorum requiritur intellectus agens, et intellectus possibilis et requiritur noticia previa terminorum. De lumine autem intellectuali his superaddito possit dici, quod nulla videtur ratio necessitans ad ponendum preter intellectum agentem tale lumen: “intellectus enim agens”, ut dicitur tertio *De Anima* est “sicut lux”: ad quid ergo alia luce vel lumine indigemus?

[28] Sed tamen hec omnia nihil vel parum faciunt ad propositum. Non enim in presenti de tali actu querimus, sed querimus an ex actuali noticia principiorum derelinquatur intellectui aliquis habitus qui non erat ante huiusmodi actualem noticiam, inclinans iterum ad consimilem ipsorum principiorum actualem noticiam, quemadmodum ex operari fortia, fit habitus in appetitu inclinans iterum ad operandum fortia, et quemadmodum ex actibus citarandi

required, as well as the possible intellect, and a previous cognition of the terms is required. But about the intellectual light superadded to them one could say that there seems to be no argument necessitating that such a light be placed beyond the agent intellect, “for the agent intellect,” as is said in the third [book] of *De Anima*, is “like the light.”<sup>270</sup> Wherefore, thus, would we require another light or illumination?

[28] However, all this has little or nothing to do with what is under consideration. For we are not presently inquiring about such an act, but we are inquiring if any *habitus* which did not exist before an actual cognition of this kind leaves a trace in the understanding through an actual cognition of principles, inclining again to an actual co-similar cognition of these very principles, just as from acting courageously a habitus is made in the appetite inclining again to act courageously, and just as from guitar-playing acts a certain *habitus* leaves a trace

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<sup>270</sup> Aristotle, *DA* III, 430a14-17: “Mind in the passive sense is such because it becomes all things, but mind has another aspect in that it makes all things; this is a kind of positive state like light; for in a sense light makes potential into actual colours.” (Trans. W. S. Hett).

derelinquitur in manu quidam habitus in the hand, [a *habitus*] of the hand which is quo manus inclinatur et habilior inclined and is rendered more skilled in redditur ad citarisandum prout dictum playing the guitar, just as is said in the est in secundo libro quod habitus ex second book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*], quibuslibet operationibus generantur that the *habitus* from whichever operations ad similes inclinantes. Non igitur are generated, inclining to similar querimus utrum ad dicendum verum operations. Therefore, we are not inquiring circa principia requiratur previa about whether a previous cognition of terms notitia terminorum, sed querimus is required in order to say the truth about utrum dicendo semel vel pluries principles, but we are inquiring about verum circa principia generetur whether a *habitus* is generated in the habitus in intellectu inclinans, sive understanding by saying, once or many firmans et habilans ipsum ad iterum times, the truth about principles, either dicendum verum circa dicta inclining or strengthening and enabling it to principia. saying the truth again about the aforementioned principles.

[29] Et forte non obstante ratione [29] And perhaps, the argument given above superius adducta non esset notwithstanding, it would not be unfitting to inconueniens dicere, quod ex actuali say that, from the actual cognition of noticia principiorum generetur principles, a *habitus* is generated, inclining habitus in anima inclinans, aut or strengthening the understanding to assent firmans intellectum ad assentiendum to these principles. But that is not to say that illis principiis. Ita tamen quod non such a *habitus* is necessary to say the truth dico quod ille habitus sit necessarius about these principles, in the same way as it ad dicendum verum circa illa is not fitting to grant that a *habitus* of principia: quemadmodum etiam knowledge is necessary for assenting to a neque oportet concedere quod habitus conclusion, as well as to say the truth about

scientificus sit necessarius ad it, nor that a *habitus* of justice [is necessary] assentiendum conclusioni, et to act justly: in fact, “the *habitus*” as shown dicendum verum circa eam, neque in the second book [of the *Nicomachean habitus iustitiae ad operandum iustum: Ethics*], “is generated by the first immo “habitus” ut apparuit in operations.”<sup>271</sup> It is thus clear that, when secundo “generatur ex primis some conclusion is first demonstrated to us, operationibus”. Manifestum est enim [even] without any previous *habitus* quod quando conclusio aliqua nobis inclining or determining us to this, we are primo demonstratur, nos absque forced to assent to that conclusion and to habitu previo ad hoc nos inclinante, grant it to be true, [simply] through the vel determinante, cogimur per cognition of the premises ordered in the right noticiam premissarum debito modo way. Therefore, also when we do have a ordinatarum ad assentiendum cognition of the terms of many complex conclusioni ad concedendum eam principles, we are forced to grant, by an esse veram. Ita igitur et cum nobis actual inclination of the understanding, noti sunt termini multorum without any previous *habitus*, that such principiorum complexorum, nos ex principles are true. However, as you see it naturali inclinatione intellectus [being the case] regarding conclusions, we cogimur absque habitu previo need to imagine the same about principles concedere talia principia esse vera. when some conclusion has been Tamen sicut tu vides circa demonstrated to you (which is maybe conclusiones oportet imaginari circa unsolvable by you). However, due to principia, cum enim conclusio aliqua sophisms inclining to the opposite, your fuerit tibi demonstrata, tamen propter assent or agreement – which you have in sophisticationes ad oppositum virtue of its demonstration in view of that ocurrentes forte tibi insolubiles conclusion – is weakened, even if you cannot

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<sup>271</sup> Aristotle, *EN* II, 1003a30: “The virtues on the other hand we acquire by first having actually practised them [...]” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1873c), p. 396: “Virtutes autem *accepimus* operantes prius quemadmodum et in aliis artibus.”

assensus seu adhesio, quam virtute demonstrationis habes ad illam conclusionem, debilitabitur, licet tu non possis dicte conclusioni dissentire. Mens enim ligata non potest ita firma esse, sicut se esset libera ad omni impedimento seu ligamento. Semper enim ad ligamentum aspiciens formidat, nisi assuetudo tollat formidinem. Sicut enim assuetudo sustinendi terribilia frangit formidinem vel timorem quam illa terribilia nata sunt inferre, sic assuetudo aspiciendi demonstrationem et assentiendi conclusionem firmat adhesionem, et tollit formidinem quam innate sunt inferre sophisticationes ad oppositum occurrentes; nec istud est mirum. Imo nos videmus quod si quis per modiculam exhortationem, vel solum forte per audire dici consuevit alicui dicto assentire, licet falso, tante firmitatis erit eius adhesio, quod frangi non poterit etiam si oppositum demonstratur. Unde secundo dissent from such a conclusion. But the tangled-up mind cannot then be as firm, as if it were free from all impediment or tangle, for it is always looking at the tangle and fearing being tied up, unless custom removes this fear. For, just as the custom to face horror breaks the fear or dread that these things may naturally induce, so too the custom of observing a demonstration and assenting to a conclusion strengthens agreement and takes away the fear that sophisms may naturally incline in the opposite direction, but there is nothing noteworthy about that. On the contrary, we see that, if someone, by brief persuasion or just by hearing someone say it, grows accustomed to assenting to a certain saying, albeit false, then their agreement will be so strong that it will not be able to be broken, even if they were proven the opposite. Whence in the second book of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle says that “the force which in tradition is demonstrated by the law, in which myths and childish things are more valuable than [our] knowledge of them, due to customs.”<sup>272</sup> Because of that,

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<sup>272</sup> Aristotle, *Met.* II, 995a3-5: “The powerful effect of familiarity is clearly shown by the laws, in which the fanciful and puerile survivals prevail, through force of habit, against our recognition of them.” (Trans. H. Tredennick).

Metaphysice dicit Aristoteles the Commentator also says, in the prologue  
quantam vim habeat quod consuetum of the third book of the *Physics*, that “indeed,  
est leges ostendunt, in quibus the faith of the people is stronger than the  
fabularia et puerilia magis quidem faith of the philosophers, for people are not  
valent ad cognoscere de his propter accustomed to listening to different things,  
assuetudinem. Propter quod etiam but philosophers are used to listening to  
Commentator in prologo tertii many things.”<sup>273</sup>  
Physicorum dicit quod “ideo fides  
vulgi est fortior quam fides  
philosophorum, quoniam vulgus non  
assuevit audire aliud, philosophi  
autem audiunt multa”.

[30] Sic igitur est opinandum, quod [30] We must, therefore, hold this opinion:  
cum nobis proponuntur principia that, when the strongest principles are put  
firmissima, licet eis intellectus before us, even though the intellect assents  
necessario assentiat, et non possit eis to them necessarily and cannot dissent from  
dissentire, tamen aliquando per them, yet there are times when, due to  
sophisticationes in oppositum sophistry in the opposite sense, [our]  
ocurrentes contingit adhesionem agreement can be weakened, and, finally, a  
debilitari, et tandem quandam certain fear can be generated. And I have  
formidinem generari. Et hoc expertus shown this to be true regarding the first-  
sum de primo principio (ut mihi mode principle (as it seems to me), for I  
videtur). Quesivi enim a multis asked many old women whether they  
vetulis utrum crederent quod possent believed they could eat and not eat at the  
simul comedere, et non comedere, et same time, and they promptly answered that

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<sup>273</sup> Averroes, *Phys.* III, Prol.: “[...] et ideo fides vulgi est fortior quam fides philosophorum, quoniam vulgus non assuevit audire aliud, philosophi autem audiunt multa [...]” in Schmieja (1986), p. 177.

statim responderunt quod non. Tunc igitur ego sic arguebam: vos scitis quod deus est omnipotens, ipse potest totum mundum adnihilare creditis ne ergo quod deus posset facere quod simul comederitis, et non comederitis? Et responderunt nescio.

[31] Concedendum est igitur quod ex frequenti consideratione et adhesionem circa prima principia omnino notissima non firmatur assensus et adhesio, nisi propter habitum ex frequenti consideratione et adhesionem derelictum in intellectu, quo habitu intellectus inclinatur, et si non ad assentiendum tamen saltem, ad firmiter assentiendum et non formidandum propter quascunque apparentias obvias.

[32] De tertio autem articulo dicendum est quod habitus predictus, quo intellectus firmatur ad dicendum verum circa principia, est virtus, quia virtus potentie attendit secundum opus perfectissimum in quod potentia potest. Sed dictus habitus determinat

they could not. Then I consequently argued thus: you know that God is omnipotent, He could annihilate the whole world. Do you believe, then, that God could act so that you could eat and not eat at the same time? And they answered "I don't know."

[31] It must be granted, therefore, that assent and agreement are not reached out of frequent consideration and agreement about the first-mode principles, themselves entirely well-known, unless because of a *habitus* having left a trace in the understanding, from frequent consideration and agreement, by which *habitus* the understanding is inclined, if not to assent, at least to agree firmly and not to fear on account of whichever deviating appearances.

[32] And about the third article, it should be said that the aforementioned *habitus*, by which the understanding is strengthened to say the truth about principles, is a virtue, for virtue pertains to the most perfect work of which power is capable. But the said *habitus* determines the understanding to the most

intellectum ad opus perfectissimum perfect deed of which the understanding is in quod ipse potest in ordine ad capable, in order, to indemonstrabilia principia, quia indemonstrabilia principles, because the *habitus* determinat ipsum ad firmam the understanding to a strong agreement with adhesionem veritati cum esset in the truth, as if it were in potency [in] both potentia ad firmam et infirmam. Ergo firm and feeble [agreement]. Therefore, such talis habitus est virtus ipsius a habitus is a virtue of understanding itself, intellectus in ordine ad ordered to indemonstrabilia principia. indemonstrabilia principia.

[33] Ad rationes.

[33] Replies to the objections.

[34] Ad primam dicendum est quod intellectus sit determinatus ad understanding is determined to say the truth dicendum verum circa aliqua about some principles, but it is not principia, tamen non est determinatus determined to say the truth firmly, without ad dicendum verum firmiter sine any fear whatsoever. quacumque formidine.

[35] Ad aliam dicendum est quod si non est difficile dicere verum, tamen is not difficult to say the truth, it is still est difficile firmiter dicere, et sine difficult to say it firmly and without fear. formidine.

[36] Ad aliam dicendum quod a natura sumus determinati ad are determined by nature to say the truth dicendum verum circa aliqua about some principles, but not to say firmly principia, sed non ad firmiter that which is true, and without fear.

dicendum illud verum, et sine  
formidine.

[37] Ad aliam dicendum est quod [37] To the other, it should be said that, even  
circa aliqua principia non contingat if we cannot err about some principles by  
errare negando ipsa, tamen contingit denying them, it is still possible not to assent  
eis non omnino firmiter assentire. entirely firmly to them. End of the question.  
Hec de questione.

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<sup>1</sup>foribus *scripsi*] fortibus MS; incunabula.  
Cf. Guillelmus de Morbeka (1995/2011), p.  
43, l. 8 (993b).

### 3.4.2 Whether *intellectus* is a virtue

In question 11, Buridan will assess whether understanding (*intellectus*) is a virtue. *Intellectus* can be taken to mean mainly two things: the intellectual power or faculty on the one hand and, on the other, it is understood in a similar sense as Aquinas's for instance, i.e. the *habitus*, or the settled disposition, of first principles. Here, Buridan inquires into whether it is plausible to describe *intellectus* as meaning both those two things – and whether from the habitus of *intellectus* we can also have *intellectus* as an intellectual virtue – or whether the term should simply be reduced to the power of the soul which we now call “intellect.”

### 3.4.2.1 Arguments showing that intellectus is not a virtue

To the main question of whether *intellectus* is a virtue, the first objection (§2) states that *intellectus* is not a virtue because it is, instead, a power of the soul, and virtues, by definition, are not powers of the soul (*potentie anime*) but rather acquired dispositions (*habitus*). Here, this thought goes, one could simply say that the term “*intellectus*” is ambiguous and sometimes designates a power of the soul and at other times, a *habitus*, but, according to this argument, this would not work, because if *intellectus* is a power of the soul, it would not need an additional *habitus* in order to perform intellectual acts, for the *habitus* or virtue would then be superfluous. Therefore, according to this first objection, if understanding is a power of the soul, it is not a virtue.

A second objection (§2) states that arts and virtues are about difficult things. Now, is *intellectus* about difficult things? According to the objection, it is not, since the first principles, which are the object of the intellect are not difficult, but rather the contrary: they are evident. Having evident things as their object, *intellectus* would then not be a virtue.

Objection 3 (§3) points out that we have understanding (*intellectus*) by nature, which is why we say the truth about first principles innately, but we do not have virtue by nature.<sup>274</sup> Therefore, understanding cannot be a virtue.

The last objection (§4) claims that, when virtues are concerned, error is possible. However, the understanding cannot err, since there is no error possible about the

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<sup>274</sup> One must recall the discussion of *QNE VI*, 1, where Buridan draws the distinction between so called “natural virtues” and “main” or “principal virtues”, which are the ones under consideration in this section.

(evident) first principles which are the object of the intellect. Therefore, *intellectus* insofar as it cannot err, is not a virtue.

#### 3.4.2.2 *Sed contra*

In the *sed contra* (§5) Buridan relies on the authority of Aristotle to discuss the issue of first principles, which will be the guiding thread of the discussion concerning the intellect, much as it was when similar questions were being discussed in the *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics*.<sup>275</sup>

Here, Buridan gives us an explanation as to why, contrary to what some believe, there are a multitude of first principles, and this is based on the following reasoning: for two conclusions A and B, neither of which is demonstrated by the other, the two of them combined need at least three premises to be yielded (unless A and B were to be *convertens* and *conversa* of one another).

The scenario would be roughly as follows:

P1	P3	or	P1	P1	or	P1	P2	or...
<u>P2</u>	<u>P4</u>		<u>P2</u>	<u>P3</u>		<u>P2</u>	<u>P3</u>	
A	B		A	B		A	B	

And this is assuming that A and B are conclusions drawn from first principles. If P1, P2, P3 etc. were not first principles, we ought to proceed with this same reasoning until we are able to track the first principles which are indemonstrable.

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<sup>275</sup> Cf. Economos (2009).

Regardless of which scenario we choose from the possibilities above, we realize that we need at the very least three indemonstrable principles to be at the basis of our reasoning, but this for two conclusions alone, which indicates that we in fact operate from many more first principles. If these first principles are many (and not just one, two, or a few), then we need to investigate how the *intellectus* relates to these first principles.

#### 3.4.2.3 Buridan's answer to the main question

In response to the main question, Buridan proposes a three-step explanation, where first (a) we should investigate how we come to know indemonstrable principles, then (b) we ought to see whether we need a *habitus* in the understanding, different from the intellectual power, in order to say the truth about those first principles, and finally (c) we should evaluate whether that habitus is a virtue.

##### *a. How we come to know indemonstrable principles (§§9-20)*

In §9, Buridan presents the claim, which he then proceeds to evaluate, that indemonstrable principles are not only universal, but also singular. Since indemonstrable principles are employed in prudential reasoning and reasoning about craft – and these two virtues, as we have seen, deal with singular things – there have to be at least some indemonstrable principles which are singular. Evoking a discussion he had already presented in his *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics*,<sup>276</sup> he gives the example of the argument of human beings being capable of laughter. Based on that universal principle (“every human is capable of laughter”), I could only conclude that

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<sup>276</sup> *QAPo.* I, 4.

this designated person, say Socrates, is capable of laughter by means of the singular premise that Socrates is a human being.<sup>277</sup>

So, according to this reasoning, indemonstrable principles can essentially be of two sorts: either universal or singular (§10). The latter can be made known to us via the senses, or via memory, or yet via experience. The senses give us particular cognitions of singular things (such as “this fire is hot”), while memory allows us to know that something was the case (“this fire was hot”), and experience allows us to make basic predictions about things which we have not yet experienced first-hand (“this fire which I have not yet felt is hot”). It is by means of induction from all of these singulars that our intellect can accept universal principles such as “all fire is hot.”<sup>278</sup> The question one might be inclined to ask here is: how many sensations and memories and how much experience do we need in order for a universal principle to be known (§11)? In order to answer this question, Buridan follows Averroes, who says that multiple instances of sensation, memory and experience must be submitted to the consideration of several individuals in order for universal judgment to be acquired but the exact amount varies according to the principle being examined and according to the investigator examining it.

But now, Buridan adds (§12), this leads us to question of whether it is even possible for there to be universal indemonstrable principles known through sensation, memory and/or experience. In fact, they seem to be neither principles nor indemonstrable. First, they do not seem to be principles because principles are obvious in themselves, and indemonstrable principles do not seem to be obvious by themselves, since we need multiple instances of each to acknowledge them as principles. Second, these would-be universal indemonstrable principles do not seem to be indemonstrable, because they

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<sup>277</sup> Cf. also: Economos (2009), p. 120.

<sup>278</sup> The text in this passage is very close to what find in Buridan’s *QAPo*. II, 11. Cf. Economos, p. 423.

seem to be demonstrated somehow – even if not by means of a syllogism – for induction also counts as a sort of demonstration, as Buridan claims that Averroes states, and as Buridan argues himself in his *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics*.<sup>279</sup>

Moreover, Buridan says (§13), we should also be careful to establish the distinction between conclusions, on the one hand, which we come to know not naturally, but rather based on previously known things by the senses, memory and/or experience, and which relate to knowledge, art or prudence, and, on the other hand, principles, which we come to know naturally and are proper to our understanding. Hence, the so-called “universal principles” discussed in §§10-11 are not actually principles, but rather conclusions. “It is just this lack of need of any prior cognition that sets our cognition of principles apart from the knowledge of scientific, artistic or prudential conclusions,”<sup>280</sup> and if they are conclusions, they cannot serve as the foundation for demonstrable knowledge. The problem here is that requiring some pre-cognition (like that of a few, or many, singulars) as a way of getting to these universal first principles would also disqualify them as first *principles*.

Once these difficulties are laid out regarding the possibility of universal principles, Buridan shifts his focus to singular indemonstrable principles: are they in the senses or

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<sup>279</sup> Qualifying induction as a “sort of” demonstration is quite important here, as Buridan acknowledges precisely when he references Averroes, with a reminder that perfect induction is impossible: “[T]he Commentator, in [his commentary on] the second book of the *Physics*, responds that although induction, or inductive experience, does not conclude on account of its form, nevertheless, the intellect, through its natural inclination toward the truth, grants that a universal principle [is] known and evident through natural and possible evidence, by repeatedly perceiving [something] to be the case for which there cannot or could not be a counterexample, [as long as] there does not seem to be a reason why this ought to be otherwise in other cases” – *QAPo*. I.2, trans. Economos (“Et quando ultra opinatur quod experientia nunquam gratia formae concludit universale principium, quia nunquam fir in omnibus singularibus, respondet Commentator, secundo Physicorum, quod licet induction, sive experientia inductiva, non concludat gratia formae, tamen intellectus, ex ejus naturali inclinatione ad veritatem, percipiens multotiens ita fieri quod non potest nec potuit recipere instantiam, nec videre esse rationem quare in aliis debeat esse aliter, ipse concedit universale principium tamquam notum et evidens evidentia naturali et possibili circa talia.”)

<sup>280</sup> Economos, p. 121.

in the intellect? If they are in the senses, the two questions that would follow (whether they are *habitus* and, more specifically, virtues) become extraneous, for there are no *habitus* of the senses. But the *habitus* of singular indemonstrable principles have to be in the intellect, for it is the intellect – and not the senses – which reasons on the basis of principles, and the certainty we attribute to these principles also comes from the intellect, because the latter “is subtler and more powerful than the senses” and “often corrects the errors of the senses,”<sup>281</sup> as sensation is prone to error.

In §15 Buridan starts addressing these issues (raised in §§12-14). According to Eustratius, the senses, induction and experience only contribute in an accessory manner to cognitions and their certainty, for it is actually the intellect’s job, more specifically the agent intellect’s, to turn something that is potentially understood into something that is actually understood. And this is why the things we come to believe with the help of the senses, sensitive induction and/or experience, and which themselves do not derive from prior principles, are called indemonstrable intellectual principles, and their *habitus* is called understanding (*intellectus*), insofar as they are only believed and known through the intellect (*intellectus*). *Intellectus* is that which inclines and determines us to assent to indemonstrable principles and enables us to form and understand such principles.<sup>282</sup>

And the fact that induction based on the senses is featured in the description above (regarding §12) as an accessory step should not be a problem (§§16-17), since induction does not conclude anything out of necessity: it simply allows the *intellectus*, due to its natural inclination to the truth, to grant a certain universal principle based on the singular data presented by sensitive induction. So, the role induction plays in demonstration, as had already been explained in the *Commentary on the Posterior*

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<sup>281</sup> *QNE* VI, 11, §14.

<sup>282</sup> Cf. Economos, p. 123.

*Analytiks*,<sup>283</sup> is a tangential one: it provides certainty not absolutely, but accessorially. And this does not prevent it from yielding legitimate demonstrations, as complex principles depend on previous cognitions. Complex principles, thus, depend on the first operations of the intellect (the apprehension of simple terms) in order to be understood. While induction is ancillary (*ancilla*), an assistant (*ministra*), or a “sidekick”, as we might say nowadays, to intellections, it is the agent intellect which is “the true doctor,” performing the main job, as it were.

In §18, we have an overview of what those complex principles discussed above (namely, in §17) are. They are initially broken down into two main categories.<sup>284</sup> The difference Buridan is presenting here can be thought of as a distinction between a nominal definition, which amounts to giving the meaning of words, and a real definition, which clarifies a given meaning “by showing it to be a compound of other propositions or properties or relations.”<sup>285</sup>

- (a) On the one hand, there are complex principles whose terms include each other with respect to their nominal contents, i.e. terms for which “the totality of the *supposita* of one term is included in the totality of *supposita* of the other term,”<sup>286</sup> and there are complex principles whose terms exclude each other with respect to their nominal contents. These complex principles are called “first-mode principles” in the *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics*.<sup>287</sup> Here, in the *Ethics* commentary, he goes on to give us a list of A-form propositions and E-

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<sup>283</sup> For a detailed account of induction in Buridan’s *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics*, cf. Economos (2009), chapter 5 (pp. 108-132).

<sup>284</sup> The division of principles in those composed by propositions which are evident in themselves (*per se note*) and those whose terms are not included in them “manifestly and evidently”. (*manifeste et evidenter*) is also taken from the *QAPo*. II, 11. On this point, cf. Biard (2012), pp. 188-189, and Economos (2009), p. 108 et ss.

<sup>285</sup> Cargile (1991), p. 21.

<sup>286</sup> Biard (2012), p. 189, n. 2 has expanded on this Buridanian shorthand, rendering it more rigorously compatible with Buridan’s theory of supposition.

<sup>287</sup> Cf. *QAPo*. II, 11.

form propositions which fit this description of complex principles, such as “whiteness is a colour” and “a being is a being,” which are examples of the first kind of first-mode principles, and “whiteness is not blackness” and “the dead are not alive,” which are examples of the second kind of first-mode principles described above.

- (b) On the other hand, we find cases (§19) where a middle term is required for the demonstration, in order for us to know that the terms of a synthetic proposition supposit for the same nominal contents. These are called “second-mode principles.” Here, “the normal intellective powers are insufficient to make the truth of these principles evident,”<sup>288</sup> i.e., the intellect does not assent to these principles necessarily, and “[t]herefore, concerning these second-mode principles, there seems to be no doubt that, in order to say the truth promptly, easily and firmly, we need an acquired habitus in addition to the intellective power [...]”<sup>289</sup>

For first- and second-mode principles to become clear to the intellect, whether they be expressed through singular or universal propositions, they have to be concluded either out of necessity, through knowledge of the terms of the proposition, or by means of induction. This seems to be the case of first-mode principles above. These come to be known “automatically” by the intellect, which gives them its necessary assent. In this case, thus, no habitus (or virtue, for that matter) seems to be required in the intellect. But this will merit further examination below.

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<sup>288</sup> Economos, p. 125.

<sup>289</sup> *QNE VI*, 11, §22.

*b. Whether we need a habitus in the intellect to say the truth about first principles (§§21-32)*

We seem to have the suggestion that, even though in order to say the truth about those second-mode principles a habitus is needed in the intellect, that is not the case for first-mode indemonstrable principles. In other words, it appears that principles expressed through analytic propositions get an immediate assent from the intellect (§21), so the added habitus is only required for principles expressed through synthetic propositions, for in this case, the intellect can stray from the truth, and needs a guarantee that it will promptly, easily and firmly stay on track: the habitus of understanding (§22).

When it is argued that, when first-mode principles are concerned (i.e., those expressed through analytic propositions), the addition of the habitus is not needed (§23), that is because the habitus only seems to be needed under one of these two conditions: either when the intellective power is determined to one of two opposites more than to the other, or when the intellective power is already determined. But in the case of first-mode principles, assent is already immediate and given regardless of any further the conditions. Thus, it would seem that the intellect does not need an additional habitus. According to Buridan, some thinkers who agree with this view say (§24) that no *acquired* habitus is needed in addition to the intellective power for us to say the truth about principles, but they say that a *natural* habitus is needed, and this natural habitus is what we call “agent intellect.” And this is “the very light of the intellect,” created in the human soul at the same time as the human soul was created by the divine intellect (§25). And others say (§26) that an acquired habitus is indeed required, but they reduce this habitus to the mere knowledge of the terms of the principles.

The “normal” intellective power which I mentioned above is composed of the agent intellect, the potential intellect and requires a previous cognition of terms (§27), and Buridan argues that those holding the views expressed in §§24-26 seem to want to add an “intellectual light,” a *habitus*, to the intellect. But if, as Buridan claims Aristotle says in the *De Anima*, “the agent intellect [...] is like the light,”<sup>290</sup> why, he asks, would we need another light?

But Buridan then clarifies (§28) that this is also extraneous to the true question under consideration here, which pertains to inquiring not about the existence of pre-existing *habitus*, but rather about the possibility of acquiring a *habitus* to say the truth about principles – a *habitus* which did not exist before a certain cognition – leaving a trace in the intellect, inclining or strengthening it to say the truth about those principles on another, future occasion. So what Buridan is actually doing is shifting the way the question is asked: instead of considering whether the intellective power requires an added *habitus* in order to say the truth about first principles, he asks whether the act of saying the truth about first principles leaves a trace in the intellect inclining it to act in a similar way whenever it finds itself in a similar situation, much like the act of playing the guitar well leaves a trace in the hand, something which we might nowadays dub “muscle memory,” inclining the hand to playing well whenever it holds a guitar in playing position and acts upon it.

Then, in §29, Buridan says that, indeed, an intellectual *habitus* inclining and/or strengthening the intellect to assent to principles is generated from the cognition of first principles. But this *habitus* is not required, insofar as the first time we assent to a first principle we grant to it be true by the sheer light of the intellect, without the *habitus*

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<sup>290</sup> *QNE VI*, 11, § 27.

being there. In fact, the habitus could not even be there, as the intellectual habitus corresponds precisely to the trace left in the intellect following a certain act:

An act of assent is determined by cognitive representations which, once accumulated, generate a scientific or simply opinative *habitus*. This *habitus* makes it easier for a person to assent to the content of a proposition. The key to Buridan's theory of belief hinges on this notion of habit, understood as the repetition of acts favouring assent.<sup>291</sup>

Thus, we see that the habitus is generated by the first operations, and could not be required for them. This is why, when a conclusion is first demonstrated to us, we grant it to be true automatically, without the habitus being present, and likewise for principles whose terms are unknown to us. However, there seem to be cases where sophistry can weaken our assent to some conclusion or principle, even if we cannot dissent from it completely. And the mind caught up in sophistry cannot be firm: all its doubts and fears must be undone by custom. But the problem which then arises is that we can be accustomed to falsehoods and come to have firm belief in those false things. This is precisely how the beliefs of the common folk, who are used to hearing the same things repeatedly, can be stronger and even greater in number than those of philosophers, who are used to dealing with more varied ideas.

And this is how Buridan arrives at his final conclusion (§31): that a *habitus* is needed in the intellect in order for it to assent to conclusions about first principles and that is because, without this *habitus*, we would be vulnerable to sophistry and misleading arguments, as well as utter confusion, such as when one is asked whether God, being omnipotent, can annihilate the whole world, or make it so that you could eat and not eat at the same time – to which Buridan has observed many old women to respond that they do not know (§30).

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<sup>291</sup> Grellard (2014), p. 94.

This kind of example of questioning is not uncommon in the Buridan corpus. On the issue of whether God could make it the case that something is and is not at the same time and under the same aspect, Buridan had already dealt with this question, for instance, in his *QMet.* II, 2.<sup>292</sup> This also touches on the question of the knowledge of the common folk or that of the *vetula*, to which Christophe Grellard has dedicated an article,<sup>293</sup> and on which Jack Zupko has also written.<sup>294</sup> The *vetula* is the classic example of how one could be accustomed to false beliefs or opinions, and however rare these cases may be, the intellect could be led to reject the truth or, at the very least, to suspend its assent to the truth on the basis of sophistical arguments or a kind of questioning formulated so as to yield confusion, as in the Buridanian “experiment” described above. So, we see that

[a]ny act of knowledge which pertains to the intellectual faculty rests on this repetition of acts. Repetition generates a habit which makes it easier to reproduce such acts in the future. Scientific knowledge, just like opinion, is thus built by the repetition of acts and the production of habit. In the case of scientific cognitive acts, especially those concerning scientific principles, there is a natural tendency in the intellect to adhere to them, so that opposed acts (the negation of the scientific principles) are accepted by the intellect with difficulty. It is, therefore, difficult, but not impossible, according to Buridan, for custom, education, and habit to produce in the intellect a habit against accepting scientific principles and this can lead the intellect to reject them.<sup>295</sup>

Assent and agreement on the part of the intellect require, thus, a *habitus* which leaves a trace in the intellect which inclines it to agree firmly – even if not to fully assent – and not to fear agreement on account of deviating appearances to the contrary.

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<sup>292</sup> As Biard (2012) points out on p. 188, n. 2, citing Buridan (“Unde quamvis nullus mente negaret primum principium, tu potes de eo habere formidinem”) and claiming that this passage is followed by the discussion of the *vetula*.

<sup>293</sup> Grellard (2014).

<sup>294</sup> Cf., for instance, Zupko (2007).

<sup>295</sup> Grellard (2014), p. 97.

c. *Whether the habitus to say the truth about first principles is a virtue (§32)*

Now, knowing that we need a *habitus* of *intellectus* in addition to the intellectual power for the intellect to be inclined to firm agreement to first principles, we must assess whether this *habitus* is a virtue. And Buridan says that it is because a virtue is a *habitus* “pertains to the most perfect work of which that power is capable” (§32) and understanding is able to agree with the truth and order itself to indemonstrable principles even when that agreement presents itself as both potentially firm and feeble. That the agreement finally become firm when presented with a true principle is evidence that the work of a virtue is in play.

#### 3.4.2.4 Buridan’s replies to the objections

Thus, following the procedural setup of the questions on the *Ethics*, we come to Buridan’s replies to the initial objections, i.e., the arguments stating that *intellectus* is not a virtue. The replies to each of the four objections (§§1-4) follow a same line of argument: Even if the intellect is determined to say the truth about some principles, that is not done firmly and without any fear lest for an additional intellectual habitus. This same line of thought is followed in the reply (§35) to the second objection (§2): although it may not be difficult for the intellect to say the truth (for it is determined to it in the case of the principles in question), it is difficult to say it “firmly and without fear,” and that is why *intellectus* can and ought to be a virtue.

In the reply (§36) to the third objection (§3), Buridan states that although it could be granted that we say the truth about some principles naturally (these principles being known to us by nature), our assent to these principles would not be firm were it not for an added intellectual virtue, i.e., *intellectus*.

Finally, to the objection claiming that understanding is not a virtue because we make no mistakes regarding first principles (§4), Buridan replies (§37) that although we may not deny those first principles, it is indeed possible that we not fully and firmly assent to them, as in the common folk cases, or as illustrated by the survey he mentions in §30, where the “many old women” in question, when presented with a *prima facie* complicated scenario, e.g. whether God could make it so that one could eat and not eat at the same time, do not outright reaffirm the principle of non-contradiction, but instead claim not to know the answer to the question. Thus, in order for our assent to principles to be not only existent, based on our intellectual powers, but also firm and unwavering, *intellectus* must be a virtue.

### 3.5.1 Questio duodecima | Question twelve

Utrum sapientia sit intellectus et scientia

Whether wisdom is understanding and knowledge

[1] Queritur duodecimo utrum sapientia sit intellectus et scientia. [1] Twelfth, it is asked whether wisdom is understanding and knowledge.

[2] Arguitur quod non, quia unus habitus intellectualis non est duo [2] It is argued that it is not, because one intellectual *habitus* is not two intellectual

habitus intellectuales. Sed sapientia est unus habitus intellectualis; intellectus autem et scientia sunt duo habitus intellectuales, aliter non essent quinque habitus intellectuales secundum quod eos ponit Aristoteles. *habitus*. And wisdom is one intellectual *habitus*, and understanding and knowledge are two [intellectual *habitus*]. Otherwise, there would not be five intellectual *habitus*, according to what Aristotle proposes.

[3] Item compositum non est partes ex quibus componitur, sed sapientia componitur ex intellectu et scientia igitur etc. Maior patet in fine septimi Metaphysice: “hec enim syllaba ba non est b & a nec idem eis”, ut dicitur ibi. Minor apparet primo Magnorum Moraliū expresse.

[3] Also, a composite is not the parts of which it is composed, and wisdom is composed of understanding and knowledge; therefore, etc. The major premise is clear at the end of Book seven of the *Metaphysics*: “this syllable ‘ba’ is not b and a, nor the same as them,”<sup>296</sup> as is said there. The minor premise is found clearly in the first book of the *Magna Moralia*.<sup>297</sup>

[4] Item sequeretur quod physica et mathematica possent ita dici sapientia, sicut metaphysica; consequens est falsum, ut patet prohemio Metaphysicæ. Consequentia patet nam sicut metaphysica considerat et continet

[4] Also, it would follow that physics and mathematics could thus be called wisdom, just like metaphysics. But what follows is false, as is clear in the first book of the *Metaphysics*.<sup>298</sup> The consequence is clear, for just as metaphysics considers and

<sup>296</sup> Aristotle, *Met.* VII, 1041b14: “[...] the syllable is not the letters, nor is BA the same as B and A [...]” (trans. H. Tredennick).

<sup>297</sup> Aristotle, *MM* I, 1197a24: “Philosophic Thought or Wisdom is a compound of Scientific Thought and Intuition.” (Trans. G. C. Armstrong, modified).

<sup>298</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* I 982a1 and ff., but this is more clearly stated in *Met.* VI, 1025b3-1026a31. (I thank Hakan Genc for his help in finding these references.)

principia per que demonstrat conclusiones quas demonstrat, ita physica et mathematica, et omnis alia scientia.

contains principles through which it demonstrates conclusions, so it is for physics and mathematics and all other sciences.

[5] Item quamvis sapientia includit in sua ratione intellectum et scientiam, tamen non potest esse utrumque formaliter, sed vel intellectus tantum, et sic simpliciter loquendo non debet dici scientia, vel scientia tantum, et tunc non debet dici intellectus, vel alterum aliquid tunc non debet dici simpliciter nec intellectus nec scientia.

[5] Also, although wisdom includes understanding and knowledge in its definition, still it cannot formally be both, but rather either it is only understanding – and thus, absolutely speaking, it cannot be called knowledge – or it is only knowledge – and therefore, it cannot be called understanding, or it is something else still – therefore, it cannot be called either understanding or knowledge without qualification.

[6] Oppositum dicit Aristoteles, et probat dicens “oportet autem sapientem non solum ex principiis scire, sed et circa principia verum dicere”, quare idem erit sapientia intellectus et scientia.

[6] Aristotle says the opposite, and he proves it by saying “the wise person needs not only to know [conclusions] from principles, but also to say the truth about those principles;”<sup>299</sup> hence wisdom will be the same as understanding and knowledge.

[7] Multi sunt modi distinguendi sapientiam ab intellectu et scientia.

[7] There are many ways to distinguish wisdom from understanding and

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<sup>299</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1141a17-18: “The wise man therefore must not only know the conclusions that follow from his first principles, but also have a true conception of those principles themselves.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 484: “Oportet ergo sapientem non solum que ex principiis scire, set et circa principia verum dicere.”

Quidam enim dicunt quod in demonstratione scientifica demonstrante propter quid, oportet principia esse per se nota, et eorum notitia pertinet ad habitum qui dicitur intellectus, et oportet ibi esse demonstrabilis vel demonstrata cuius notitia pertinet ad scientiam, sed nec iste notitiae sufficiunt, sed oportet ibi esse connexionem principiorum ad conclusionem, quia oportet cognoscere non solum quod principia sint vera, et quod conclusio sit vera, sed etiam quod conclusio est vera propter veritatem principiorum, et haec tertia notitia pertinet ad sapientiam. Licet enim haec tres notitiae concurrant in eadem demonstratione, tamen formaliter distinguuntur. Aliud enim est cognoscere quod terra interposita est inter solem et lunam, et aliud quod eclipsatur luna, et aliud quod ipsa eclipsatur propter dictam terre interpositionem, et illam tertiam notitiam notavit Aristoteles in definitione ipsius scire primo Posteriorum, quando dicit “et quoniam illius est causa etc.”

first book of the *Posterior Analytics*, when he says “and inasmuch as its cause etc.”<sup>300</sup>

[8] Contra istum modum dicendi [8] Against this way of arguing it is obijcitur quia sequeretur quod omnis objected that it would follow that all scientia demonstrativa propter quid, demonstrative *propter quid* knowledge, quecumque esset de entibus infimis et even if it is about the lowest and the least vilibus, diceretur sapientia sicut et ipsa worthy things, would be said to be Metaphysica, cuius oppositum dicitur wisdom, just as metaphysics itself, the prohemia Metaphysice, et in isto texto opposite of which is said in the first book ubi dicit Aristoteles “sapientiam esse of the *Metaphysics*,<sup>301</sup> and in this text, honorabilissimorum.” where Aristotle says “Wisdom is of the most honourable.”<sup>302</sup>

[9] Sed ad hoc responderi potest, quod [9] But to that one can reply that just as we sicut in homine ponimus virtutem posit virtue in a certain respect and virtue secundum quid et virtutem simpliciter, without qualification in humans (I say (dico virtutem secundum quid, quia virtue in a certain respect, because it perficit hominem non secundum totum, perfects humans not according to the nec secundum eius partem whole, nor according to their most principalissimam, sicut sunt artes principal part, just as some arts only quedam, qua solum perficiunt hominem perfect humans according to the practical secundum intellectum factivum; dico intellect; and I call virtue without autem virtutem simpliciter que perficit qualification that which perfects humans

<sup>300</sup> Aristotle, *APo.* I, 70b: “[...] we possess scientific knowledge of a thing only when we know its cause [...]” (Trans. G. R. G. Mure).

<sup>301</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* I, 983a10-11.

<sup>302</sup> Aristotle, *EN* VI, 1141a16-17: “Hence it is clear that Wisdom must be the most perfect of the modes of knowledge.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 484: “Quare manifestum quoniam certissima utique scienciarum erit sapientia. [...] Et quemadmodum capud habens, sciencia honorabilissimorum.”

hominem secundum totum vel according to the whole, or according to  
 secundum partem principalissimam a this most principal part from which the  
 qua totum natum est simpliciter whole is intended to be named without  
 denominari), sicut in homine est dare qualification), in that same way there is in  
 prudentiam secundum quid, et man prudence in a certain respect and  
 prudentiam simpliciter. Et dico prudence without qualification. And I call  
 prudentiam secundum quid secundum prudence in a certain respect that  
 quam homo dicitur non prudens homo, according to which a man is not called a  
 sed prudens miles aut nauta etc. Et dico prudent man, but a prudent soldier or a  
 prudentiam simpliciter, secundum prudent sailor etc. And I call prudence  
 quam dicimus hominem simpliciter without qualification that according to  
 prudentem hominem, de qua prudentia which we call a man a prudent man  
 locutus est Aristoteles, dicens “videtur without qualifications, about which  
 autem prudentia esse posse bene prudence Aristotle talks when he says “it  
 consilium circa ipsius bona et seems that prudence can advise well about  
 conferentia non secundum partem, sed human goods and aptness, not according to  
 ad bene vivere totum”. De prudentia a part, but to living well as a whole.”<sup>303</sup>  
 autem secundum quid locutus est cum And he talked about prudence in a certain  
 subdit “signum autem quia et circa respect when he later said “a proof of this  
 aliquid prudentes dicimus, quando ad is that we also call ‘prudent’ in some  
 finem aliquem studiosum bene respect people who reason well toward a  
 ratiocinabuntur quorum non est ars.” Ita certain keen end, one to which craft does  
 dicemus in homine aliam esse not apply.<sup>304</sup> In the same way we

<sup>303</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1140a26-28: “Now it is held to be the mark of a prudent man to be able to deliberate well about what is good and advantageous for himself, not in some one department, for instance what is good for his health or strength, but what is advantageous as a means to the good life in general.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 481: “Videtur autem prudentes esse, posse bene consilium circa ipsi bona et conferentia, non secundum partem, puta qualia ad sanitatem vel fortitudinem, set ad bene vivere totum.”

<sup>304</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1140a28-30: “This is proved by the fact that we also speak of people as prudent or wise in some particular thing, when they calculate well with a view to attaining some particular end of value (other than those ends which are the object of an art) [...]” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier

sapientiam secundum quid, secundum quam homo dicitur sapiens mathematicus aut sapiens medicus, aliam autem sapientiam simpliciter, secundum quam dicimus hominem sapientem hominem, et est illa que convenit homini secundum eius partem et potentiam excellentissimam, scilicet respectu obiecti excellentissimi. De sapientia igitur secundum quid loquitur Aristoteles prohemio *Metaphysice*, cum dicit “artifices sapientiores esse expertis, et architectores esse sapientiores manu artificibus”. De sapientia autem simpliciter loquitur ibidem dicens eam esse circa primas causas et prima principia, nec esse activam sed speculativam, et ipsam solam esse liberam et divinam et honorabilissimam. Similiter in sexto huius loquitur de sapientia secundum quid, cum dicit “sapientiam autem in artibus certissimis, secundum artes assignamus Phidiam latomum sapientem, Polictetum statuificem”, distinguish in humans wisdom in a certain respect, according to which a someone is said to be a wise mathematician or a wise doctor, and wisdom without qualification, according to which we say that someone is a wise human, and that is the one which is suitable to humans according to their most excellent part and power; that is to say, with respect to the utmost object. Aristotle, therefore, is speaking of wisdom in a certain respect in the first book of the *Metaphysics*, when he says “craftsmen are wiser than those who [merely] have experience, and architects are wiser than the manual workers,”<sup>305</sup> and he talks about wisdom without qualification in that very place, saying that it is about the first causes and first principles, and that it is not active but speculative, and that itself alone is free and divine and most honourable. Similarly, in the sixth book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*] he talks about wisdom in a certain respect when he says that “wisdom exists in the most certain crafts and, according to them, we

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(1973c), pp. 481-482: “Signum autem quoniam et circa aliquid prudentes dicimus, quando ad finem aliquem *studiosi* bene ratiocinabuntur, quorum non est ars.”

<sup>305</sup> Aristotle, *Met.* I, 981b30-32: “[...] the man of experience is held to be wiser than the mere possessors of any power of sensation, the artist than the man of experience, the master craftsman than the artisan [...]” (Trans. H. Tredennick).

deinde subdit de sapiente simpliciter designate Pheidias as a wise sculptor [and] “esse autem quosdam sapientes Polykleitos as a wise statue maker,”<sup>306</sup> estimamus totaliter.” Dicerent ergo illi whence later Aristotle says about the wise quod ita in processu physico vel without qualification: “and we estimate mathematico, aut ubicunque contingit that some are wholly wise.”<sup>307</sup> Thus, they effectum demonstrare simpliciter per would say that in the process of physics or causam, est dare sapientiam formaliter mathematics or wherever it is appropriate distinctam ab intellectu et scientia, sicut to simply demonstrate from the cause, it is in metaphysica, licet sapientia in appropriate to present wisdom as formally processu metaphysico, propter distinct from understanding and excellentiam, magis debeat dici knowledge, just as in metaphysics, even simpliciter sapientia, sicut Paulum inter though wisdom in the metaphysical ceteros vocamus simpliciter process, because of its superiority, is more Apostolum, et videtur mihi quod hoc deserving of being called wisdom without posset rationabiliter sustineri. qualification, just as when, among all others, we call Paul simply “The Apostle,” and it seems to me that this can be rationally supported.

[10] Diceretur igitur quod sapientia non [10] Therefore, one would say that wisdom est formaliter intellectus et scientia, sed is not formally understanding and quasi materialiter et suppositive, quia knowledge, but [it is understanding and non secundum notitiam principii, nec knowledge] materially and suppositively, secundum notitiam conclusionis dicitur so to speak, because it is not called wisdom

<sup>306</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1141a9-11: “The term Wisdom is employed in the arts to denote those men who are the most perfect masters of their art, for instance, it is applied to Pheidias as a sculptor and to Polycleitus as a statuary.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 483: “Sapientiam autem in artibus certissimis artes assignamos; puta Pheidiam lathonum sapientem, *Policliton* statuificem...”

<sup>307</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1141a12-14: “But we also think that some people are wise in general and not in one department, not ‘wise in something else,’ [...]” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 483: “...esse autem quosdam sapientes existimamus totaliter non secundum partem.”

sapientia formaliter, sed secundum notitiam tertiam qua cognosco non solum hoc esse et illud, sed hoc esse propter illud.

formally according to the cognition of the principle, nor according to the cognition of the conclusion, but according to a third cognition by which I cognize not only that this is the case and that is the case, but also that this is the case on account of that being the case.

[11] Alio modo potest dici quod sola metaphysica dicitur sapientia, si loquamur solum de habitibus intellectualibus nobis humanitus acquisitis, prout de eis loquitur Aristoteles. Ipsa enim Metaphysica differt ab aliis scientiis, quia “ipsa versatur et circa principia doctrine communissima” ut apparet quarto Metaphysice, et circa prima principia essendi, scilicet circa Deum, et intelligentias. Alie autem scientie versantur circa principia specialiora. Modo prima principia doctrine communissima sunt tante latitudinis quod quicumque negat ea, ipse negando concedit aliud. Ex quo possibile est

[11] In another way, it can be said that only metaphysics can be called wisdom, if we only speak about the intellectual *habitus* acquired by us in the human way, just as Aristotle talks about them. For metaphysics differs from the other sciences, because “it dwells on and is about the most common principles of teaching”<sup>308</sup> – as is clear in the fourth book of the *Metaphysics* – and about the first principles of being, namely about God, and intelligences. Other sciences are about more specific principles. Only the first and most common principles of teaching are of so much breadth that whoever denies them, in denying one, grants another one. From this, it is possible to argue against

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<sup>308</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* IV, 1003a21-26: “There is a science which studies Being qua Being, and the properties inherent in it in virtue of its own nature. This science is not the same as any of the so-called particular sciences, for none of the others contemplates Being generally qua Being [...]” (Trans. H. Tredennick). (I thank Hakan Genc for his assistance in tracing this reference.)

arguere contra ipsum ducendo ipsum ad redargutionem. Sic autem non est de principiis specialibus. Propter quod “Metaphysica et Logica habent viam contra negantes sua principia et non alia scientia”, sicut dicitur primo Physicorum, et apparet quarto Metaphysice. Nec credas quod talis modus procedendi sit sophisticus (sicut aliqui putant), immo est verus processus non tamen ad probandum simpliciter, sed ad redarguendum negantem, ideo talem processum vocat Aristoteles “elenchum”. “Elenchus” enim non est syllogismus sophisticus, sed est syllogismus contradictionis, id est inferens et ducens ad metam contradictionis, qui potest accipere tanquam vera ea que respondens concedit, licet sint falsissima.

such a person leading them to recant their argument. This is not so with specific principles. Because of this, “metaphysics and logic have ways against those who deny their principles while other sciences do not”, as is said in the first book of the *Physics*,<sup>309</sup> and as is clear in the fourth of the *Metaphysics*.<sup>310</sup> And do not believe that such a way of proceeding is sophistic (as some think); on the contrary, it is the true process, not however to simply demonstrate, but to refute the one denying it; therefore, Aristotle calls such a process “*elenchus*.” “*Elenchus*” is not a sophistic syllogism, but it is a syllogism of contradiction, that is, inferring and leading to the turning point of a contradiction, [a syllogism] which can take to be true those things which the one responding grants to be true; even though they are very false.

[12] Ex quibus apparet, quod Metaphysica dupliciter se habet ad huiusmodi principia, uno modo per modum intellectus, in quantum concedit ea sine probatione ex sola

[12] From which it comes out that metaphysics has a twofold relationship to principles of this kind: one way through the mode of understanding, insofar as it grants them without demonstration from

<sup>309</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Phys.* I, 184b15-185a21.

<sup>310</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* IV, 1005a19-1005b34.

naturali inclinatione intellectus ad ipsum verum. Alio modo per modum scientie, in quantum habet viam ad arguendum de ipsis elenchice contra negantes ea. Ideo sapientia simul dicitur intellectus et scientia.

the sole natural inclination of the understanding toward the truth, and another way through the mode of knowledge, insofar as it has a way to argue about them in the elenchic way against those who deny them. Therefore, wisdom is at the same time called understanding and knowledge.

[13] Et quamvis ista sententia videtur esse clara, tamen non satisfacit dictis Aristotelis. Nam Aristoteles non solum vult quod sapientia sit intellectus, et scientia, circa prima doctrine principia, sed etiam circa prima principia essendi que sunt Deus et intelligentie, ut dicit quod “sapientia est intellectus et scientia honorabilissimorum natura,” et illa honorabilissima (dicit esse) in homine. Puta longe diviniore secundum naturam manifestissima ex quibus constat mundus, et ideo dicit “sapientiam esse circa admirabilia, difficillia et divina” et illa sunt Deus et

[13] And as much as this position seems to be clear, nevertheless it does not comply with what Aristotle says. For Aristotle not only wants that wisdom be understanding and knowledge about the first principles of teaching, but also about the first principles of being which are God and intelligences, as he says that “wisdom is understanding and knowledge of things of the most honourable nature,”<sup>311</sup> and that thing of the most honourable nature is said to be in man. Think about the deities: according to their nature, it is very clear that the world exists because of them, and for that reason [Aristotle] says: “wisdom is about

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<sup>311</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1141b1-2: “[...] Wisdom is both Scientific Knowledge and Intuitive Intelligence as regards the things of the most exalted nature.” *et passim* (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 484: “... manifestum quoniam sapientia est et scientia et intellectus honorabilissimorum natura. [...] Propter quod Anaxagoram et talem et tales sapientes quidem, prudentes autem non aiunt esse, cum videant ignorantes conferencia sibi ipsis, et superflua quidem et admirabilia et difficillia et divina scire ipsos aiunt.”

intelligentie, ut patet prohemio  
Metaphysice,

admirable, difficult and divine things” and they are God and the intelligences, as is clear in the first book of the *Metaphysics*.<sup>312</sup>

[14] Propter quod alii subtilius intuentes dicunt quod cum omnis nostra cognitio intellectiva dependeat quodammodo ex sensitiva, nos non possumus nisi ex sensibilibus ascendere ad notitiam separatorum circa que sapientia principaliter versatur, quia cum ista sensibilia valde sint improportionata illis substantiis separatis, ipsa non sunt sufficientia media ad ascendendum in sufficientem notitiam illarum, nisi intellectus noster ex proprio lumine suo naturali esset capax amplioris notitie de ipsis substantiis, quam esset illa que posset haberi de ipsis virtute sensuum. Immo dicunt ipsi quod illud lumen nostri intellectus propter nimium aspectum ad ista sensibilia obumbratur, ut sepe non possit naturas abstractorum percipere. Propter quod oportet in appetitu sedari sensibiles passiones, ut non trahant

[14] Because of that, others with more subtle insight say that as all our intellective cognition depends somehow on perceptible cognition, we cannot, lest from the perceptible things, ascend to the cognition of the separated things, which wisdom is mainly about, because – since these perceptible things are greatly disproportionate to those separated substances – the latter [i.e., the perceptible things] are not a sufficient means to ascend to a sufficient cognition of the former [i.e. of separated substances], unless our understanding is capable of [acquiring] from its own natural light a greater cognition about those substances than the one that could be had about them in virtue of the senses. Indeed, they say that that light of our understanding is obscured because of excessive attention to these perceptible things, in such a way that the natures of the abstract things often cannot

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<sup>312</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* I, 982b29-983a23.

impetum intellectus ad sensibilia. Quibus sedatis deputatur illud lumen, et possumus clare intueri substantias separatas illa claritate que est humane nature possibilis in hac vita. Ob hoc enim dictum est in fine primi Magnorum Moralium, quod “prudentia est sicut procurator sapientie que continens passiones et temperans parat locum sapientie ut aliis non impedita possit in proprium opus.” Dicunt igitur isti quod metaphysica que secundum Aristoteles vocatur “sapientia” in quantum versatur circa substantias separatas habet se ad huiusmodi substantias primo per modum scientie, in quantum non potest nisi per sensibilia venire in notitiam illarum; secundo per modum intellectus in quantum ultra sensibilibus exigentiam virtute proprii lumini sapit naturas earum. Et forte dicti tres modi dicendi non opponuntur ad invicem.

be perceived. Because of that, the perceptible passions must be confined in the appetite, so as not to pull the movement of the understanding toward the perceptible things. These [passions] being so confined, that light is [duly] cast, and we can clearly consider the separated substances with as much clarity as is possible to human nature in this life. Because of that, it is said at the end of the first [book] of the *Magna Moralia* that “prudence is like a manager of wisdom, which, containing and restraining passions, prepares the seat of wisdom so that it cannot be obstructed by other things in its own work.”<sup>313</sup> Therefore, they say that metaphysics, which, according to Aristotle is called “wisdom” insofar as it is about separate substances, relates to substances of this sort, firstly by way of knowledge, insofar as it cannot come to cognize them except through the perceptible things; secondly, by way of understanding, insofar as beyond the demands of the perceptible things, it grasps their natures in virtue of its own

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<sup>313</sup> Aristotle, *MM I*, 1198b17-20: “So likewise, Prudence or Practical Thought is a dispenser or steward to Philosophic Thought, ministering to it leisure and the freedom to perform its own task, by restraining and disciplining the passions of the soul.” (Trans. H. Tredennick).

light. And perhaps these three ways of speaking mentioned are not opposed to one another.

[15] Ad rationes principales dicendum est secundum primam viam, quod sapientia non est formaliter intellectus, neque scientia, sed materialiter modo predicto. Vel dicendum est juxta secundam viam, quod pro quanto sapientia, intellectus, et scientia sunt habitus distincti, sapientia non est intellectus et scientia, sed modum et quasi virtutem habens intellectus et scientie. Nam intellectus est habitus principiorum specialium per se notorum, scientia est habitus conclusionum ex se dubiarum prius et demonstratarum et posterius. Sapientia autem est habitus principiorum primorum et communissimorum, que modum habet intellectus in quantum concedita per se, et modum scientie habet, in quantum potest arguere de eis contra negantes. Vel dicendum secundum tertiam viam modo simili, scilicet quod sapientia non est formaliter intellectus neque scientia,

[15] To the main arguments, it should be said, according to the first route, that wisdom is not formally understanding, nor knowledge, but materially in the aforementioned way. Or it should be said, in a like manner, according to the second route that, insofar as wisdom, understanding and knowledge are distinct *habitus*, wisdom is not understanding and knowledge, but it has the mode or, so to speak, the virtue, of both understanding and knowledge. For understanding is the *habitus* of special principles cognized for themselves, knowledge is the *habitus* of conclusions previously doubted and then demonstrated. And wisdom is the *habitus* of the first and most common principles, which has the mode of understanding insofar as they are admitted by themselves, and it has the mode of knowledge, insofar as it can argue about them [i.e. about principles] against those who deny them. Or it must be said similarly, according to the third route, namely that wisdom is not

sed est habitus circa talia que nec ex se tantum notificabilia sunt nobis, nec tantum virtute mediorum per que oportet nos duci in notitiam ipsorum, sed secundum utrumque modum simul, propter quod similiter participat modum seu virtutem intellectus et scientie. Hec de questione.

formally understanding nor knowledge, but it is a *habitus* about such things that would not only be cognizable to us by themselves, nor only by virtue of some middle term by which we need to be led in the cognition of them, but according to both ways at once. Because of that, it similarly participates in the mode or virtue of the understanding and in that of knowledge. That is all about this question.

### 3.5.2 Whether wisdom is understanding and knowledge.

Having already dwelt on art and prudence in the beginning of book VI, in this question, Buridan will address the other three intellectual virtues: he asks whether wisdom (*sapientia*) is understanding (*intellectus*) and knowledge (*scientia*).

Before we turn to the text, we must note that the term *sapientia*, which I am translating merely as “wisdom,” corresponds to theoretical wisdom and counts as a theoretical intellectual virtue, not to be confused with its practical counterpart, *prudentia*, which I translate as “prudence” to avoid the longer yet oft-used expression “practical wisdom.” “Metaphysics” (*metaphysica*), as we shall see below, is another word Buridan uses as an equivalent to *sapientia* or theoretical wisdom. The detailed explanation as to why *sapientia* and *metaphysica* can be taken as synonyms<sup>314</sup> is given in Buridan’s *QMet. I*,

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<sup>314</sup> For a more elaborate account of this issue, cf. Biard (2012), pp. 285-295.

2 and could be presented in a nutshell as follows: “[...] among all other intellectual habitus, metaphysics deserves to be called wisdom. This is easily proved, because all conditions of wisdom suit it, and all conditions of the wise person suit the person having it [i.e., metaphysics].”<sup>315</sup> I will take these equivalences for granted in much of what follows.

Now, to delve into the question as to whether wisdom is understanding and knowledge, the objections state that they are not the same thing.

### 3.5.2.1 Arguments showing that wisdom is not knowledge and understanding

First, as noted in §2, we have the argument according to which if wisdom were reducible to knowledge and/or understanding (presumably either taken together or apart, for the sake of this argument), there would not be five intellectual virtues (i.e., wisdom, knowledge, understanding, prudence and art), as Aristotle says there are. So, wisdom cannot be understanding and knowledge.

The second objection (§3) states that:

- (P1) A composite is not equal to the parts of which it is composed.
- And                    (P2) wisdom is composed of understanding and knowledge.
- Therefore,        (C) wisdom is not the same thing as understanding and knowledge.

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<sup>315</sup> Buridan, *QMet* I, 2: “Inter ceteros habitus intellectuales metaphysica meretur dici sapientia. Hoc probatur facilliter: quia ipsi conveniunt omnes conditiones sapientiae et habenti eam conveniunt omnes conditiones sapientis.” (my translation of the Latin text presented by J. Biard in Biard (2012), p. 287, n. 3).

P1 is demonstrated with the example<sup>316</sup> of the syllable “ba,” which is a different entity from the letters “a” and “b;” whence a whole is different from its composing parts. P2 is quite literally stated by Aristotle in the *Magna Moralia*. So, if indeed we follow the trace of these Aristotelian passages, we would conclude that wisdom cannot be understanding and knowledge.

The third objection (§4) states that if wisdom were knowledge and understanding, then physics and mathematics would also be called wisdom, just as metaphysics is, for those two sciences – and actually all sciences, although Buridan focuses on the other two speculative sciences, as taxonomized in his *QMet.* VI, 2 – demonstrate conclusions from the principles they contain. Thus, all sciences would be wisdom. But this is clearly not the case, as Aristotle explains in the first book of the *Metaphysics* (and as Buridan himself discusses in the *Questions on the Metaphysics* I, 2) that only metaphysics truly is wisdom.<sup>317</sup>

The fourth objection (§5) states that although wisdom could be taken as knowledge and understanding without further qualification, wisdom cannot *formally* be knowledge and understanding at once. Since forms are mental qualities, if a *habitus* is a mental quality, as Buridan claims it is, then each *habitus* is different from the other. Since knowledge and understanding are different *habitus*, wisdom cannot formally be both. So, three options are presented here: either (a) it is only understanding, in which case it is not knowledge – because understanding is different from knowledge – or (b) it is only knowledge, in which case it is not understanding, or (c) it is neither one nor the other, and in that case, we would have a negative answer to the main question. Whichever

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<sup>316</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* VII, 1041b.

<sup>317</sup> On Buridan’s account of these three speculative sciences (i.e., physics, mathematics, and metaphysics) and their differences, with a focus on mathematics, cf. Thijssen (1985), especially pp. 75-76.

way we were to go, we would arrive at the same conclusion: that wisdom is not knowledge and understanding.

### 3.5.2.2 *Sed contra*

Against this way of arguing, Buridan wants us to consider (§6) what Aristotle says in the *Metaphysics* (982a) concerning the wise person who not only knows things from their (i.e, the things') principles, but who also says the truth about principles. Considering the image of the wise person, it seems that we could actually conflate this person's wisdom with a combination of their knowledge and their understanding. Then, in that sense, wisdom would be knowledge and understanding.

### 3.5.2.3 Buridan's reply to the main question (§§7-14)

Once these preliminary pro and con arguments have been presented, it is time for Buridan to start developing his own answer to the question. He proposes three possible solutions to the problem at hand: he presents three ways of describing how wisdom could differ from knowledge and understanding and, immediately after presenting each one, he assesses them. The first main way of espousing a distinction between those three intellectual virtues is presented in §7, a response is presented in §8, and that response is challenged in §§9 and 10. In §§11 and 12 we have the second way of arguing for the distinction, dismissed in §13. After these two assessments pointing toward the insufficiency of the proposed solutions, in §14 Buridan will offer us a third and final attempt at a distinction, which is then accepted once some nuance is added to our understanding of what it means for wisdom to be knowledge and understanding.

a. *The first attempt at showing that wisdom is understanding and knowledge*  
(§§7-10)

Buridan begins §7 with an explanation of ways in which we could distinguish wisdom from those other two intellectual virtues under consideration here. He describes three ways of knowing or cognizing: one according to which we assent to the truth of principles (i.e., *intellectus*), another one according to which we assent to the truth of conclusions (i.e., *scientia*), and finally, a third one according to which we assent to the truth of conclusions because of the truth of the principles (i.e., *sapientia*). This third kind of cognition, which establishes a causal (*propter quid*) relation, is the one we call wisdom, and, according to what has been said, namely that it does a different job from the other two (i.e., *intellectus* and *scientia*), it is formally different from them. Here, it is worth remembering that for two or more things to be considered formally the same, the definition of one must include the definition of the other(s). If the definition of wisdom does not contain the definitions of knowledge and understanding – as it does not – then they are not formally the same.

Wisdom, then, appears to be providing, in this example, a causal link between two states of affairs,<sup>318</sup> one represented by the truth of principles and the other by truth of the conclusions arrived at from those principles, and it is different from both begettings of (or assents to) those truths. The example Buridan gives is that of the eclipse: by building upon this sensory data, our understanding can assent to the general principle that, whenever when the earth is located between the sun and the moon, the moon is eclipsed. Based on that principle and on the information that we get from the senses (for instance, the realization that the moon is currently not visible), we can know (i.e.,

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<sup>318</sup> This causal link, albeit present here, is not a requirement for all syllogisms, to be sure.

assent to the conclusion) that the moon is currently not visible because it is eclipsed. But it is another thing, formally, to know that we assent to the conclusion that the moon is eclipsed on account of the fact that we assented to the principle that whenever the earth is between the moon and the sun the moon is eclipsed. However, this third kind of cognition, which seems to correspond to “wisdom” is what, according to Buridan, Aristotle defined as “(scientific) knowledge” in the *Posterior Analytics*. Although, from this example we can see that wisdom is not formally understanding and knowledge, the account of wisdom we get from this explanation seems misleading, as Buridan will point out.

In §8, Buridan argues that if we called all *propter quid* demonstrations wisdom, this intellectual virtue would not live up to its name, since we can give *propter quid* demonstrations of the most banal or lowly things, things which are usually considered to be beneath metaphysics, which is the most honourable virtue and synonymous with wisdom, as Aristotle himself claims in the *Metaphysics* (983a). With this argument *ad absurdum*, we are supposed to realise how the explanation from §7 is flawed and how, thus, the line it draws between wisdom, on the one hand, and knowledge and understanding, on the other, does not hold water. Moreover, this would lead back to the third objection from the beginning of the text (§4). But Buridan himself acknowledges that this is not quite enough to refute his opponents. In §9 he explains how considering multiple ways of talking about some concepts might contribute to our understanding of the question at hand: in an important parenthetical explanation, Buridan establishes the difference between a virtue taken in an unqualified manner (*simpliciter*), and a virtue taken in a certain respect (*secundum quid*) (§9):<sup>319</sup>

I say virtue in a certain respect, because it perfects humans not according to the whole, nor according to their most principal part, just as some arts only perfect humans according to the practical intellect; and I call virtue without qualification

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<sup>319</sup> On this distinction, cf. also Buridan, *QNE* VI, 9, §17, *supra*.

that which perfects humans according to the whole, or according to this most principal part from which the whole is intended to be named without qualification.<sup>320</sup>

To illustrate this point, we can take the case of prudence, presented by Buridan: we can describe a human being as being “a prudent person” or rather as “a prudent soldier,” “a prudent sailor” etc. In the first case, we are describing the prudent person according to that which perfects them as a whole or with regards to their main part (i.e., their humanity), whereas in the two other cases, we are describing the virtue that perfects a person in a specific respect (warfare and seafaring, respectively), according to one part, but which is not their defining feature as a human being. The case of prudence, Buridan suggests, is analogous to that of wisdom:<sup>321</sup> we could talk about “a wise person” and compare that to calling someone “a wise physician” or “a wise mathematician.” While in the latter two cases we are referring to the wisdom *secundum quid*, i.e. a wisdom concerning a non-principal part of those human beings, in the first case we are considering wisdom absolutely, taking the wise person to be wise with regards to metaphysics, namely the person who is wise according to their “most excellent part and power,” i.e., metaphysics as speculative knowledge about first causes and first principles.

In general, when we use the term “wisdom” we could be referring either to the excellence of someone who is merely knowledgeable about matters of mathematics (the wise mathematician), for instance, as well as the virtue of someone who is wise absolutely. In common parlance, it is as though we could have many “kinds” of wisdom, such as that of mathematics or physics, even though we know that, in a proper sense, only wisdom absolutely speaking ought to really be called wisdom or perhaps

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<sup>320</sup> *QNE*, VI, 12, §9, italics added for emphasis.

<sup>321</sup> On the analogies and disanalogies between prudence and wisdom, cf. Buridan, *QNE* VI, 22 and my accompanying commentary, *infra*.

even “Wisdom,” with a capital w – as it ranks above all “other wisdoms,” so to speak. This, as Buridan explains, is analogous to the case of Paul of Tarsus: even though Jesus had many followers, only twelve of whom are typically called “apostles,” we still use the expression “The Apostle” in its non-strict sense to refer to Paul, even if he is not strictly speaking an apostle (i.e., he is not listed amongst the apostles in the gospels or the Book of Acts). This idea of there being different “kinds” of wisdom in our common ways of expression (some of which are plainly improper ways of speaking, albeit ubiquitous) should assuage the worry that defining wisdom by its *propter quid* character would trivialize it.

And although it looks like this may help Buridan’s objector, this also helps us find a way of giving an affirmative answer to the main question: in a technical sense, insofar as it demonstrates the effect from the cause, wisdom is and must be *formally* distinct from knowledge and understanding, but wisdom, knowledge and understanding can still be considered to be analogous materially or suppositively (§10). This is because wisdom is not called wisdom on account of its knowledge of principles (in which case it would be reduced to understanding) nor on account of its knowledge of conclusions (in which case it would be reduced to knowledge) – which is why they are not *formally* the same – but rather because of that third kind of knowledge, by which I come to know that this is the case *because of* that other thing that is the case. So, wisdom is knowledge and understanding insofar as it *presupposes* knowledge and understanding: it relies on the assent *scientia* gives to true conclusions and the assent *intellectus* gives to true principles in order to assent to a proposition stating that something is the case on account of a certain something else. In that sense, the terms of the propositions which are the object of understanding, knowledge and wisdom are the same, and so are the *supposita* of those terms – and thus they are also materially the same – even if each of the acts of assent and corresponding *habitus* are not formally the same. Although wisdom cannot *formally* be knowledge and understanding, it is *as if* it were those two

virtues materially or suppositively: the truths of wisdom are begotten by the truths to which knowledge and understanding assent.

But this is not the only possible way out of this conundrum and to give an affirmative reply to the main question.

*b. The second attempt at showing that wisdom is understanding and knowledge (§§11-13)*

As suggested above, even if physics and mathematics could be called wisdom in a certain, improper sense (*secundum quid*), Buridan says here (§11), echoing once again his view from the *Questions on the Metaphysics*,<sup>322</sup> that only metaphysics can aptly be called wisdom – wisdom here understood *simpliciter*, as the utmost speculative intellectual habitus. This shows, once again that wisdom is distinct from knowledge and understanding, for whereas metaphysics – and, thereby, wisdom – deals with the most general principles of teaching (*communissima*) and the first principles of being (i.e., God and the intelligences), which someone cannot deny without contradicting themselves or without eventually coming to admit the very things they tried to deny, other sciences deal with more specific principles against which one can argue without contradiction, for they are independent of one another. What sets metaphysics and logic apart from other sciences, granting them their own status as wisdom, is a sort of special standing they have, insofar as they are both able to refute those who deny their principles. Buridan admits that some people might see this refutation as being sophistical, but he quickly explains that it is not; it is rather an elenctic refutation: a syllogistic method which allows to disprove those who deny one or more of those

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<sup>322</sup> Buridan, *QMet.*, I, 2.

principles – in this case, in denying one principle, the person must grant another, which exists within the same set of rules, and which eventually leads back to the corroboration of the principle originally under attack.

Now although this might incline us to think, once again, that wisdom is not knowledge and understanding, in §12 Buridan posits that what it actually shows is that metaphysics entertains a twofold relation to the *communissima*: on the one hand, it relates to these principles through the understanding’s natural light and inclination to the truth and, on the other, through knowledge, by means of elenctic refutations. In this sense, we can go back to the idea that even if wisdom cannot *formally* be knowledge and understanding, it can be both materially or suppositively, through this twofold relation.

But something is still amiss, since, as we learn from §13, this explanation does not fully comply with what Aristotle says. Despite accounting for the first principles of *teaching* described above (i.e., those to whose truth we assent by *intellectus*), this explanation does not account for the first principles of *being*, i.e., God and the intelligences. Here, we must recall that wisdom or metaphysics has as its objects not only the utmost generality of being,<sup>323</sup> but also the highest, noblest, most difficult things, which are those which are the furthest from our senses. These “things,” thus, are God and the intelligences (mentioned earlier but not properly taken into consideration yet). Thus, what is lacking is an explanation of how wisdom is knowledge and understanding not only with regards to the *communissima*, but also to God and the intelligences, since wisdom is knowledge and understanding “of things of the most honourable nature.”<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Cf., e.g., Buridan, *QMet.* I, 2: “metaphysicus maxime cognoscit omnia, quia metaphysica est communissima, cum ipsa consideret de ente in eius tota communitate,” as transcribed in Biard (2012), p. 286, n. 6.

<sup>324</sup> *QNE* VI, 12, §13.

c. *The third attempt at showing that wisdom is understanding and knowledge*  
(§14)

In an attempt to come to a fully satisfying answer to the main question, Buridan calls on another, yet more subtle, set of opinions (§14), more in line with Aristotle's thought – a way with which he seems content.

According to this third way of thinking, wisdom does pertain to God and the intelligences but in order to arrive at any presumed knowledge about those higher beings we must start from sensible things. Intellective cognition depends on sensitive cognition: we need *sensibilia* to ascend to separated things. But because sensible things are evidently disproportionate to God and the intelligences, *sensibilia* are a necessary but not a sufficient condition for our knowledge of divine things. Thus, we need the addition of the understanding and its natural light, which can achieve a greater knowledge than the senses themselves.

Now, the light of the understanding is often dimmed by the distractions of the senses, which preclude it from perceiving the nature of abstract things. This is where prudence comes in – and why it has such an important role with regards to wisdom, as we shall see in q. 22:<sup>325</sup> prudence subdues passions in the appetite, allowing for the light of the understanding to be cast on what is beyond the *sensibilia*, making the separate substances as clear as possible to our human nature. In this sense, metaphysics is called wisdom because it is about separate substances. And it comes to acquaint itself with these separate substances by means of knowledge (*scientia*) of conclusions of demonstrations as well as by means of the understanding (*intellectus*) of principles,

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<sup>325</sup> Cf. sections 3.6.1 and 3.6.2 *infra*.

through which it grasps the nature of abstract things, with a little help from prudence. It is, again, in this sense that we can say that wisdom is indeed knowledge and understanding – only materially and suppositively, in that it presupposes what is begotten via knowledge and understanding and refers to the same *supposita* and things. In fact, as Buridan states at the very end of §14, these three attempts of responding affirmatively to the main question might just be compatible with one another. And each of the three, with its particular methodological steps, will play a part in the replies to the objections presented at the very first section of the text.

#### 3.5.2.4 Replies to the objections

As a means of addressing the difficulties proposed in §§1-5, Buridan proceeds to a brief recap (§15) of the three ways above. According to the first way, one may say that wisdom, despite being *formally* distinct from knowledge and understanding, is the same as them *materially*, because it cognizes separate substances through knowledge and understanding, as was stated at the end of §14, and complementing the first explanation offered in §10.

According to the second way, it is said that although these three intellectual virtues are distinct, wisdom has the mode of the other two, because understanding means assenting to specific principles, knowledge means assenting to the demonstrations of conclusions which we did not previously have, and wisdom means having the first and most general principles (which are admitted by themselves) and being able to use these principles and the conclusions derived from them to argue against those who doubt or deny them.

According to the third way, even though wisdom is said to be formally different from knowledge and understanding, for the reasons we have seen (they are different intellectual acts and *habitus* with different kinds of objects), wisdom cannot be either knowledge only or understanding only. Rather, it must be both at once insofar as it deploys both acts and both virtues. It is in this sense, through these so-called “modes” (i.e., *intellectus* and *scientia*), that we can say that wisdom is both – and at once – knowledge and understanding. And thus we come to a thorough reply to the first, second, third, and fourth objections.

### 3.6.1 *Questio vicesima secunda* | Question twenty-two

Utrum sapientia sit virtus melior quam prudentia

Whether wisdom is a better virtue than prudence

<p>[1] Arguitur quod non, quia virtus felicitabilior est melior. Sed prudentia est felicitabilior, cum septimo Politice dicit Aristoteles quod “quidam igitur unicuique felicitatis adiacet tantum quantum quidem virtutis et prudentie et eius quod est agere secundum has sit concessum nobis, teste Deo qui felix quidem est et beatus, propter</p>	<p>[1] It is argued that it is not, because a virtue abler to make us happy is better. Now, prudence is abler to make us happy, since in the seventh book of the <i>Politics</i> Aristotle says that “let us grant, therefore, that to each person there falls just as much happiness as they achieve of virtue and prudence and acting following them; the evidence of this being God, who is happy and blessed, but on account of no external goods”<sup>326</sup> etc.</p>
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<sup>326</sup> Aristotle, *Pol.* VII, 1323b22-26: “Let us then take it as agreed between us that to each man there falls just so large a measure of happiness as he achieves of virtue and prudence and of virtuous and prudent

nullum autem extrinsecorum bonorum” etc.

[2] Item parum post dicit “nullum autem bonum opus neque viri, neque civitatis sine virtute et prudentia,” sed multi multa bona operantur sine metaphysica, que sapientia dicitur; ergo prudentia est magis nobis necessaria ad bene operandum et per consequens ipsa est melior.

[2] Also, a little later he says “but no good work neither of man nor of the state [is performed] without virtue and prudence,”<sup>327</sup> but many perform many good deeds without metaphysics, which is called wisdom. Therefore, prudence is more necessary for us to act well and, consequently, it is better.

[3] Quidam etiam hoc omnino convincere putantes, arguunt sic: illa virtus est melior que perficit meliorem anime particulam. Prudentia autem est huiusmodi, ergo etc. Maiorem videtur Aristotelem ponere sexto huius expresse, et in septimo Politice. Minor autem probatur multipliciter.

[3] And some, thinking this to be entirely convincing, argue like this: that the best virtue is the one that perfects the best part of the soul. And prudence is like that; therefore, etc. It seems that Aristotle clearly shows the major premise in the sixth book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*]<sup>328</sup> and also in the seventh book of the *Politics*.<sup>329</sup> And the minor premise is proved in many ways.

[4] Primo sic: illud est optimum hominis quod corrumpitur per

[4] First, like this: the best in a human is that which is corrupted by badness and is

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action: in evidence of this we have the case of God, who is happy and blessed, but is so on account of no external goods [...]” (Trans. H. Rackham, modified).

<sup>327</sup> Aristotle, *Pol.* VII, 1323b34: “[...] there is no good action either of a man or of a state without virtue and prudence [...]” (Trans. H. Rackham, modified).

<sup>328</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *EN* VI, 1139a-1139b.

<sup>329</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* VII, 1333a16-30.

malitiam, et extinguitur per destroyed by beastlikeness, and the part [of  
bestialitatem, sed particula the soul] perfectible through prudence is of  
perfectibilis per prudentiam est this sort, and the speculative part is not;  
huiusmodi, et non particula therefore, etc.  
speculativa, ergo etc.

[5] Maior istius syllogismi patet [5] The major premise of that syllogism is  
septimo huius, ubi vult Aristoteles clear in the seventh book [of the  
quod optimum in homine malo malitia *Nicomachean Ethics*],<sup>330</sup> where Aristotle is  
humana aliter corruptum est quam in of the opinion that the best in the bad human  
homine bestiali, quoniam in homine is corrupted by human badness in a different  
malo corruptum est quia depravatum, way than in the beastlike human, since in the  
in homine vero bestiali sic corruptum human the best is corrupted because it is  
est quod non utitur eo. Minor autem deformed, but in the beastlike human the  
apparet in sexto huius expresse, ubi best is so corrupted because they do not use  
dicit Aristoteles quod temperantia it. And the minor premise clearly appears in  
salvat prudentiam, et quod the sixth book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*],  
intemperantia sive malitia corrumpit where Aristotle says that temperance  
eam, que tamen non corrumpit neque preserves prudence, and that intemperance  
pervertit estimationem speculativam, or badness corrupts it. However, it does not  
puta quoniam “trigonum duobus rectis corrupt nor pervert speculative assessment,  
equales habet etc.” for think of “a triangle [which] has [angles]  
equal to two right [angles]” etc.<sup>331</sup>

<sup>330</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *EN VII*, 1150a1-5.

<sup>331</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1140b13-16: “[...] for pleasure and pain do not destroy or pervert all beliefs, for instance, the belief that the three angles of a triangle are, or are not, together equal to two right angles, but only beliefs concerning action.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 482: “... puta quoniam trigonum duos rectis equales habet vel non habet, set eas que circa operabile.”

[6] Secundo minor principalis probatur sic: principalissimum in homine est id quod est maxime homo, sed pars perfectibilis per prudentiam est illud quod est maxime homo, ergo etc.

[6] Second, the minor premise of the main argument is proved thus: the most important thing in a human is that which is chiefly human. And the part perfectible through prudence is that which is chiefly human; therefore, etc.

[7] Maior videtur nota de se. Minor probatur per rationes Philosophi nono huius, nam illud in homine maxime dicitur homo, in quod continere vel non continere homo dicitur continens, vel incontinens, et in quod vincere aut vinci homo dicitur victor aut victus, sed hoc est pars prudentialis, non pars aliqua speculativa. Ideo etc.

[7] The major premise seems known in itself. The minor is proved through the Philosopher's arguments in the ninth book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*],<sup>332</sup> for that thing in humans is chiefly called human because it is by being contained or not being contained that someone is said to be continent or incontinent, and it is due to conquering or being conquered that someone is called a conqueror or one conquered. But this is the prudential part, not some other speculative part. Therefore, etc.

[8] Tertio probatur minor principalis sic: naturale precipiens melius est obediente, sed pars prudentialis precipit parti sapientiali. Probatur per Aristotelem sexto huius dicentem quod "prudentia licet non precipiat

[8] Third, the minor premise of the main argument is proved thus: the [part] which instructs by nature is better than the [part] which obeys. But the prudential part instructs the sapiential part. This is proved by Aristotle's saying, in the sixth book [of

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<sup>332</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *EN IX*, 1168b35-1169a3.

sapientia tamen precipit eius gratia.” Arguam ergo sic: cui precipit prudentia illi precipit pars per prudentiam perfecta, sed prudentia precipit parti per sapientiam perfectabili, scilicet quod speculetur gratia sapientie acquirende. Propter quod etiam in principio huius sexti, et in tertio de Anima vult Aristoteles quod pars speculativa nihil movet, practica autem movet ceteras potentias. Et confirmatur, quia cui principatur appetitus intellectivus, eidem principatur intellectus appetitivus, qui est intellectus prudentialis. Habent enim se inseparabiliter in movendo, propter quod Aristoteles pro eodem habuit electionem esse appetitum intellectivum, vel intellectum appetitivum, et in tertio de Anima voluit quod “appetitus nihil movet sine intelligentia practica, necque hec sine illo”, sed appetitus intellectivus

the *Nicomachean Ethics*], that “even though prudence does not instruct wisdom, nevertheless it instructs for its sake.”<sup>333</sup> Therefore, I would argue thus: that which prudence instructs, the part perfected by prudence instructs it. But prudence [also] instructs the part perfectible by wisdom, namely that it should speculate for the sake of acquiring wisdom. That is why in the beginning of the sixth [book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*], and in the third book of the *De Anima* Aristotle claims that the speculative part moves nothing, whereas the practical one moves all the other powers.<sup>334</sup> And this is confirmed, because that which the intellectual appetite orders the appetitive intellect also orders, and that is the prudential intellect. For they find themselves inseparable in moving, which is why Aristotle held that choice is intellective appetite or appetitive intellection. And in the third book of the *De Anima*, Aristotle was of the opinion that “the appetite moves nothing without practical intelligence, nor

<sup>333</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1145a6-9: “[...] it is not really the case that Prudence is in authority over Wisdom, or over the higher part of the intellect, any more than medical science is in authority over health.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 493: “Set tamen neque et principalis est sapiencie neque melioris particule, quemadmodum neque sanitatis medicinalis. Non enim utitur ipsa, set videt qualiter fiat illa cuius gracia precipit, set non illi.”

<sup>334</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1139a36-1139b2 and *DA III*, 432b26-433b3.

principatur intellectui speculativo et  
 universaliter omnibus potentiis anime,  
 unde cum volumus ambulamus et cum  
 volumus speculamur, et cum non,  
 non; ideo etc.

does the latter [move] without the  
 former.”<sup>335</sup> But the intellectual appetite  
 instructs the speculative intellect and all  
 powers of the soul universally; whence  
 when we want, we walk, and when we want,  
 we speculate, and when we do not want to,  
 we do not; therefore, etc.

[9] Item, ad principale arguunt illi sic:  
 prudens non metaphysicus melior est  
 metaphysico non prudente; ergo  
 prudentia est melior metaphysica.

[9] Also, to the main [question], they argue  
 thus: the prudent non-metaphysician is  
 better than the non-prudent metaphysician.  
 Therefore, prudence is better than  
 metaphysics.

[10] Consequentia videtur de se nota,  
 sed antecedens probatur sic,  
 quicumque simpliciter est bonus  
 homo est melior quocumque non bono  
 simpliciter homine, sed prudens non  
 metaphysicus est simpliciter bonus  
 homo, quia impossibile est simpliciter  
 prudentem esse, et non esse bonum  
 hominem, ut apparet in isto sexto. Sed  
 metaphysicus non prudens non est  
 simpliciter bonus homo, quia sine

[10] The consequence seems known by  
 itself, but the antecedent is proved thus:  
 whoever is a good person without  
 qualification is better than a person who is  
 not good without qualification, but the  
 prudent non-metaphysician is a good person  
 without qualification, for it is impossible to  
 be prudent without qualification and not to  
 be a good person, as is clear in the sixth  
 book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>336</sup> But the  
 non-prudent metaphysician is not a good

<sup>335</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *DA* III, 433a18-26: “So these two, appetite and practical thought, seem reasonably considered as the producers of movement. [...] mind is never seen to produce movement without appetite [...] but appetite produces movement contrary to calculation [...]” (Trans. W. S. Hett).

<sup>336</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *EN* VI, 1141b13-14.

prudencia et morali virtute nullus person without qualification, because potest esse bonus homo. without prudence and moral virtue no one can be a good person.

[11] Item, illa virtus est melior, cuius principalis effectus et proprius est melior, sed finalis effectus prudentie est melior quam finalis effectus sapientie. Probatio, quia finis sapientie est scire solum, vel speculari, ut apparet prohemia et secundo metaphysice, finis autem prudentie est bene vivere totum. Hoc autem est melius quam scire tantum. [11] Besides, the better virtue is the one whose main and proper effect is better, and the final effect of prudence is better than the final effect of wisdom. The proof: the goal of wisdom is only to know, or to speculate, as is clear in the first and second books of the *Metaphysics*,<sup>337</sup> but the goal of prudence is to live well as a whole. And that is better than only knowing.

[12] Item, illa notitia est melior, que est regula et mensura bonitatis humane, quam que non. Sed sola prudentia est huiusmodi, ut vult Aristoteles sexto huius, dicens, “signum autem etenim nunc omnes, quando definiunt virtutem apponunt habitum, dicentes et ad que est secundum rectam rationem, quoniam talis habitus virtus est, que secundum rectam rationem. Recta autem que secundum prudentiam. Videntur, [12] Besides, the cognition which is the rule and measure of human goodness is better than one which is not. But only prudence is like that, as Aristotle states in the sixth book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*], saying “and now indeed the evidence: all persons, when defining virtue, add [something] to the *habitus*, saying also, ‘which is in accordance with right reason.’ For virtue is such a habitus, which is in accordance with right reason. And right [reason] is that which is in accordance with prudence. At

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<sup>337</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* I and *Met.* II generally speaking, but mainly 980a21-983a21 and 993a30-993b29.

utique divinare aequaliter omnes”, et ob hoc in secundo huius, recta ratio accepta fuit in definitione virtutis. Similiter etiam Seneca et Tullius per omnes libros suos videntur omnem nostram felicitatem reducere ad mores, quorum tamen prudentia regula est, et domina. Et si quandoque dicant sapientiam felicitare, videntur uti nomine sapientie pro prudentia.

any rate, they all seem to guess [as much] somehow.”<sup>338</sup> And, because of that, in the second book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*] right reason was admitted into the definition of virtue.<sup>339</sup> Similarly, Seneca and Cicero, in all of their books, seem to reduce all of our happiness to customs, whose ruler and master is prudence. And if sometimes they say that wisdom makes us happy, they seem to use the name “wisdom” for prudence.

[13] Oppositum videtur sepe tenere Aristoteles in isto sexto, dicens, “erit utique sapientia intellectus et scientia, et quemadmodum caput habens scientia honorabilissimorum”, quasi arguat sic, habitus ille est melior et honorabilior qui est circa melius et honorabilius obiectum. Sapientia autem versatur circa Deum et

[13] Aristotle often seems to hold the opposite in the sixth book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*], saying that “wisdom will at any rate be understanding and knowledge, with knowledge of the most honorable objects having[, as it were, a] head,”<sup>340</sup> as if he were arguing thus: that the better and more honorable *habitus* is that which is about a better and more honorable

<sup>338</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1144b21-1144b26: “A proof of this is that everyone, even at the present day, in defining Virtue, after saying what disposition it is and specifying the things with which it is concerned, adds that it is a disposition determined by the right principle; and the right principle is the principle determined by Prudence. It appears therefore that everybody in some sense, divides that Virtue is a disposition of this nature, namely regulated by Prudence.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 492: “Signum autem; et enim nunc omnes quando diffiniunt virtutem apponunt habitum, dicentes et ad que est, secundum rectam rationem; recta autem que secundum prudentiam. Videntur utique divinare aequaliter omnes...”

<sup>339</sup> Cf. esp. Aristotle, *EN II*, 1103b33 (*et passim*).

<sup>340</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1141b: “Hence Wisdom must be a combination of Intelligence and Scientific Knowledge: it must be knowledge having as it were a head.” (Trans. H. Rackham, modified according to Rackham’s footnote referencing Plato’s *Gorgias*, 505d). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 484: “Quare erit utique sapientia, intellectus et scientia. Et quemadmodum caput habens, scientia honorabilissimorum.”

Intelligentias, qui multo sunt nobiliores quam sit homo et actus humani circa que versatur prudentia, unde subdit Aristoteles “inconveniens utique, si quis scientiam Politicam, vel prudentiam studiosissimam estimat esse, si non optimum eorum que in mundo homo est.”

object. And wisdom is about God and the intelligences, which are much nobler than man and human acts, which prudence is about; whence Aristotle says later: “it is indeed inappropriate for someone to think that political science, or prudence, is the keenest knowledge, since man is not the best that there is in the world.”<sup>341</sup>

[14] Item, in fine sexti huius dicit quod “sicut sanitas facit felicitatem corporis, sapientia facit felicitatem anime,” et quod “sicut ars medicinalis est ad sanitatem, ita prudentia est ad felicitatem”. Ars autem medicinalis non principatur sanitati; non enim precipit sanitati quid aut quando operetur, sed precipit gratia sanitatis acquirende vel conservande, tanquam ministri ipsi sanitati, et sanitas sit finis eius; ergo similiter prudentia erit ministra sapientie, et sapientia erit finis eius. Hoc autem intendebat

[14] Also, at the end of the sixth book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*], he says that “just as good health produces the happiness of the body, wisdom produces the happiness of the soul,” and that “just as medicine is to health, so is prudence to happiness.”<sup>342</sup> But medicine does not rule over health, for it does not prescribe health what to do or when, but it orders [what things ought to be done] for the sake of the acquisition or maintenance of health, much like a servant of health having health as its goal. Therefore, similarly, prudence will be the servant of wisdom, and wisdom will be its

<sup>341</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1141a21-23: “For it is absurd to think that Political Science or Prudence is the loftiest kind of knowledge, inasmuch as man is not the highest thing in the world.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 484: “Inconveniens enim si quis scientiam politicam vel prudentiam studiosam existimat esse, si non optimum eorum in mundo, homo est.”

<sup>342</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1144a3-5: “Wisdom produces Happiness, not in the sense in which medicine produces health, but in the sense in which healthiness is the cause of health.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 481: “Deinde et faciunt quidem, non ut medicinalis autem sanitatem, set ut sanitas, sic sapiencia felicitatem.”

Aristoteles in his verbis: “neque prudentia principalis est sapientie, quemadmodum neque sanitati medicinalis. Non enim utitur ipsa, sed videt qualiter fiat illa cuius gratia precipit sed non illi.” Et ponit Aristoteles aliud exemplum, scilicet, quod dicere prudentiam principari sapientie simile est ac si diceremus politicam principari diis ex eo quod precipit circa deorum templa et sacrificia. Non tamen diis, sed gratia deorum. Et in fine *Magnorum Moralium* dicit Aristoteles “prudentiam se habere ad sapientiam, sicut procurator in domo ad dominum qui omnia disponit et preparat domini gratia”, ut dominus a necessariis ex solutus – ex necessariis solutus – possit operari sibi congruentia; sic enim prudentia tanquam ministra

end. Now, Aristotle intended this with his words “prudence does not rule over wisdom, just as medicine does not rule over health, For it does not use it, but it sees in what way it brings about that for the sake of which it gives orders – and not that which it orders.”<sup>343</sup> And Aristotle gives another example, namely, that to say that prudence rules over wisdom is similar to saying that politics rules over the gods, because it orders things concerning temples and sacrifices. However, [it] does not [order] the gods but [orders] for their sake. And, at the end of the *Magna Moralia*, Aristotle says “prudence has the same relation to wisdom, as the manager of a household to the houselord, as she arranges and prepares everything for the sake of the lord,”<sup>344</sup> so that the houselord, freed from such obligations, can do what suits him. In the same way indeed prudence, as a servant,

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<sup>343</sup> Aristotle, *EN VI*, 1145a7-9: “[...] it is not really the case that Prudence is in authority over Wisdom, or over the higher part of the intellect, any more than medical science is in authority over health. Medical science does not control health, but studies how to procure it; hence it issues orders in the interests of health, but not to health.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 493: “Set tamen neque et principalis est sapientie neque melioris particule quemadmodum neque sanitatis medicinalis. Non enim utitur ipsa, set videt qualiter fiat illa cuius gratia precipit, set non illi.”

<sup>344</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *MM I*, 1198b13-16: “Perhaps her position is rather that of a steward or housekeeper. Such an one has rights over everything in the house, and exercises dispensation thereof; still he is not the master of all, but ministers leisure to his lord, so that he, undistracted by the care of daily necessities, may not be debarred from any of those noble actions which befit him.” (Trans. G. Cyril Armstrong).

parat locum sapientie, continens  
passiones, et has temperans.

prepares a place for wisdom, restraining  
passions and moderating them.

[15] Item, in decimo huius: [15] Besides, in the tenth book [of the  
“operationem secundum virtutem  
optimam et optime partis” que  
perfecta felicitas, dicit Aristoteles esse  
“speculativam”, quod ibidem probat  
multis rationibus. Et in prohemio  
Metaphysice videtur Aristoteles  
omnino preferre metaphysicam ceteris  
habitibus intellectualibus, dicens, et  
“ut dicimus homo liber qui suimet et  
non alterius causa est, sic et hec sola,  
scilicet metaphysica, libera est  
scientiarum; sola namque hac suimet  
causa est”, et ob hoc etiam totum  
genus speculativum videtur aliquibus  
excellere totum genus practicum, quia  
practice scientie sunt propter opus,

[15] Besides, in the tenth book [of the  
*Nicomachean Ethics*], Aristotle says that  
“the operation in accordance with the best  
virtue and the best part,” which is perfect  
happiness, is “contemplative,”<sup>345</sup> something  
which, in that very place, he proves with  
many arguments. And in the first book of  
the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle also seems to  
prefer metaphysics to all other intellectual  
habitus, saying also “as we call ‘free’ a  
person who exists for their own sake and not  
for another’s, so too this one science is free,  
namely metaphysics, for it alone exists for  
its own sake.”<sup>346</sup> And for this reason the  
whole contemplative kind seems to some to  
excel over the whole practical kind, for  
practical sciences exist on account of what

<sup>345</sup> Aristotle, *EN X*, 1177a12-19: “But if happiness consists in activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be activity in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be the virtue of the best part of us. [...] it is the activity of this part of us in accordance with the virtue proper to it that will constitute perfect happiness; and it has been stated already that this activity is the activity of contemplation.” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 576: “Si autem *felicitas est secundum virtutem operatio*, rationale secundum optimam; hec autem utique erit optimi, sive igitur intellectus hoc sive aliud quid quod utique secundum naturam videtur principari et dominari et intelligenciam habere de bonis et divinis, sive divinum ens et ipsum, sive eorum que in nobis divinissimum, huius operatio secundum propriam virtutem erit utique perfecta felicitas. Quoniam autem est speculativa, dictum est.”

<sup>346</sup> Aristotle, *Met. I*, 982b25-27: “[...] for just as we call a man independent who exists for himself and not for another, so we call this the only independent science, since it alone exists for itself.” (Trans. H. Tredennick).

speculative autem propter se, seu they produce, whereas the contemplative  
propter scire solum. ones exist on account of themselves, or on  
account of knowing alone.

[16] Item, parum post dicit Aristoteles [16] Also, a little later, Aristotle says “and it  
“nec tali”, scilicet, metaphysica is not fitting to consider a science more  
“aliam honorabiliorem oportet honorable than this one,”<sup>347</sup> namely  
existimare”, et probat, dicens, “nam metaphysics. And he proves it saying  
maxime divina est, maxime est “metaphysics is the most divine and ought  
honoranda; talis autem duplex erit, to be most honored, and it will be [divine]  
quam enim maxime Deus habet dea in two ways: insofar as God possesses/loves  
scientiarum est, et utique, si qua sit it the most, it is a goddess among sciences,  
divinorum; sola autem ista, scilicet and, especially, if it is a [science] of divine  
metaphysica, ambo hec sortita est, things. And only this one, namely  
necessariores quidem omnes sunt metaphysics, fulfills both of these. Indeed,  
ipsa, dignior vero nulla.” all [other sciences] are more necessary than  
it, but none is worthier.”<sup>348</sup>

[17] In solutione huius questionis ego [17] In the answer to this question, I  
prescindoo a sapientia et prudentia separate from human wisdom and prudence  
humanis omnem habitum nobis every *habitus* supernaturally infused in us,  
supernaturaliter infusum, et ab ista and I separate the future life from this life.  
vita vitam futuram. Quero ergo si non Therefore, I ask – if there were no other life

<sup>347</sup> Aristotle, *Met.* I, 983a4-5: “[...] nor must we suppose that any other form of knowledge is more precious than this [...]” (Trans. H. Tredennick).

<sup>348</sup> Aristotle, *Met.* I, 983a6-10: “[...] for what is most divine is most precious. Now there are two ways only in which it can be divine. A science is divine if it is peculiarly the possession of God, or if it is concerned with divine matters. And this science alone fulfils both these conditions; for (a) all believe that God is one of the causes and a kind of principle, and (b) God is the sole or chief possessor of this sort of knowledge. Accordingly, although all other sciences are more necessary than this, none is more excellent.” (Trans. H. Tredennick).

esset alia vita nec aliquis habitus nobis supernaturaliter infusus, ita quod metaphysica, que de primis causis entium considerat ea que de eis possunt humana ratione convinci, dicatur sapientia; et prudentia dicatur que circa agibilia humana, scilicet que sunt in potestate nostra fieri vel non fieri, consiliatur, iudicat, et precipit que sint agenda, et que omittenda, et qualiter, et quando, et ubi sint agenda vel omittenda, et sic de aliis circumstantiis. Questio nunc solvenda esset an sapientia sit melior quam prudentia, vel e contra?

nor any *habitus* supernaturally infused in us – that metaphysics, which, concerning the first causes of beings, considers what is capable of being convincingly argued for by human reason, be called wisdom; and that what is called prudence be that which concerns what humans are able to do – that is, what is in our power to do or not to do: it advises, judges and prescribes what ought to be done and what ought to be avoided, as well as how, when and where those things ought to be done or avoided, and so on for other circumstances. The question now to be answered is whether wisdom is better than prudence or the contrary.

[18] Ad quam questionem puto dicendum esse, sicut dicit Aristoteles, quod “sapientia est simpliciter melior et principalior”, sicut bene probant (ut credo) rationes Aristotelis superius adducte de quarum aliquibus forte considerabitur amplius in decimo huius. Sed ad presens aliquantulum habitudo sapientie ad prudentiam

[18] I think what ought to be said about this question, as Aristotle says, is that “wisdom is better and more important without qualification,”<sup>349</sup> just as Aristotle’s arguments above – some of which will perhaps be considered in more detail in the tenth book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*]<sup>350</sup> – prove satisfactorily well, as I believe they do. But up until now, the relation of wisdom

<sup>349</sup> This is understood from what Aristotle says in *NE* VI, but nowhere does he state this *ipsis litteris*, although Buridan claims that he does both here and in his *QMet.* I, 2.

<sup>350</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *EN* X, 1177a11 and ff.

videatur secundum intentionem to prudence seems to be following Aristotelis. Aristotle's thought.

[19] Notandum est quod sicut in maiori mundo omnia sunt ordinata, sicut apparet in fine duodecimi Metaphysice, ita oportet in minori mundo, scilicet in homine, si bene et feliciter se debeat habere, omnia esse ordinata. Propter quod oportet aliquid in eo esse finem omnium aliorum in quod omnia tanquam in optimum reducuntur, et hoc est operatio secundum virtutem optimam in qua consistit humana felicitas, sicut apparet in primo, et dicitur in decimo. Que autem sit illa virtus optima, dubium est an sit sapientia, vel prudentia, vel virtus moralis: de aliis autem virtutibus nulli philosophorum dubitaverunt; quecumque autem illarum trium virtutum ponatur optima virtus, oportet secundum dicta quod alie due sint ipsius gratia, vel operationes ipsarum operationis sue gratia. Sapientia autem non ordinatur finaliter ad prudentiam, nec ad

[19] It should be noted that, just as everything is ordained in the higher world, as is clear from the end of the twelfth book of the *Metaphysics*,<sup>351</sup> so it need also be in the lesser world. That is to say: in humans everything must be ordered if they are to be well and happy. That is why something in them must be an end with respect to everything else, to which all the other things lead back as if to the single best thing. And that is the operation which is in accordance with the best virtue, in which human happiness consists, as it is clear in the first book and will be said in the tenth book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*]. But what is this best virtue? It is debated whether it is wisdom or prudence or moral virtue. Concerning the other virtues, no philosopher ever was in doubt. Whichever one out of those three is posited as the best virtue, in keeping with what has been said, it is required that the two other virtues be for the sake of this one, or that their operations be for the sake of the operation of this one.

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<sup>351</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* XII, 1075a11 and ff.

virtutes morales, nec ad ipsarum operationes, cum finis ipsius fit scire tantum vel ipsa veritas, et non ad opus, ut apparet prohemio et secundo Metaphysice. ergo oportet naturali ordine, quod prudentia et virtutes morales ordinentur finaliter ad ipsam sapientiam et ad opus eius. Propter quod sapientia erit optima virtus humana, et opus eius humana felicitas.

But wisdom is not ordered to prudence, nor to the moral virtues, nor to their operations as its end, for its own end is only knowledge, or truth itself, and not a work, as is clear in the first and second books of the *Metaphysics*.<sup>352</sup> Therefore, it is fitting in the natural order that prudence and moral virtues be ordered to wisdom and to its work as an end. That is why wisdom will be the best human virtue, and its work human happiness.

[20] Item, si ad Dei operationes aspiciamus, apparebit quod illa Dei operatio qua ipse seipsum cognoscit et amat, que non est operativa, sed sui ipsius contemplativa tantum, est vel ex natura rei vel secundum rationem multo nobilior quam illa qua ipse cognoscit alia et agit et conservat, que est operativa. Similiter etiam operatio intelligentie, qua ipsa contemplatur essentiam divinam, est nobilior quam illa qua ipsa cognoscit et agit alia, propter quod etiam videtur quod operatio nostri intellectus qua ipsa

[20] Also, if we look at God's operations, it will be clear that God's operation by which He cognizes and loves himself – which is not operative, but only contemplative of Himself – is, either from the nature of the thing [cognized] or with respect to its consideration, much nobler than that [operation] by which He cognizes and acts on and maintains other things, which is operative. Similarly, the operation of an intelligence, by which it contemplates the divine essence, is nobler than that by which it cognizes and acts on other things. That is also why it seems that the operation of our

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<sup>352</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* I 982b19-28 and *Met.* II, 993b20-23. (I thank Hakan Genc for his help in finding these references.)

Deum contemplatur, que est operatio sapientie, sit nobilior quam illa qua cognoscit et operatur ea que subsunt sibi, que est operatio artis vel prudentie, quod etiam ex hoc apparet, quia cum Deus sit finis omnium aliorum, et “nihil sit bonum nisi propter causas finales”, ut dicit Commentator secundo *Metaphysice*, manifestum est nihil habet aliquid boni et perfecti, nisi in quantum participat aliquam Dei similitudinem. Intellectus autem noster magis efficitur similis ipsi Deo per ipsius contemplationem quam per eorum que sibi subsunt notitiam et operationem, cum Deus principaliter et prima intentione contempletur seipsum, et intentione secundaria cognoscat et agat alia, sicut bene declarat Commentator secundo *Caeli*, commento decimoseptimo et decimotertio.

understanding, by which it contemplates God – which is an operation of wisdom – is nobler than that by which it cognizes and acts on that which is beneath, which is the operation of art or of prudence, which is whence also apparent, because since God is the end of all other things, and “nothing is good except on account of its final causes,”<sup>353</sup> as the Commentator says in the second book of the *Metaphysics*, it is clear that nothing has any amount of good and perfection except inasmuch as it participates in God’s likeness. And our understanding becomes more similar to God’s through the contemplation of God rather than through the acquaintance of those things which are beneath it, as God contemplates himself principally and with a primary intention and also cognizes and acts on other things with a secondary intention, just as the Commentator rightly states in the second book of *On the Heavens*, seventeenth and thirteenth comments.<sup>354</sup>

<sup>353</sup> Averroes, *In Met.* II 2, comm. 8.

<sup>354</sup> Cf., e.g., Averroes, *De Caelo* II, 17: “In Divina autem Scientia perscrutabimur de hoc, quoniam ibi declaratur quod hec non sunt propter ea que sunt hic nisi secunda intentione, non prima; et quod sunt duo fines, una scilicet secundum primam intentionem et altera secundum secundam; sed quia hoc non declarabitur in hac scientia, inceptit dare illud quod est equivalens in hac scientia, et est illud quod apparet hic ex sollicitudine circa res generabiles et corruptibiles, que est finis secunda intentione, quamvis hoc non apparet hic sed ipsum esse finem tantum.” (Trans. Michael Scotus, p. 297).

[21] Item videamus ad quid et quantum nobis valeat prudentia, et erit manifestum consideranti, quod ipsa est cognoscitiva agibilium humanorum et activa, et modo non est dicendum quod ipsa, pro quanto est cognoscitiva, prescindendo ab ea activitatem, sit nobilior quam sapientia, nisi dicas quod nobilior sit cognoscere cibum et potum, etiam si nulla debeat actio consequi, quam Deum, quod est absurdum valde, nec est nobilior secundum quod activa, quia nihil videtur nobis valere sua activitas nisi ad supplendas corporis necessitates, vel ad relevandas appetitus fragilitates. Dato enim quod omnes essemus semper sani et non indigeremus cibo neque potu, et sic de aliis corporis exterioribus bonis, quodquod appetitus noster non ferretur in malum, sed esset determinatus naturaliter ad ferri semper in bonum, videtur statim quod activitas prudentie periret, non tamen cognoscivitas, quod quanto perfectiores essemus tanto magis cognoscere possemus et vellemus, et

[21] Also, let us see for what purpose and to what extent prudence is useful to us, and it will become obvious to whoever considers it that it is [useful] as that which cognizes what humans can do and acts on it. However, one should not say that prudence, insofar as it cognizes, and leaving aside its activity, is nobler than wisdom, unless you say that it is nobler to cognize food and drink, even if no action should follow from this, than cognizing God – which is completely absurd. Nor is prudence nobler for being active, for its activity seems to be worthy to us only insofar as it supplies what the body needs or relieves the frailties of the appetite. For if we were always healthy and never lacked food or drink, or any of the other external goods of the body, and if none of our appetites were drawn to evil, but were naturally determined always to be drawn to the good, it immediately seems that the activity of prudence would perish, but not its cognoscitivity, since the more perfect we are, the more we can and want to cognize. And it is thus immediately clear that activity suits prudence in its eventual dwindling, but cognoscitivity suits it due to its perfection, and that is why cognoscitivity is nobler than

ita videtur statim quod activitas activity. But prudence, with regards to  
 convenit prudentie occasione cognoscitivity, does not achieve the nobility  
 diminutionis, cognoscivitas autem of wisdom, as has been said, and, therefore,  
 ratione perfectionis, propter quod neither does it [achieve the nobility of  
 cognoscivitas est nobilior activitate; wisdom] with respect to [its] activity.  
 sed prudentia, quantum ad  
 cognoscivitatem, non attingit ad  
 nobilitatem sapientie, ut dictum fuit,  
 ergo nec quoad activitatem.

[22] Si quis autem querat utrum omnis [22] Now, if anyone were to ask whether  
 scientia speculativa sit nobilior every speculative science is nobler than  
 prudentia, dicam quod non, sicut dixi prudence, I would say that it is not, just as I  
 et declaravit in principio primi libri. said and claimed in the beginning of Book  
 one.<sup>355</sup>

[23] Ad rationes ergo dicendum est: [23] Now, in response to the arguments, it  
 must be said that:

[24] Ad primam quod illo loco [24] To the first one, [it should be said] that  
 Aristoteles loquebatur de felicitate in that place Aristotle was talking about  
 politica, non de felicitate simpliciter. political happiness, and not about happiness  
 Felicitas enim politica consistit in without qualification. For political  
 operibus prudentie. Felicitas autem happiness consists in the works of prudence,  
 simpliciter in opere sapientie. Teste but happiness without qualification consists  
 Deo, qui felix quidem est et beatus in the work of wisdom. God is witness to  
 propter solam sui ipsius this: He is happy and blessed only on

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<sup>355</sup> Buridan, *QNE* I, 1 (*Responsio*; more specifically, “*prima conclusio*” and “*secunda conclusio*”).

contemplationem, non propter account of his own contemplation of  
 quamcunque ipsius in alia vel circa himself, and not on account of whatever else  
 aliam actionem. He might contemplate or on account of any  
 other action.

[25] Ad aliam concedi potest, quod [25] To the next one, it can be granted that  
 nullum sit opus bonum sine virtute et there is no good work without virtue and  
 prudentia, nisi voluntas sua libera prudence, unless the will supplies the  
 potestate suppleat vices virtutis, et instances of virtue out of its free power. And  
 concedendum est quod multa possunt it must be granted that many good things  
 fieri bona sine metaphysica; propter can be done without metaphysics. That is  
 quod bene conceditur, quod prudentia why it is granted that prudence is more  
 sit magis necessaria ad bene necessary to do good than metaphysics, but  
 operandum quam metaphysica, sed it does not follow that, therefore, it is better.  
 non sequitur quod ergo melior. Sic For it would thus be proved that [good]  
 enim probaretur quod sanitas esse health is better than wisdom, and that things  
 melior quam sapientia, et omnino entirely orderered to an end are better than  
 ordinata in finem quam finis, nam that end, for things ordered to an end are  
 ordinata in finem sunt necessaria necessary on account of the end, and not the  
 propter finem non e contra, ut apparet other way around, as is clear in the second  
 in secundo Physicorum. Ideo bene de book of the *Physics*.<sup>356</sup> For that reason,  
 metaphysica dicit Aristoteles Aristotle says about metaphysics in the first  
 prohemio Metaphysice: book of the *Metaphysics*: “every other  
 “necessariores quidem omnes, ipsa [science] is indeed more necessary [than  
 dignior vero nulla.” this one], but none is wothier.”<sup>357</sup>

<sup>356</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Phys.* II, 200a1-200b7.

<sup>357</sup> Aristotle, *Met.* I, 983a10-11: “[...] although all other sciences are more necessary than this, none is more excellent” (Trans. H. Tredennick).

[26] Ad aliam potest dici quod sapientia perficit partem anime nobiliorem quam prudentia, quia, sicut visum, pars anime prudentialis, et pars sapientialis non distinguuntur nisi ex distinctione actuum, vel obiectorum, vel ex distinctione dispositionum requisitarum in eadem anima ad acquisitionem prudentie vel sapientie. Modo apparet ex predictis quod quantum ad primam differentiam pars sapientialis sit nobilior, quia versatur circa nobilius obiectum, et eius etiam operatio est nobilior. Quantum etiam ad secundam differentiam, videtur quod sapientialis sit nobilior, quia sic ipsa nihil aliud videtur quam anima iam informata prudentia, et virtutibus moralibus, et aliis scientiis speculativis, sapientia enim hec omnia supponit, sicut finis ea que ad finem, ideo dicitur esse postrema via doctrine.

[26] To the next one, it can be said that wisdom perfects a nobler part of the soul than prudence does, because, as was seen, the prudential part of the soul and the sapiential part of the soul are not distinguished except on the basis of a distinction of act, or of objects, or on the basis of a distinction in the dispositions required of the same soul in the acquisition of prudence or wisdom. It is only clear from what has been said that, as to the first difference, the sapiential part is nobler, because it is about a nobler object and its operation is also nobler. And, as to the second difference, it seems that the sapiential [part of the soul] is nobler, because it seems to be nothing other than the soul already informed by prudence and by the moral virtues and by the other speculative sciences. For wisdom presupposes all of those, just as the end presupposes what is ordered to that end, and for that reason it is said to be the very last step in learning.

[27] Tunc ergo respondendum est ad rationes que videntur arguere contrarium.

[27] Now, therefore, we must respond to the arguments that seem to argue the contrary.

[28] Ad primam potest dici, quod Aristoteles in illo septimo vocabat “optimum in homine” totam partem rationalem distinguendo eam contra partem sensibilem, ita quod non intendebat distinguere intra partem prudentialem et sapientialem. Illa autem pars rationalis per intemperantiam corrumpitur primo et directe quoad eius partem prudentialem, et ex consequenti quoad partem sapientialem, in quantum ipsa supponit prudentialem, sicut egritudo corrumpit directe sanitatem, et ex consequenti totam partem sensibilem.

[28] To the first it can be said that Aristotle in the seventh book [of the *Politics*] called “the best in humans” the whole rational part, distinguishing it from the sensitive part.<sup>358</sup> So, he did not intend to distinguish prudential from the sapiential part. But that rational part is first and directly corrupted by intemperance when it comes to the prudential part and, consequently, when it comes to its sapiential part, inasmuch as it presupposes the prudential part, just as illness directly corrupts health and, consequently, the whole sensitive part.

[29] Ad aliam dicendum est eodem modo, quod ille rationes Philosophi, nono huius, non sunt nisi secundum comparationem partis intellectualis ad partem sensualem. Posset etiam concedi quod homo secundum communem cursum, et communem modum loquendi, magis dicitur pars prudentialis quam pars sapientialis,

[29] To the next one, it must be said in the same way that the Philosopher’s arguments in the ninth book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*] are nothing but arguments following a comparison of the intellectual part to the sensual part.<sup>359</sup> It could even be granted that humans, following the common course of things, and the usual way of speaking, are said to be the prudential part more than the

<sup>358</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* VII, 1323b1-12.

<sup>359</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *EN* IX, 1170a16-1170b5.

quia status sapientie communem sapiential part, for the state of wisdom statum hominis excedit. Propter quod exceeds the common state of man. That is de eo qui opus sapientie exercet why, in the tenth book [of the *Nicomachean* dicitur in decimo huius, “talis autem *Ethics*], it is said of the person who carries utique erit melior vita quam secundum out the work of wisdom, “the life of such a hominem, non enim secundum quod person [i.e., a wise person] will be a better homo est sic vivit, sed secundum quod life than a [mere] human life, for [the best] divinum aliquid in ipso existit.” human [life] is not [one] lived according to what humans are like, but according to something divine that exists in them.”<sup>360</sup>

[30] Propter solutionem alterius [30] As a solution to the next argument, it rationis potest notari, quod “omnes can be noted that “by nature, all humans homines natura scire desiderant,” ut desire to know,”<sup>361</sup> as the first book of the habetur prohemio *Metaphysice*, et *Metaphysics* has it. And [as] Cicero says in Tullius in libro *De officiis* dicit the book *De Officiis* “all of us are naturally “omnes enim trahimur naturaliter et drawn and led to the eagerness for cognition ducimur ad cognitionis et scientie and knowledge;”<sup>362</sup> That is why it must cupiditatem”. Propter quod forte perhaps be said that in the natural order the dicendum est, quod naturali ordine prudential part is not required to order the non oportet quod pars prudentialis sapiential part, but only that the prudential precipiat parti sapientiali, sed solum part provide, as a servant, what is necessary quod ipsa tanquam ministra provideat [to the sapiential part], and [that the

<sup>360</sup> Aristotle, *EN* X, 1177b27-29: “Such a life as this however will be higher than the human level: not in virtue of his humanity will a man achieve it, but in virtue of something within him that is divine [...]” (Trans. H. Rackham). Cf. Gauthier (1973c), p. 578: “Talis autem utique erit melior vita quam secundum hominem. Non enim secundum quod homo est *siturum*, set secundum quod divinum aliquid in ipso existit.”

<sup>361</sup> Aristotle, *Met.* I, 980a22: “All men naturally desire knowledge.” (Trans. H. Tredennick).

<sup>362</sup> Cicero, *De Officiis*, I, 18: “For we are all attracted and drawn to a zeal for learning and knowing [...]” (Trans. W. Miller).

de necessariis, et impedimenta removeat, scilicet continendo passiones, ordinando vires sensibiles, habilitando ad feliciter et prompte sustinendum labores, et ita oportet quod pareat parti sapientiali locum et idoneitatem operandi. Hoc enim facto quelibet absque mandato desideraret naturaliter addiscere, et opus sapientie exercere pro posse et in actum transiret addiscendi vel speculandi. Quando ergo dicitur, quod si volumus speculamur, et si non, non; concedo, sed impedimentis remotis et ordinato appetitu, nos volumus non ex precepto prudentie sed ex naturali inclinatione. Cum hoc etiam, si ista ratio valeret, ipsa concluderet quod prudentia esset principalior seipsa, quia prudentia non minus precipit parti prudentiali quam parti sapientiali. Sicut ergo puer lactat matrem, sic sapiens speculatur, remotis impedimentis, absque precepto prudentie eo solo quod uterque ad utrumque naturaliter inclinatur.

prudential part] remove what hinders [the sapiential part], namely by containing passions, guiding the sensitive forces, enabling the endurance of hardship happily and readily. And so it is required that it prepare a place and suitable setting for the sapiential part to operate. For, that being done, anyone, without being told, would naturally desire to learn further and to act out the work of wisdom to the extent of their abilities, and would carry out the act of learning further and contemplating. Therefore, when one says that we contemplate if we want to, and that we do not contemplate if we do not want to, I grant it, but once the hindrances are removed and the appetite is well-ordered, we want it not as the result of an order of prudence, but as the result of a natural inclination. Along with this, if that argument were good, it would conclude that prudence is more important than itself, for prudence does not order the prudential [part] less than the sapiential part. Thus, just as a child breastfeeds on their mother, so too the wise man contemplates once hindrances are removed, without the order of prudence, by this reason alone that each of them is

naturally inclined to their respective activity.

[31] Ad aliam dicendum quod ratio falsum supponit, non enim est possibile aliquem esse vere metaphysicum sine virtutibus moralibus et prudentia. Primo, quia habens affectiones ad alia non potest bene studere. Secundo, quia talis statim false iudicaret de divinis. Oportet enim ex notitia istorum sensibilibium ascendere ad notitiam divinorum, et ea que perfectionem arguunt eis attribuere, et ab eis alia remove. Credentes ergo, propter imprudentiam et moralem malitiam, quod delectationes sensuales, vel pecunie, vel honores sint meliores quam sapientia, vel iustitia, credent vel nihil, vel non esse Deum alium preter ventrem suum vel quam divitias, vel honores, vel credent eius bonitatem et excellentiam in hoc consistere, quod utatur: nectare, et manna, et cibis maxime delicatis, vel in hoc, quod habeat indeficientes thesauros, vel quod plurimos habeat

[31] To the next one, it must be said that this argument assumes something false, for it is not possible for someone truly to be a metaphysician without moral virtues and prudence. First, because one cannot apply oneself well [to one thing] when one has affections for other things. Second, because such a person would readily judge falsely about divine things. For it is necessary to ascend from the notion of these perceptible things to the notion of divine things, and to attribute to them those things which demonstrate their perfection, and to remove from them other things. Therefore, those who believe, because of imprudence and moral badness, that sensual pleasures, or money or honours are better than wisdom or justice, they either believe in nothing, or they believe that there is no God beyond their own belly, or their wealth, or their honours, or they believe that their goodness and excellence consist in what they enjoy: a fancy drink, a delicacy and the most sumptuous foods, or [that their excellence and goodness] consist in the possession of

sibi servitores, et non in hoc quod contempletur seipsum. Et si talia non dicant ore, tamen ea videntur habere mente; propter quod videmus valde multos expectantes vitam futuri seculi, magis velle perpetuo vivere sanos et juvenes in hac vita quam ad aliam aliquando transire. Tales ergo habitum circa divina falsificant, et non habent metaphysicam sed habitum sibi contrarium. Dicam ergo quod verus metaphysicus est simpliciter bonus homo, et perfectus; prudens autem non metaphysicus est simpliciter, id est, absoluto sermone loquendo, bonus homo, sed non perfecte et consummate: cum hoc etiam putandum est, quod omnis vere prudens plus habet de metaphysica non falsificata in mente quam maximus disputator malus homo. unfailing treasures, or in having many servants – and not in the very thing they contemplate. And even if they do not say so out loud, nevertheless they seem think it. That is why we see that many persons expecting life to continue into a future age would rather live forever in good health and youth in this life than to go over to the next life at some point. Thus, such people falsify the *habitus* pertaining to what is divine, and do not have metaphysics, but a *habitus* that is contrary to it. I will say, therefore, that the real metaphysician is a good human without qualification, and a perfect human. But prudent non-metaphysician is, absolutely speaking, a good man without qualification but not perfectly and completely. Along with this, we must also think that every truly prudent person has more non-falsified metaphysics in mind than a great participant of a *disputatio* who is a bad person.

[32] Forte tu objicies quod secundum dicta videtur quod malitia non solum corrumpat estimationem practicam, sed etiam estimationem speculativam. Dicendum est, ipsa non corrumpit directe et per se estimationem [32] Perhaps you will object that, following what was said, it seems that badness not only corrupts practical assessment, but also speculative assessment. It must be said that badness does not corrupt speculative assessment directly and in itself, but

speculativam, sed per accidens et indirecte, in quantum corrumpit media, per que nati sumus ad estimationem speculativam venire, sicut apparuit.

[33] Ad aliam dicendum est quod effectus finalis prudentie sic est bene vivere totum, quia prudentia simpliciter dicta statuit sibi finem sapientiam vel opus sapientie, quem tamen, vel quod, ipsa non elicit. Sed ad illum finem adipiscendum ipsa ordinat circa alia totam vitam. Finalis autem effectus sapientie est optima et suprema vita continens omnem vitam inferiorem bonam, sicut finis ea que ad finem.

[34] Ad aliam potest dici quod prudentia est regula et mensura totius bonitatis humane politice, non totius bonitatis humane simpliciter, nisi preparative, sicut ministra. Dicendum est etiam quod Tullius et Seneca locuti sunt in suis moralibus de felicitate politica solum, scilicet activa, non de contemplativa, que est

accidentally and indirectly, insofar as it corrupts the means by which we are drawn to making speculative assessments, as is clear.

[33] To the next one, we should say that the final effect of prudence is precisely to live well as a whole, for prudence absolutely speaking sets to itself as an end wisdom or the work of wisdom – an end which, nevertheless, it does not itself choose. But prudence orders life as a whole to other things so as to secure this end. And the final effect of wisdom is the best and greatest life, containing every lesser good life, just as the end [contains] what is ordered to that end.

[34] To the next one, it can be said that prudence is the rule and measure of all human political goodness, but not of all human goodness without qualification, except in a preparatory manner, like a servant. It must also be said that Cicero and Seneca, in their moral treatises, only talked about political happiness, that is, active happiness, and not about contemplative

felicitas simpliciter. Et sic est finis happiness, which is happiness without  
 questionum super sextum librum. qualification. And this is how the questions  
 on the sixth book end.

### 3.6.2 Whether wisdom is a better virtue than prudence

In question 22, Buridan asks whether wisdom is a better virtue than prudence. More specifically, this is an attempt to figure out which virtue ranks the highest among the five intellectual virtues.

#### 3.6.2.1 Arguments showing that prudence is a better virtue than wisdom

In the objections (§§1-12), there are six arguments which state that prudence is a better virtue than wisdom. Buridan will explain each of these before responding to them and stating, instead, that wisdom is the better virtue.

The first (objection 1; §1) states that a virtue which is more capable of making us happier is a better virtue. According to book VII of the *Politics*, prudence fulfils that role. Just before the passage cited by Buridan, whose aim is to establish a necessary connection between happiness and prudence, Aristotle also names prudence (or “practical wisdom,” as some may dub it) as one of the conditions for happiness,<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Aristotle, *Pol.* VII, 1323a: “For nobody would call a man ideally happy that has not got a particle of courage nor of temperance nor of justice nor of practical wisdom, but is afraid of the flies that flutter by him, cannot refrain from any of the most outrageous actions in order to gratify a desire to eat or to drink,

alongside courage, temperance and justice. According to this argument, if prudence is necessary for happiness, and if “to each person there falls just so large a measure of happiness as he achieves of virtue and prudence and of virtuous and prudent action,”<sup>364</sup> it follows that prudence is the standard against which the goal of human life (i.e., happiness) is measured; therefore, prudence is a better virtue than wisdom.

A second argument (objection 2; §2), also relying on the authority of Aristotle in the *Politics*, wants to claim that we can perform good deeds without knowledge of metaphysics (that is, wisdom or theoretical/contemplative wisdom, in the Aristotelian sense) but, on the other hand, no good deed can be performed without prudence, as has been mentioned above. This should suffice to prove that prudence is more necessary for us to act well and, consequently, is the better virtue out of the two.

Moreover, those who are convinced by this argument go on to present a third objection (§§3-8), still based on book VII of the *Politics*. In 1333a, Aristotle talks about the division of the soul into two parts,

of which one is in itself possessed of reason, while the other is not rational in itself but capable of obeying reason. To these parts in our view belong those virtues in accordance with which a man is pronounced to be good in some way. But in which of these two parts the end of man rather resides, those who define the parts of the soul in accordance with our view will have no doubt as to how they should decide. The worse always exists as a means to the better, and this is manifest alike in the products of art and in those of nature; but the rational part of the soul is better than the irrational. And the rational part is subdivided into two, according to our usual scheme of division; for reason is of two kinds, practical and theoretic, so that obviously the rational part of the soul must also be subdivided accordingly. A corresponding classification we shall also pronounce to hold among its activities: the activities of the part of the soul that is by nature superior must be preferable for those persons who are capable of

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ruins his dearest friends for the sake of a farthing, and similarly in matters of the intellect also is as senseless and mistaken as any child or lunatic.” (Trans. H. Rackham, modified).

<sup>364</sup> Aristotle, *Pol.* VII, 1323b22 (Trans. H. Rackham, modified).

attaining either all the soul's activities or two out of the three; since that thing is always most desirable for each person which is the highest to which it is possible for him to attain.<sup>365</sup>

On the basis of this passage and its postulation of two parts of the soul, namely the purely theoretical and the practical (or prudential), a third objection is formulated and its main argument is as follows:

Argument 3:

(P1) The better virtue is the one that perfects the better part of the soul.

And (P2) prudence is the virtue that perfects the better part of the soul.

Therefore, (C1) Prudence is the better virtue.

Buridan says that, according to these objectors, the major premise (P1) is maintained by Aristotle in book VII of the *Politics*, as quoted above, and in book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1139a-1139b), where, having established the distinction between the rational and the irrational parts of the soul, he postulates a subdivision in the rational part, similar to that of the *Politics* quote above: one scientific (or contemplative) part of the soul and the other deliberative (or calculative), the former being the “one whereby we contemplate those things whose first principles are invariable, and one whereby we contemplate those things which admit of variation [...]”<sup>366</sup> Moreover, he says, “[w]e have therefore to ascertain what disposition of each of these faculties is the best, for that will be the special virtue of each.”<sup>367</sup> If there is a virtue which perfects each of those two parts of the soul, then the virtue which perfects the better part of the soul is the better virtue.

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<sup>365</sup> Aristotle, *Pol.* VII, 1333a (Trans. H. Rackham).

<sup>366</sup> Aristotle, *EN* VI, 1139a7-8 (Trans. H. Rackham).

<sup>367</sup> Aristotle, *EN* VI, 1139a16-17 (Trans. H. Rackham).

Authors who adhere to objection 3 above now need to prove the minor premise (P2), which they do in the following paragraphs, in three different ways.

In §4, the argument aiming to show that prudence perfects the best part of the soul is as follows:

Argument 3.1:

(P3) The best in a human being is that which is corrupted by badness and is destroyed by beastlikeness;

But (P4) The part of the soul perfectible through prudence is corruptible by badness and destroyable by beastlikeness and the speculative part of the soul is not.

Therefore, (C2) the part of the soul perfectible by prudence is the best part.

As Buridan explains (§5), P3 comes from Book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

Bestiality is less <evil> than vice, though more horrible: for <in a bestial man as in an animal> the highest part <i.e. the intellect> is not corrupted, as it is in a man <who is wicked in a human way>, but entirely lacking. So that it is like comparing an inanimate with an animate thing, and asking which is the more evil; for the badness of a thing which has no originating principle—and intelligence is such a principle—is always less capable of mischief.<sup>368</sup>

This passage describes the “best part” of human beings, the one that makes us human, which is here called “the intellect” and “intelligence” (νοῦς). This is also the part that is corrupted by badness and that is lacking altogether in those who “behave like animals,” as it were. It is through the corruption of this part, according to Aristotle, that

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<sup>368</sup> Aristotle, *EN VII*, 1150a1-5 (Trans. H. Rackham).

we become bad, and cases of “bestial character [...] occur”, among other reasons, “as a result of disease or arrested development”<sup>369</sup> of this part, according to him, or on account of “a surpassing degree of human vice.”<sup>370</sup> Thus, the best part of humans is this part which is corrupted by badness and absent or destroyed in brutish persons.

Now, according to what Aristotle says in book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1140b), it is prudence (i.e., practical wisdom) which is saved or corrupted, respectively, by temperance and intemperance, for instance. While our beliefs about how to act, which pertain to prudence, can be swayed by pleasure and pain, our speculative beliefs, such as that the sum of the three internal angles of a triangle being equal to 180°, cannot be corrupted. Thus, wisdom cannot be corrupted – whence we have P4.

So, if only the best part of humans, i.e., the human soul, can be corrupted by badness and destroyed by beastlikeness, and it is prudence which gets saved or corrupted, then prudence must be the best part of humans.

Another argument for proving P2 is presented in §§6-7:

Argument 3.2:

(P5) The most important thing in a human is that which is chiefly human.

And (P6) The part of a human soul perfectible through prudence is that which is chiefly human.

Therefore, (C4) the most important part of the human soul is the one perfectible by prudence.

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<sup>369</sup> Aristotle, *EN VII*, 1145a31 (Trans. H. Rackham).

<sup>370</sup> Aristotle, *EN VII*, 1145a32 (Trans. H. Rackham).

P5, the argument goes, is self-evident (*nota de se*). P6 follows book IX of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (1168b-1169a) in claiming that the main part of a human being is that by which someone is considered to be self-restrained or unrestrained, having or not having control over their inclinations and desires, and that all pertains to the prudential part of the soul, and not to the speculative part of the soul. Thus, the part which is chiefly human in any human being is the prudential part of the soul – and that is, of course, the part perfectible by prudence (C4). And hence, prudence perfects the best part of the soul (P2).

A third set of arguments (§8) supporting P2 is as follows:

Argument 3.3:

(P7) That which commands by nature is better than that which obeys.

But (P8) The prudential part of the soul commands (*precipit*) the sapiential part.

Therefore, (C5) the prudential part is better.

Again, we start from a self-evident claim (P7), followed by the explanation of P8 which may look counterintuitive but is explained with a passage from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* VI:

It is therefore clear that, even if Prudence had no bearing on conduct, it would still be needed, because it is the virtue of that part of the intellect to which it belongs; and also that our choice of actions will not be right without Prudence any more than without Moral Virtue, since, while Moral Virtue enables us to achieve the end, Prudence makes us adopt the right means to the end.

But nevertheless it is not really the case that Prudence is in authority over Wisdom, or over the higher part of the intellect, any more than medical science is in authority over health. Medical science does not control health, but studies how to procure it; hence it issues orders in the interests of health, but not to health.

And again, one might as well say that Political Science governs the gods, because it gives orders about everything in the State.<sup>371</sup>

According to the argument being advanced here, even if prudence does not command wisdom directly, it commands the part of the soul which is perfectible by wisdom, i.e., the speculative part. But, the argument goes, according to Aristotle, the speculative part does not move anything, so it is prudence which ought to move the powers of the soul for the sake of wisdom or for the sake of the perfection of the speculative part of the soul. The speculative and the appetitive intellects, which correspond, respectively, to the speculative and prudential parts of the intellect, must be aligned toward a common goal of operation, and because “mind (i.e., speculative intellect) is never found producing movement without appetite,”<sup>372</sup> it seems that the speculative intellect is subordinate to the work of the intellectual appetite, which is why we only do things when we desire. Hence why, ultimately, the prudential part commands or rules over (*precipit*) the sapiential part of the soul. And this concludes the lengthy set of arguments which make up the third objection.

And yet another one (objection 4; §§9-10) introduces some common-sense reasoning justified by the authority of Aristotle. The argument is:

(P9) A person who is good absolutely is better than a person who is not good absolutely.

(P10) The prudent non-metaphysician is good absolutely.

(P11) The non-prudent metaphysician is not good absolutely.

Therefore, (C6) the prudent non-metaphysician is better than the non-prudent metaphysician.

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<sup>371</sup> Aristotle, *NE* VI, 1143b21-1143b35.

<sup>372</sup> Aristotle, *DA* III, 433a.

P10 and P11 rely on a passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1141b) where Aristotle says that

For we say that to deliberate well is the most characteristic function of the prudent man; but no one deliberates about things that cannot vary nor yet about variable things that are not a means to some end, and that end a good attainable by action; and a good deliberator in general is a man who can arrive by calculation at the best of the goods attainable by man.

Nor is Prudence a knowledge of general principles only: it must also take account of particular facts, since it is concerned with action, and action deals with particular things. *This is why men who are ignorant of general principles are sometimes more successful in action than others who know them*: for instance, if a man knows that light meat is easily digested and therefore wholesome, but does not know what kinds of meat are light, he will not be so likely to restore you to health as a man who merely knows that chicken is wholesome; and in other matters men of experience are more successful than theorists. And Prudence is concerned with action, so one requires both forms of it, or indeed knowledge of particular facts even more than knowledge of general principles.<sup>373</sup>

According to the point made above, this passage seems to show that because prudence concerns both universals and particulars, in what concerns human goods people who have more experience (obtained from reasoning from particulars) are better than those who simply have knowledge (obtained from reasoning from universals). Anaxagoras and Thales, for instance, are wise but not prudent: “[...] while admitting them to possess a knowledge that is rare, marvellous, difficult and even superhuman, they yet declare this knowledge to be useless, because these sages do not seek to know the things that are good for human beings.”<sup>374</sup> Or, to use the example from the quote above, knowing that chicken is wholesome is more likely to produce health, which is good for humans, than the mere universal knowledge that light meats are digestible and wholesome without the knowledge that chicken is such a meat, which would produce no good. In that sense, for the practical purposes of human life, the prudent non-

<sup>373</sup> Aristotle, *NE VI*, 1141b15-1141b23 (Trans. H. Rackham, italics mine).

<sup>374</sup> Aristotle, *NE VI*, 1141b2-8 (Trans. H. Rackham).

metaphysician is better in the absolute. It is thus better to be someone who has a lifetime of experience but who is not a philosopher than it is to be a philosopher who only has knowledge of divine and celestial things.

In §11, we find a fifth objection, which states that:

(P12) The better virtue is the one which has the better effect.

(P13) The goal of wisdom is only to know.

(P14) The goal of prudence is to live well as a whole.

Therefore, (C7) the final effect of prudence is better than the final effect of wisdom.

Hence, (C8) prudence is better than wisdom.

P13 is justified with a reference to books I and II of the *Metaphysics*. In 981a, for instance, Aristotle says that “indeed we see men of experience succeeding more than those who have theory without experience.”<sup>375</sup>

Although Buridan does not explicitly provide an authoritative reference for P14, the arguments from the fourth objection above could be used to make the point that the goal of prudence is to live well as a whole, insofar “living well” concerns human goods. Having what looks like a broader, more important effect on human life, prudence would be a better virtue than wisdom.

In §12, the last objection (objection 6) is presented, namely:

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<sup>375</sup> Aristotle, *Met.* I, 981a14-15 (Trans. H. Tredennick).

(P14) Knowledge which is the rule and measure of human goodness is better than knowledge which is not.

(P15) Prudence is the rule and measure of human goodness

Therefore, (C9) prudence is a better knowledge (than wisdom, which is not the rule and measure of human goodness).

This argument drawn on a similar point concerning the good of human life: if prudence is “the rule and measure of human goodness”, it must be the best human virtue.

#### 3.6.2.2 *Sed contra*

Thus, we finally come to the arguments in the opposite sense (§§13-16) which here are supported by a series of annotated Aristotle citations, which are remarkably lengthy for this commentary. Much of what Buridan does here is simply to clarify many of the passages which were used for the opposing arguments, in the objections. The first one is a recap of 1141b (from book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*), where Aristotle actually says that wisdom is a better virtue than prudence because its object (namely, God and the intelligences) is nobler than that of prudence (namely, humans and human acts). The best kind of knowledge or intellectual virtue is that which concerns the best thing there is, and that is not humans.

Moreover, if we reconsider that argument about means (or that for the sake of which) and final goals, we see that the final goal of wisdom is the happiness of the soul, whereas prudence simply orders that things be done for the sake of the acquisition

and/or maintenance of that happiness which is the final goal of wisdom. A series of analogies are used to illustrate this point:

a. The medicine analogy (*EN* 1144a3-5, 1045a7-9, 1045a7-9)

Just like medicine does not order or rule over health, but rather commands that things be done for the sake of health, i.e., having good health as its ultimate goal, so does prudence command that things be done for the sake of wisdom, but does not itself rule over wisdom.

b. The politics analogy (*EN* 1145a10-12)

There is also an analogy between prudence as an instructor of things done for the sake of wisdom and politics, which does not rule over the gods, but, instead, issues orders about the affairs of the state that ought to be done for the sake of the gods, such as the building of temples and the performance of sacrifices.

c. The household analogy (*MM* 1198b13-20)

According to this analogy, prudence is like the servant of a household: it prepares the terrain for the flourishing of its master, but does not hold sway over all. So, the work of prudence is to manage moral virtues, restraining and moderating passions, for the sake of the work of wisdom, which, in turn, is aimed at the happiness of the soul.

In the sense of these analogies, prudence is seen as a servant, but never as a master. The master, i.e., that for the sake of which (or in whose interest) things are done, i.e., health, the gods, and the household, respectively, is represented by wisdom, which, in truly ruling over prudence, is a better virtue.

A third main authoritative argument presented in this section of the text (§15) based on book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics* stipulates that the best operation, that which belongs to the best part of the soul is contemplative, rather than practical. That point is also supported by the beginning of the *Metaphysics* (982b), where Aristotle says that something which exists for its own sake is better than something which exists for the sake of something else. Considering the preceding argument with all of its analogies, the best virtue must be the one which directs the best operation, and thus we conclude yet again that wisdom must be a better virtue than prudence.

The fourth and final point advanced in the *sed contra* (§16) examines wisdom's standing as a divine science, and it is shown as the only science which is of God in two senses: first, in the sense of a genitive of possession, because it is the science which is possessed and most loved by god, and also in the sense of a genitive of description, because it is the science which is about divine things. Thus, being thoroughly divine, no other science can be more honourable than wisdom, as is suggested in the *Metaphysics* – and so it is better than prudence.

### 3.6.2.3 Buridan's arguments that wisdom is a better virtue than prudence

Now we finally arrive at Buridan's own answer to the main question. He starts (§17) with some methodological considerations and highlights the fact that he will not be considering infused virtues, nor supernaturally infused habitus of any kind. Then, he defines what he means by wisdom and prudence. Wisdom refers to “the knowledge of metaphysics – which with respect to the first causes of beings considers what is capable

of being convincingly argued for by human reason,”<sup>376</sup> whereas prudence “is that which concerns what is doable by humans – that is, what is in our power to do or not to do, what it advises, judges, and prescribes concerning what ought to be done and what not, as well as how, when, and where those things ought to be done or not, and so on for the other circumstances.”<sup>377</sup>

Once this is established, following Aristotle, Buridan can present his thesis that wisdom is better than prudence, absolutely speaking (§§18-21). The first reason is that which concerns the order of things in this (lesser) world, which mirrors the order of things in the other (higher) world (§19). That to which everything is ordered is happiness (as Buridan has explained in book I of the *QNE* and will develop in book X), and the best operation is the one which consists in happiness. Out of all virtues, Buridan shortlists three as candidates for the title of best virtue, namely prudence, wisdom, and moral virtue. Now, to be able to establish which one out of the three is best, we need to figure out which virtue has as its operation something which is an end in itself, as opposed to those which are ordered to or work for the sake of the best virtue’s end. Wisdom is the only one which fulfills that former criterion, as its own end is truth and knowledge, and it is not ordered to prudence nor to moral virtue. Prudence and moral virtue, however, act for the sake of wisdom, and are ordered or subordinate to it.

Moreover, if we go back to the point concerning wisdom being the most divine science (as we have seen in the *sed contra*, §16), we should also consider God’s activity (§20), that by which He contemplates and loves Himself — and that activity, which is purely contemplative by nature, acting in view of the highest realm, is better than the practical activity, which is merely a by-product of the contemplative activity. And as it is in the divine realm so it is in the human realm: the activity of the human intellect by which it

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<sup>376</sup> *QNE* VI, 22, §14.

<sup>377</sup> *QNE* VI, 22, §14.

contemplates God and all that is beyond our active power (like the intelligences) is better and nobler than the activity by which we engage with mundane things, acting on them, which is what art and prudence are concerned with.

Following this reasoning, Buridan also adds that contemplation, which is participation in God's likeness, is achieved through wisdom, and not prudence: "our understanding becomes more similar to God's through the contemplation of God than through acquaintance with those things which are beneath it."<sup>378</sup> Here, we must also remember that in Book one of his commentary Buridan had already ruled out the possibility that the divine be a subject of moral philosophy, for god is independent of humans and divine affairs from human affairs.<sup>379</sup>

But then, we might ask, if all the precedence and superiority of wisdom seems so obvious, what is the role of prudence, and why does it have this rank of manager of virtues? (§21) And that is because prudence is unique in its ruling over human affairs. Indeed, while it rules all human action, it does not have as high a standing as wisdom because humans are fallible and our bodies have needs and our appetites are frail, and we need prudence to order them well. So, counterfactually, were our appetites always to be contained, we could do away with prudence, but not with wisdom, as we need the latter for the perfection of our knowing and our beatitude, which is our ultimate end, by nature.

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<sup>378</sup> *QNE VI*, 22, §17.

<sup>379</sup> *QNE I*, 3: "Quid sit subjectum in morali scientia? Videtur quod Deus, quia dicit Aristoteles quod in morali bonum optimum inquiritur, quod est finis quem propter ipsum volumus, et alia propter illum, et quia complectitur fines aliarum scientiarum; hoc autem est Deus, omnia namque finaliter ordinantur in ipsum. Oppositum dicit Aristoteles primum huius, quia 'bonum in hac scientia quaesitum est ab homine operatum et possessum, et non est Deus.'" (Buridan (1637), p. 10) Cf. also: Korolec (1975), p. 62.

Buridan's take on this issue is rather unsurprising: his view of prudence is rather similar to Albert's both in his *Super Ethica* and *Ethica*,<sup>380</sup> according to whom

[prudence] is, as it were, the leader of the virtues (*auriga virtutum*), which controls all ethical virtues. This leadership function results from its position, which actually places it between the intellectual and the ethical virtues (*sit media inter morales et speculativas virtutes*), for *prudentia* guarantees the necessary connection between theory and practice. The priority of *sapientia* is not called into question by Albert: because it deals with the contents of theoretical philosophy, it is, like those contents, the noblest and, thus, superior to *prudentia*.<sup>381</sup>

All this having been said, it is important to highlight, as Buridan does (§22), that although wisdom is nobler than prudence, we ought not to extrapolate from that and claim that just any and all contemplative sciences are better than prudence.

#### 3.6.2.4 Buridan's replies to the objections

Having exposed his response to the main question, in the remaining paragraphs (§§23-34), Buridan will address the objections. In doing that, some finer aspects of the preceding points will also become clearer.

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<sup>380</sup> Albert's account of prudence is significantly different in the *De Bono*, since at the time of its writing, Albert was only acquainted with the *Ethica nova* and *Ethica vetus*, and did not have the broader understanding of prudence which he acquired once he had access especially to Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, about four years later. Cf. Stammkötter (2001), as well as Callus (1947) and Pelzer (1921).

<sup>381</sup> Stammkötter (2001), p. 309, my translation. The texts Stammkötter is referring to are from Albert's *Super Ethica* I, VI, lect. 7, 10, 18.

In §24, we find a brief reply to the first objection (§1), the one that relied on Aristotle saying that prudence is more able to make us happy than wisdom. What must be considered in that argument is the context of that Aristotelian claim: Aristotle was discussing *political* happiness, and not happiness simpliciter, so that claim does not hold its own for the purpose of the question at hand. This issue is not developed in detail, for a similar point was also already presented in §13 and §18.

In the following paragraph (§25), Buridan replies to the second objection (§2), namely the one about which virtue is more necessary to do good. Buridan points to a false equivalence in his response: “more necessary” does not mean “better.” Although prudence seems more necessary to do good, that does not mean it is a better virtue. This paragraph is better understood with the aid of the Aristotelian authority presented in §14 as well the analogy from the sixth main point of the *respondeo* (§21): if we considered what is more necessary as better, it would follow that health is better than wisdom. The problem is that this would mean that the things ordered to a certain end (which are necessary for that end to be attained) would be better than the end itself – which is clearly nonsensical. Thus, wisdom, being the ultimate end of human life, is the most honourable of sciences and virtues, but not the most necessary one, for it needs all of the other things that are ordered toward it, such as prudence.

Then comes a series of paragraphs whose aim is to reply to the third objection and all of its arguments (§§3-8). §26 brings an overall response stating that wisdom perfects the sapiential part of the soul. The sapiential part has a nobler object and activity than the prudential part. Therefore, wisdom, being concerned with the sapiential part of the soul is a better virtue than prudence, which acts on the prudential part of the soul. He then tackles objections 3.1 (§28), 3.2 (§29), and 3.3 (§30) with a series of terminological remarks to render them assailable.

To counter 3.1, Buridan relies, once again, on a semantical precision. He claims that the expression “best in man” in (P3) is not meant to oppose the prudential to the sapiential part, but rather the rational to the appetitive part. So, “the best in man” denotes the whole rational part of the soul. Thus, even though intemperance seems to corrupt the prudential part directly, in corrupting it, it corrupts the whole rational part. To address objection 3.2, Buridan starts from the proposed distinction between the prudential and the sapiential parts of the rational soul and clarifies that the term *homo* in the usual way of speaking refers to the prudential part, for wisdom is often beyond the common state in which most humans find themselves, whereas prudence seems to be more common to humans in general. But that is only a descriptive manner of speaking and is not a normative indication of the prudential part being better. In fact, Aristotle clearly says in the tenth book of the *Ethics* (1177b) that the life of a person concerned with wisdom is better than a life focused merely on human affairs, for something divine exists in the former which does not in the latter. In that sense, the most important thing in a human being, being its divine connection, is not prudence, but wisdom.

Again, what we can say about objection 3.3 is that although we seem to say that the prudential part commands or rules over (*precipit*) the sapiential part, it does not do so as a commander, but rather as a servant or an enabler. By its very activities of “containing passions, guiding the sensitive forces, enabling the endurance of hardship happily and readily,” (§30) prudence is necessary as a preceptor or instructor of wisdom: once the preliminary groundwork is done, the workings of wisdom can follow almost automatically, due to our natural inclination toward knowledge. In a similar way to that which we saw in §21, if the hindrances and impediments which come from our bodies and appetites are no longer obstacles due to the effect of prudence’s activities, then we can devote ourselves to contemplation. But our desire to contemplate, despite depending on prudence to prepare the ground for it as has been said above, is not a

result of prudence's command and is not triggered by prudence itself, but it comes, rather, from our natural inclination to knowledge. That goes to show that P8, which claimed that the prudential part of the soul commands the sapiential part does not hold; instead, prudence commands the prudential part, and wisdom commands the sapiential part of the soul. Moreover, Buridan shows the absurdity of objection 3.3: if it were indeed the case that the prudential part commanded the sapiential part and that prudence also commanded the prudential part, if we add to this the claims that wisdom commands the sapiential part (as we have seen above, in obj. 3.2), claiming that prudence is better than wisdom would ultimately mean that prudence would be better or more important than itself – and this argument is clearly not acceptable. So, when we say that prudence instructs the sapiential part, it only does so in a limited capacity (and by no means in a determining manner), simply by removing obstacles when needed so that the sapiential part can then exercise its natural inclination.

In the reply to the fourth objection (§§31-32), Buridan claims that it is not possible for someone to be a true metaphysician without moral virtue and prudence. Regarding the necessity of prudence, his point of view builds on what has been said above about the role of prudence as a preceptor to wisdom. Moral virtue is also required for the wise person in that one does not acquire knowledge and judgment about divine things promptly. It is a gradual process which starts from the knowledge of sensible things. People who worship sensual pleasure, money and fame and think those are better than wisdom and justice as well as those who prefer sumptuous foods, riches and servants to contemplation have incorrect views and beliefs on account of their imprudence and lack of moral virtue. And it is because prudence and moral virtue are lacking that they cannot be dispositionally inclined to wisdom. Hence, the non-prudent metaphysician seems to belong to the realm of *impossibilia*. The existence of a prudent non-metaphysician, on the other hand seems perfectly conceivable: it is someone who is generally good, and more dispositionally inclined to wisdom than the common folk (such as the debater) who is a morally bad person. It just so happens that they have not

(yet) completely and perfectly achieved metaphysical wisdom. And even if someone were to say that a morally bad person would only have their practical assessments impaired – and not speculative ones – that would not be completely true, for if lack of moral virtue serves as an impediment to the part of the soul which is precisely in charge of keeping all passion and powers in check so that wisdom can accomplish its goal, speculative assessments would not be performed properly in the absence of moral virtue.

The response to objection 5 (§33) once again tackles the formulation of the argument and reiterates most of what has been said about the relationship between prudence and wisdom as means and goal, respectively. And it adds an emphasis on the fact that although “prudence absolutely speaking sets to itself as an end wisdom or the work of wisdom – an end which, nevertheless, it does not itself choose. But prudence orders life as a whole to other things so as to secure this end.” (§33) As a preceptor, it does not, as the objection falsely claimed, *produce* a better effect; instead, it simply enables and orders that end to be obtained. That which indeed *produces* the desired end, which is the best and supreme life, is wisdom. So, if the better virtue of the two is the one that produces the better effect, it is wisdom, and not prudence.

Finally, in Buridan’s response to the sixth objection (§34), he argues that although Cicero and Seneca talk about prudence as the master of our virtues, that is precisely because they wrote moral treatises which were concerned with political and practical happiness and goodness, but not with happiness and goodness absolutely speaking, which, as we have seen above, is equivalent to contemplative happiness and falls under the scope of wisdom. And with this Buridan wraps up Book VI of his commentary.

## CHAPTER 4

### CRAFT<sup>382</sup>

Given its vast corpus, it is no surprise that the current scholarship on the philosophy of the Late Middle Ages has tended to overlook certain subject-matters, especially a few pertaining to ethics and political philosophy. A conspicuous example of this in scholastic virtue theory is the case of craft. Whereas, in the last few decades, there has been increasing interest in the discussion concerning virtues and *habitus*<sup>383</sup> and, more specifically, epistemic virtues such as *sapientia*,<sup>384</sup> and *scientia*,<sup>385</sup> one intellectual virtue, namely craft, seems to be consistently overlooked,<sup>386</sup> perhaps due to its status as a “minor” or “subordinate” virtue.<sup>387</sup> While this chapter does not purport to offer *ars*

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<sup>382</sup> A slightly different version of this text was published, along with part of section 3.3.2, in Medeiros Ramos (2021).

<sup>383</sup> Cf., e.g., Faucher & Roques (2018).

<sup>384</sup> Cf., e.g., Saarinen (2006) and Hibbs (2001).

<sup>385</sup> Cf., e.g., Pasnau (2010) and Biard (2012).

<sup>386</sup> The notable exception being Craemer-Ruegenberg & Speer (2012), although the book approaches the subject-matter very broadly and *ars* is rarely taken merely as the virtue, but rather in contexts where it stands as near-synonym to *scientia*, namely, as a set of scientific-philosophical disciplines, such as when it is used in the contraposition of the *artes liberales* to the *artes mechanicæ*, or the discussion about which discipline ought to be called *ars artium*.

<sup>387</sup> It is interesting to note that *ars* did not figure among the three intellectual virtues in the arts masters’ commentaries on the *Ethica vetus* and *Ethics nova* (i.e., *Ethics* commentaries written until the first half of the 13th century). The intellectual virtues were then restricted to *intelligentia*, *sapientia* and *fronesis/prudentia*. Later, with the development of *Ethics* commentaries based on the whole of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (with the appearance of Herman the German’s paraphrasis of Moerbeke’s translation to the ten books and the reestablishment of Aristotle’s five intellectual virtues as *scientia*,

full historical reparations, I would like to bring some of its noteworthy aspects back to light after emphasizing how and why craft qualifies as an intellectual virtue. Once it has been adjudicated that we are justified in counting craft among the intellectual virtues, we can ask ourselves why so few passages of Buridan's ethics commentary are dedicated to it, and why craft does not seem to be as valued or considered as important as the other four intellectual virtues.

#### 4.1 Craft as a minor intellectual virtue

Although craft is confirmed as an intellectual virtue by Buridan's reasoning, its role seems to be somewhat limited, as it is treated as a virtue of the factive intellect, and one which concerns the *factibilia*, which have a lesser standing than the objects of our practical deliberations and of our theoretical contemplation. But why go through all this trouble of saving the status of craft as a virtue? The fact that Aristotle had counted it among the five intellectual virtues does bear some weight on Buridan's reasoning just as it did for other scholastics – hence Aquinas' similar defense of craft as an intellectual virtue. What is at stake here is a broader consideration of the coherence of the scheme of intellectual virtues, and not simply a one-off defense of craft as a virtue. While the principles admitted in speculative sciences are intellectually evident principles (known by the intellect through its natural light, when it considers the meaning of the terms),<sup>388</sup> i.e. the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of identity, or through the experience of the many principles which cannot be known

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*intellectus, prudentia, sapientia* and *ars*), *scientia* was given a prominent position in subsequent debates, whereas the *ars* continued to be somewhat neglected. (On the intellectual virtues according to the arts masters in the first half of the 13th century, cf. Zavattero (2007), pp. 49-51 and Lafleur (2012), pp. 59-60.)

<sup>388</sup> Cf. Buridan, *QNE* VI, 11.

otherwise, or by ratiocinative teachings deducing conclusions from principles,<sup>389</sup> principles admitted in practical sciences are not self-evident and require sensible experience and memory. The latter pertain to craft, prudence, and also to some speculative sciences. But unlike speculative knowledge, which can rely solely on evident principles or necessarily deducible conclusions, craft must do some internal work of synthesis from experience. While, according to Aristotle (*Met.* 981a), experience is able to merge many particular perceptions into one experience and gain knowledge of individual cases all while merely seeing these individual cases as such and not exceeding their particularity,

[craft] recognizes, for the first time, proceeding from the similarities of observations [of particulars], what is general inherent in them; thus, it is able to structure cases by kinds and has a λόγος – here, one may full well say “concept” – which allows for the subsumption of similar cases; even cases which are similar only in certain respects. It is only at this stage that the general is recognized in the many individuals, and the emancipation from immediate perception opens up the possibility of theorizing.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> Cf. Buridan QNE VI, 1 §13: “Alii autem dixerunt quod habitus intellectuales non generantur in nobis ex assuetudine, sed ex naturali inclinatione intellectus ad intelligibile quantum ad principia omnino prima, vel per experientiam quantum ad multa principia que aliter sciri non possunt, vel per doctrinam ratiocinativam deducendo conclusiones ex principiis [...]”

<sup>390</sup> Schneider (2012), p. 173: *Der Erfahrung gelingt es zwar, viele singuläre Wahrnehmungen zu einer Erfahrung zu verschmelzen, ihr gelingt die Erkenntnis der Einzelfälle, aber sie sieht die Einzelfälle auch nur als solche und kann deren Singularität noch nicht übersteigen. Die Empirie ist auch noch ganz der Sinneswahrnehmung verhaftet, weil ihre Erkenntnismöglichkeiten davon abhängen, dass ihr identische Wahrnehmungsbilder gegeben werden; wann immer ein bereits bekannter und insofern identischer Fall auftritt, kann dieser identifiziert werden, die Erfahrung stellt fest, dass etwas der Fall ist, weiss dann möglicherweise auch, auf welche Weise mit diesem Fall - sei es theoretisch, sei es praktisch - umzugehen ist. Aber erst die Kunst weiss, weshalb dies der Fall ist, erst auf dieser Stufe findet sich Kenntnis der Ursachen. Die Kunst leistet eine ganz andersartige Synthese als die Erfahrung, indem sie erstmals von den Ähnlichkeiten der Beobachtungen ausgehend deren Allgemeines erkennt; damit vermag sie Fälle nach Arten zu gliedern und verfügt über einen λόγος – hier darf man wohl "Begriff" sagen – der die Subsumption artgleicher, mithin bloss in bestimmter Hinsicht ähnlicher Fälle erlaubt. Erst auf dieser Stufe wird an dem vielen Einzelnen das Allgemeine erkannt, und mit der Emanzipation von der unmittelbar ge-ggebenen Wahrnehmung wird die Möglichkeit der Theoriebildung eröffnet.* (my translation)

The properly contemplative, properly genetically intellectual side of *ars*, insofar as it pertains to the utmost rational part of the soul, is begotten from its ability to conceptualize (i.e., acquire a so-called universal) based on particular occurrences. Craft, thus, is not simply a routine repetition of an act and entails a certain form of cognition and judgment, whence its status as an intellectual virtue:

Aristotle speaks of a real “knowledge” in this context for the first time when he considers the “architects,” those who employ τέχνη [i.e., craft], to be comparatively “wiser” with regards to those craftsmen whose actions are based merely on experience; [the former] are called wiser not because they know how to approach a given case better – this is not always the case and it is often not the case when dealing with individual cases – but rather because they have the λόγος and know the causes.<sup>391</sup>

Since craft is directly related to the product of work (and not really to its doing or the activity itself, as we have seen in Buridan’s analysis), the goodness of the work cannot be a product of mere chance. It must be caused by some practical, or factive, notion which is applied by the craftsperson as the circumstances require. There is something in craft that has this knowledge-like feature, a “conceptuality” (λόγος), even if it is not quite a *scientia* (ἐπιστήμη). So, we see that craft is doing the sort of work an intellectual virtue does, and is thus aptly counted in that category, even if the other intellectual virtues carry out higher-order acts of cognition.

So even though craft may seem like a minor virtue amongst intellectual virtues, for it is concerned with *factibilia* and primarily the mechanical arts as well as the factive intellect, rather than with all which is proper to the practical and speculative

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<sup>391</sup> Schneider, p. 173: *Auch von einem wirklichen „Wissen“ spricht Aristoteles in diesem Zusammenhang erstmals, wenn er die „Architekten“, diejenigen, die über die τέχνη verfügen, gegenüber den Handwerkern, deren Tun bloß auf Erfahrung beruht, für vergleichsweise „weiser“ hält; und nicht weil sie einen gegebenen Fall besser, erfolgreicher anzugehen wüßten, heißen sie „weiser“ — das muß keineswegs immer so sein und ist es ausdrücklich gerade beim Handeln, das auf den Einzelfall zielt, oftmals nicht —, sondern weil sie über den λόγος verfügen und die Ursachen kennen.* (my translation)

intellects,<sup>392</sup> it is still important insofar as it has something in common with speculative habits, as noted above.

Although both Aquinas and Buridan deal with the question of whether craft is a virtue, Buridan's treatment of this question merits consideration when compared to Aquinas' mainly on two grounds. First, it is significantly longer than Aquinas'. While the Doctor Angelicus only raises three objections to his view in his *quaestio*, Buridan raises five and proceeds to offer us a sturdier thesis, which is capable of accounting for all of them. Furthermore, Buridan's reply to the question includes more detail about this virtue and how it finds its seat in the intellect. Second and most importantly, the Picardian arts master also gives craft a broader scope than Aquinas, allowing its influence to extend beyond the realm of the factive intellect and to reach the appetite.

Hence, a first answer to the question as to why craft seems to be overlooked when compared to the other virtues emerges from the discussion above and the weight it is given by different philosophers: even if *ars* is a virtue, it is not a virtue of humans qua humans independent of other virtues, and, more importantly, because it concerns *factibilia*, and not contemplation, it ranks lower (or the lowest, one might argue) within our philosophical hierarchy. But there is more to this discussion than meets the unsuspecting eye. That *sapientia* and *prudentia* both deserve special places in the podium of virtues seems uncontroversial due to their status as, respectively, a purely contemplative virtue, synonymous with philosophy itself, and the manager of moral virtues. *Intellectus*, in turn, being the *habitus* of first principles,<sup>393</sup> is also warranted a prominent position. But what of *ars* and *scientia*? Why should the latter have precedence over the former? This sort of primacy of *scientia* over *ars*, against common

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<sup>392</sup> Here we must also recall that Buridan had paraphrased Aristotle, in the very beginning of the Proemium of the *QNE*, to remind us that “nobilis et excellens est virtutum speculatio adhuc multo nobilior et multo melior est virtutem operatio.” (Buridan (1637), p. 1)

<sup>393</sup> Cf., Aristotle *NE* 1141a6-8 and, e.g., Aquinas, *ST Ia IIae*, q. 50 a. 4, Buridan *QNE* VI, 11.

belief, is not something that arises in modernity, nor with the advent of the Renaissance. The medieval discussion we find on this issue can actually be traced back to the early middle ages.<sup>394</sup> Moreover, as Lafleur notes it,<sup>395</sup> already in the 13th century, e.g., in the *Philosophica Disciplina* of 1245 written by an anonymous Parisian arts master, the use of those terms carried some weight. Whereas the term “*scientia*” is found recurrently throughout that work, “*ars*” is seldom present, except in fixed expressions, serving mainly two purposes: in one sense, such as in the expression “*ars dicendi*,” it connotes a weaker epistemological status than *scientia*; in another, when used in expressions such as “*artes liberales*,” it is supposed to denote more rigour (especially once physics, metaphysics and poetics were added to the liberal arts), which would therefore legitimize the role of the *magister artium* in the university.

But while these remarks consider both *ars* and *scientia* as broad, non-technical terms, a more precise question concerning the difference between these two virtues nevertheless is asked. But just as it may seem obvious to us, albeit merely intuitively – and perhaps unjustifiably so – that craft and (scientific) knowledge are not the same thing, this distinction did not seem to be a particularly tricky one for Buridan, for he only dedicates a short section to it:

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<sup>394</sup> Cf. Włodek (2012), p. 57: “Or, dans l’antiquité, les arts et les sciences formaient un ensemble de disciplines scientifico-philosophiques. Le haut moyen âge a seulement hérité d’une partie du patrimoine classique, c’est-à-dire de la connaissance des arts libéraux (trivium et quadrivium) et de celle des arts serviles ou mécaniques. On connaissait les divisions classiques de la philosophie (philosophie spéculative et philosophie pratique) sans connaître le contenu des disciplines présentées par ces divisions. Pour les érudits médiévaux, jusqu’à la fin du XIIe si., les arts renfermaient tout le savoir profane. On les considérait comme des voies qui conduisent aux sciences sacrées et à la plénitude de la vie chrétienne. Au XIIIe s., après l’entrée d’Aristote en Europe occidentale, les arts ont, pour ainsi dire, retrouvé leur place naturelle comme partie d’un grand système du savoir humain. Mais les rapports entre les arts et les sciences ont été compris de diverses façons par les philosophes médiévaux. Car la conception exigeante de la science, présente dans les œuvres d’Aristote (qui y voit un savoir axiomatique, déductif, dont l’objet est universel et nécessaire) ne fut jamais mise en pratique d’une manière absolue. Ainsi, au moyen âge, la science a fait l’objet de différentes conceptions en fonction des différents courants philosophiques. Par conséquent, les relations entre les arts et les sciences ont aussi été conçues différemment par les divers auteurs médiévaux.”

<sup>395</sup> Lafleur (2012), p. 55.

But one could raise a question about how knowledge (*scientia*) will be able to differ from craft (*ars*) and prudence (*prudentia*), when knowledge is allowed to be about contingent things, just as craft and prudence? I reply that although knowledge deals with external contingent things, yet in another way it is also concerned with non-contingent conclusions and propositions and things in the way mentioned above [i.e., through a demonstrable conclusion, or through the thing (or things) signified by the terms of the conclusion, or through that which the terms of the conclusion supposit]. And craft and prudence are about contingent conclusions and from contingent propositions, namely those which could be otherwise, or others which could be false. The physician concludes that this patient must not drink tomorrow, and this conclusion turns out to be false. Therefore, he will conclude the opposite, and will give him wine because of the variety of the matter and of the circumstances of the singular, which the craftsperson and the prudent person ought to consider, but not the knowledgeable person and the wise person.<sup>396</sup>

We thus see that the issue does not emerge in the eighth question of the *QNE* because Buridan had already addressed it two questions prior. Now, although *scientia* may deal with contingent things but it is not necessary that it does, *ars* – and also *prudentia*, for that matter – necessarily deal with contingents.<sup>397</sup> Thus, it concerns lesser things in the

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<sup>396</sup> *QNE* VI, 6: “Sed adhuc aliquis poterit dubitare, quomodo scientia poterit ab arte et prudentia differe, cum ipsa concedatur versari circa res contingentes, sicut ars et prudentia? Respondeo quod licet scientia sit de rebus extra contingentibus, est tamen de conclusionibus et propositionibus non contingentibus aliter se habere [...]. Ars autem et prudentia sunt de conclusionibus contingentibus et ex propositionibus contingentibus, scilicet quas contingit alibi, vel alias esse falsas. Concludit enim medicus modo quod iste infirmus non debet bibere cras, hec conclusio erit falsa. Ideo concludet oppositum, et dabit ei vinum propter varietatem materie et circumstantiarum singularium quas oportet considerare artificem et prudentem, non autem scientem et sapientem.” (Buridan (1637), p. 502, my translation).

<sup>397</sup> It is thus also interesting to note what Biard (2012, pp. 100-101) remarks on this issue: although *scientia* and *ars* may be synonymous in a broad sense, in a strict sense, i.e., taken as epistemic virtues, “craft and prudence are opposed to wisdom, understanding and knowledge, in that they are practical – and not speculative – mental dispositions” (Biard, 2012, p.100) Thus, Biard, goes on to argue, “logic is not a science (...)” because “even though it is not easy to distinguish the practical mental disposition from the speculative mental disposition, it is nevertheless clear that logic is a practical disposition of the mind, insofar as its object are the operations of the mind which we freely choose to form and combine. And among the practical dispositions, logic is a craft and does not derive from prudence, for it is not concerned with the ultimate goal of living well [...]. The goal of logic is argumentation: it teaches us to argue and to conclude in the best way we can according to the subject being dealt with.” (Biard, 2012, p. 101, my translation) In a broad sense, however, logic can be either *scientia* or *ars*. If we bear in mind Buridan’s distinction between *logica utens* and *logica docens* (cf., e.g., Kann, 1994), we must acknowledge that the former, corresponding logic as it is used (“logic-in-use,” as Klima calls it – cf. Klima 2009, p. 13), is still considered a craft whereas the latter, logic as it is thought (“logical doctrine,”

hierarchy of beings, and although this means it is about less difficult things than those dealt with by *scientia*, *intellectus* and *sapientia* (which are based on principles), it concerns a wider array of things considered in light of general guidelines, and a thoroughly specific account of it and all of the contingent *factibilia* and *facienda* it entails is impossible to give. This could be one of the reasons why relatively little attention is paid to craft as an intellectual virtue, and only a cursory treatment of it seems to suffice for the purposes of the *QNE*.

#### 4.2 Whither craft?

While *ars* might still need a suitable rehabilitation by a careful analysis of other philosophers' accounts of it so its role in the "pantheon of virtues" can be properly restored, the examination above has hopefully shown that this subject-matter is worth pursuing, if not for itself, at least insofar as it may help give us a broader understanding of Late Medieval virtue theory. Finally, and despite the questions raised in this chapter, I think it is worthwhile to acknowledge that the consideration of craft in my own writings here is also dwarfed by the discussion of the other intellectual virtues, not only because Buridan himself does not dedicate such a large portion of his work to it but also because, for the purposes of this study, my efforts are primarily focused on the virtues properly belonging to the speculative intellect.

Even though it goes beyond the scope of this work, in addition to the broader research about virtues I have mentioned above, the significance of the role of craft in a philosophical system is worth pursuing on its own, especially from the viewpoint of

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*pace* Klima, *ibid.*), does not deal with particulars, and is thus considered a *scientia*, in the sense of scientific knowledge that can be taught.

the relations between technology, science and ethics, as those three subject-matters seem to be much more closely related in the context of Late Medieval philosophy than nowadays, when they tend to be bundled together to address specific concerns, usually on the part of the public consuming specific technology, or to respond to specific research and development demands springing from corporate or academic interest. In a world that has become so dependent on technology (and so much more quickly in the last few decades) in an ever-renewing sense of that term, a thorough study of the issues I have discussed above might prove to be of the utmost importance.

## CHAPTER 5

### UNDERSTANDING

The virtue which I am calling understanding – also known as “intuitive insight”, “intuitive reason” etc. –<sup>398</sup> is that which Buridan calls “*intellectus*,” the Latin equivalent to Aristotle’s νοῦς, i.e., what Aristotle and medieval philosophers interpreted as “the *habitus* of first principles,”<sup>399</sup> or the *habitus* of indemonstrable principles, which, in keeping with Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*, comprises axioms, definitions and hypotheses.<sup>400</sup> How late medieval philosophers and, in particular, Buridan, understand *intellectus* is what I will explore in this section.

The fact that Buridan argues that *intellectus* can be more than simply a power of the soul in *QDA* III, 11 further justifies my choice of translating “*intellectus*” as “understanding” not only when I refer to that power, but also when I refer to the virtuous disposition under examination throughout most of this dissertation. In fact, this use of the term is already attested to in Aristotle himself, who calls νοῦς a *habitus*

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<sup>398</sup> Cf., for instance, Saarinen (2006), p. 189, Saarinen (2003), p. 750.

<sup>399</sup> Cf., Aristotle *EN* 1141a6-8 and, e.g., Aquinas, *ST* Ia IIae, q. 50 a. 4, Buridan *QNE* VI, 11.

<sup>400</sup> Aristotle, *APo.* 72a15-76b37.

—<sup>401</sup> thus not always referring to it, as it were, as a power of the soul.<sup>402</sup> But because, in that dispositional sense, we often associate *intellectus* with the grasping of first principles, this seems to be problematic for confirming it as a virtue, since it is not *prima facie* clear how a grasping of first principles can be habituated. And this, as we have seen, is what Buridan explains in *QNE* VI, 11.

In its broader sense, taken either as a power or a virtue, we find a synoptic account of *intellectus* in the late Middle Ages in Economos' 2009 dissertation, where she provides detailed explanations of how Grosseteste, Aquinas and Buridan relate it to induction. One of the main aspects of what she presents that we need to consider to have a full grasp of the importance of *intellectus* is that

Indemonstrable first principles are essential to the acquisition of scientific knowledge (*scientia*), and serve the function of providing a starting-point for scientific demonstration. [Grosseteste, Aquinas and Buridan] closely [follow] Aristotle in claiming that, strictly speaking, to have scientific knowledge of something means that one has demonstrated it. A demonstration, according to these philosophers, is a syllogism which produces knowledge of the cause of a thing or event. The premises of a demonstrative syllogism must be true, primary, immediate, prior to, and causative of the conclusion. [...] Again, following Aristotle, each of these philosophers claims that the premises of such a demonstrative syllogism must not only be known, but must in fact be *better-known* than the conclusion.<sup>403</sup>

To understand and properly distinguish *intellectus* and *scientia*, the first thing we need to bear in mind is that while *intellectus* is the *habitus* of assenting to first principles,

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<sup>401</sup> Aristote, *EN* VI, 1143a.

<sup>402</sup> On "*intellectus*" as a πολλαχῶς λεγόμενον, cf., for instance, Odonis (1500), f. 127v-128r, where he describes *intellectus* as being able to mean five things: passive intellect (*intellectus passivus*), possible or material intellect (*intellectus possibilis seu materialis*), agent intellect (*intellectus agens*), actualized or acquired intellect (*intellectus adeptus*), and/or speculative intellect (*intellectus speculativus*). All of these other, possible meanings of *intellectus* are addressed by Buridan in his *QDA* III.

<sup>403</sup> Economos (2009), p. 32.

*scientia* is the *habitus* of assenting to conclusions begotten from premises, as in syllogisms. That is to say: we can have understanding of first principles and scientific knowledge of the conclusions of an argument. And the understanding of at least some first principles is a necessary condition for scientific knowledge.

But one main question of interest here concerning *intellectus* broadly speaking remains, namely: whether there is indeed such a thing as a disposition of *intellectus* distinct from the power of the soul which receives the same name – and, if there is, whether it is one single disposition. The former question, as we have seen, is mentioned in *QNE* VI, 11, but a more thorough explanation of how *intellectus* as a disposition is different from the intellect taken as a power of the soul can also be found in *QDA* III, 11, where “[...]it is asked [...] whether the act or the disposition of the intellect is the same as the intellectual soul, or a thing superadded to it.”

In fact, Buridan’s treatment of this issue in the *QNE* will mirror much of the discussion presented by Geraldus Odonis, as is often the case throughout the *Ethics* commentary. Once again, just as was the case for some other questions in *QNE*, Buridan uses his very close reading of Odonis to criticize this fourteenth-century Franciscan, something which many commentators have noted.<sup>404</sup> It is noteworthy here how heavily Buridan relies on Odonis’ *lectio VI, quæstio 11*.<sup>405</sup> In his discussion, Odonis will mention and address three out of the four objections presented by Buridan (i.e., the objections found in §§2, 3 and 4 of Buridan’s *QNE* VI, 11, corresponding, respectively, to the second, first and third objections found in Odonis).<sup>406</sup> Even if similar formulations can also be found in Aquinas, their views on intellect are rather distinct. I will touch on some of these differences below, but I will not linger on the comparison between the latter two,

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<sup>404</sup> Cf., for instance: Walsh (1975), Kent (2008), and Saarinen (2003) and (2006).

<sup>405</sup> Cf., for instance: Odonis (1500), ff. 127v-128v. For a comprehensive discussion of Odonis’ *Ethics* manuscripts and incunabula, cf. Porter (2009).

<sup>406</sup> Odonis (1500), f. 127v.

for a fairly comprehensive study of this issue, which also considers Grosseteste's views on intellect, was undertaken by Economos.

### 5.1 Buridan on first principles and understanding as a disposition

Although a great part of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* deals with demonstrations, in that treatise Aristotle also admits to the fact that some human cognitions are not obtained through demonstrations (72b19-20). We seem to “grasp” or “get to know” some things in ways we cannot demonstrate: these are called first principles – or primary and immediate premises, when they are used to demonstrate something else. Thus, we can have understanding from something other than a demonstration. As we learn from Buridan and from the Aristotelian tradition in general, the *habitus* of first principles, i.e., of principles which are not demonstrated and which themselves can serve as a starting point for demonstrations, is called *intellectus*. Buridan will rely on these first principles to some extent – just like other medieval authors did – to avoid explaining demonstrations through infinite regresses or question-begging arguments. For the arts master, however, to the three kinds of indemonstrable principles proposed by Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics* (namely, axioms, definitions and hypotheses), we should also add singular propositions, which rely on our senses, memory and experience, as he establishes in *QNE VI*, 11 and *SD 719*, and causal principles, which are universal principles generated by induction from particular propositions.<sup>407</sup>

Thus, all while ratifying the indemonstrable principles proposed by Aristotle, Buridan adds new kinds of indemonstrable principles to the Peripatetic's list, some of which were a novelty to Buridan's own contemporaries and predecessors, like Aquinas, for

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<sup>407</sup> Cf. Economos (2009), chapters 2 and 5.

whom principles could be begotten from a combination of senses, memory, and/or experience through the induction of causal principles, but only through the mediation of reason.<sup>408</sup> Reason, Aquinas says, “receives one common item which is held firmly in the soul and considers it with no consideration of any of the singulars – and takes this common item as a principle of craft and scientific knowledge.”<sup>409</sup> This, of course, relies on the idea of a common nature that can be incompletely grasped through reason,<sup>410</sup> which is what allows us to use induction to go from “this female bird lays eggs” and “that female bird lays eggs” and “that one also” to “all female birds lays eggs” but not from “this female bird is white” to “all female birds are white.”

But Buridan, as a nominalist, certainly does not want to rely on common nature to allow for induction. Thus, he draws a distinction, as we have seen in the text and exegesis of *QNE VI*, 11, between, on the one hand, demonstrations, axioms, and hypotheses, the understanding of which is based solely on our knowledge of the terms of the propositions, with no need for induction, and, on the other hand, causal principles, for the understanding of which the senses, memory and/or experience are required. The former are what Buridan names first-mode principles, and the latter he calls second-mode principles. This is how we come to focus on second-mode or causal principles, not originally present in Aristotle’s discussion of *voûç*. Buridan is not the first to posit causal principles as being a kind of first principle. As Economos duly notes,<sup>411</sup> this idea was already present in Grosseteste and Aquinas and can be traced back to Avicenna.<sup>412</sup> A thorough comprehension of the scope of first principles as also including these causal, second-mode principles is crucial to Buridan’s account of *intellectus* because,

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<sup>408</sup> Cf. Economos (2009), p. 96.

<sup>409</sup> Aquinas, *Expositio Posteriorum* II, l. 20, 11: “Ratio autem non sistit in experimento particularium, sed ex multis particularibus in quibus expertus est, accipit unum commune, quod firmatur in anima, et considerat illud absque consideratione alicuius singularium; et hoc commune accipit ut principium artis et scientiae.” (My translation here is loosely based on Economos’ but also expands on it.)

<sup>410</sup> Economos (2009), pp. 99-100. On the incompleteness requirement, see Schmidt (1966).

<sup>411</sup> Economos, p. 43

<sup>412</sup> Cf. Weinberg (1965), pp. 134-135.

if by first principles we simply mean axioms, definitions and hypotheses, such as “a being is a being” and “white is a colour”, it seems that the human intellect can automatically assent to these propositions – provided, of course, that we know the meaning of the terms used in them. As we have already seen in the exegetical text commentary, first-mode principles get immediate assent from the intellect, so long as the terms in the propositions are known. This is the case for propositions such as: “nothing rational is irrational” and “white is a colour,”<sup>413</sup> as well as “whiteness is not blackness”, “a being is a being”<sup>414</sup> etc. If assent is “automatic,” no virtue is needed – thus, understanding would seem not to be a virtue, and that would defeat the effort of showing how *intellectus* is an intellectual virtue. In order to claim that *intellectus* is a virtue, we need to talk about these other kinds of first principles. Second-mode principles, on the other hand, require sensation, memory and/or experience in order to be understood, bringing us back to Aristotle’s discussion of induction in the *Posterior Analytics* (99b-100a), where he describes how we perceive things through the faculty of discrimination and, once these things are no longer present to us, they can still present themselves to our intellect through memory and, eventually, some memories which are numerically multiple, yield one experience: a universal, which, in turn, can serve as the starting point to art or *scientia*.<sup>415</sup> Here, however, Buridan claims that second-mode principles can be singular or universal.<sup>416</sup> Examples of second-mode principles are the ones he gives in the *QAPo* and *QNE* VI, 11, be them singular or universal propositions: “this rhubarb purges bile”, “this fire is hot”, “all rhubarb purges bile”, “all fire is hot” etc.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> *QAPo*. II, 11.

<sup>414</sup> *QNE* VI, 11, §18.

<sup>415</sup> This is something Buridan discusses in detail in *QNE* VI, 6.

<sup>416</sup> *QNE* VI, 11, §20.

<sup>417</sup> We assent to these on the basis of the consideration of multiple things by many individuals, Buridan says, quoting Averroes, and the exact amount depends on “the nature of the principle and the nature of the investigator,” which could signal a sort of encroachment on Buridan’s part, maybe even a concern with pragmatic encroachment, i.e., the idea that practical considerations play in how readily we are willing to assent to principles, and that different stakes lead to different strength of assent. Buridan does

To be clear, the argument for postulating that understanding is a virtue is that, if “understanding” is a term we use to describe the special kind of relationship we have to first principles, as some sort of immediate assent or grasp, it is important to investigate what these first principles are, and into which kinds they can be distinguished. Precisely how *intellectus* functions will also depend on the kind of first principles under consideration. If, for first-mode principles, the intellect’s assent seems to be “automatic” – or, in Buridan’s words, “prompt and firm” – since, in those instances, the intellect can simply not go astray if the terms of the proposition are understood, that is not the case for second-mode principles. For second-mode principles, a virtuous *habitus* is needed to guarantee that the intellect will not err, as Economos claims, so *intellectus* must be a virtue.

Generally speaking, then, the *habitus* of understanding is responsible for the acquisition of and assent to the truth of indemonstrable principles through induction or “from frequent consideration and agreement” (*QNE* VI, 11 §31). For Buridan, this *habitus* is particularly important because of the central role it plays in the acquisition of second-mode principles – a role which is far more important than that of induction, for instance, which simply “provides *intellectus* with the content which it will use to form a universal principle.”<sup>418</sup> In his system, Buridan gives a greater role to understanding, presenting it as “actively [enabling] us to intuit the truth of indemonstrable principles.”<sup>419</sup> While, for Aquinas, induction is mediated by reason,<sup>420</sup> which grasps common natures and

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not dwell on this issue, and neither will I, but this is an issue which could be explored further at a more opportune moment.

<sup>418</sup> Economos, p. 9

<sup>419</sup> Economos, p. 10

<sup>420</sup> Here, it is worth noting, following Economos, that when Aquinas is concerned, the secondary literature is rather misleading in treating *intellectus* as a kind of “intuition”, while it is truly a *habitus* of first principles. What *intellectus* does is not provide a kind of intuitive cognition but it is rather a state of possessing principles which have already been grasped through intuition or through the understanding of the meaning of the terms in a proposition. *Intellectus* is born out of the inductive process.

produces singular or universal principles from them, “for Buridan, the primary role which induction plays is to train and cultivate the innate power of *intellectus* so as to ensure that its natural assent to universal principles does not go astray, by providing counter-examples to such generalizations, if available.”<sup>421</sup> According to Economos’ interpretation, a virtuous *habitus* of *intellectus* seems to be particularly needed for second-mode principles, where induction is key. However, as we shall see below, Buridan’s stance in the *QNE* seems to be bolder than this, in that in *QNE* VI, 11, he argues that for first-mode principles the added *habitus* is also required for our minds not to get tangled-up and fear being noosed by sophistry, for instance. Because we can come to doubt the truth of axioms to which we have assented to before. Point in case is Buridan’s *vetula* example in *QNE* VI, 11, according to which, when asked whether they could eat and not eat at the same time, old women replied they could not, but faced with the reminder that God is all-powerful and then being made to consider, in light of this reminder, whether God could make it so that they could eat and not eat at the same time, they retract their immediate rejection of the principle of non-contradiction and now claim that they simply do not know the answer to the question. That example is meant to show that our having acquired a *habitus* of a first principle from frequent consideration and agreement with them is a more reliable way of shying away from error and for making sure that our minds do not get tangled up in confusion. What the virtuous *habitus* of understanding accomplishes, thus, is making sure we stay away from these mental knots and that we do not doubt the truth of first principles, whether first- or second-mode.

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<sup>421</sup> Economos, pp. 9-10, with reference to *QAPo*. I, 2

## 5.2 *Intellectus* as a disposition vs. *intellectus* as a power of the soul

In *QDA* III, 11, Buridan directly examines whether the intellectual soul is the same as the act of the disposition of *intellectus*. Much of the discussion of Buridan's answer to the question is dedicated to establishing the difference between *scientia* and *intellectus*. In the *QNE*, this seems to be a moot point: in part, indeed, because Buridan had already addressed this issue in the *QDA*, which was written before the *QNE*,<sup>422</sup> but also because he establishes in *QNE* VI, 1 that there are five intellectual virtues (in keeping with what Aristotle says in *EN* VI), and the distinction between *scientia* and *intellectus* is taken for granted. However, to appease any remaining resistance on the reader's part, *QNE* VI, 12 seems to account for that distinction in the context of the *Ethics* commentary in a satisfying manner, by firmly establishing the boundaries between the three speculative virtues, to wit: understanding, knowledge and wisdom, and the distinction between understanding and knowledge, in a nutshell, is the standard one, which I have presented at the very beginning of this section: the *habitus* of first principles vs. the *habitus* of the conclusion of an argument. But the effort of establishing classifications and distinctions that are useful to our grasp of the genesis of our acts and *habitus* goes far beyond the list of virtues. As Zupko (2018) explains, in *QDA* III, 11 Buridan is quite clear on his explanation of the difference between acts of thinking and dispositions. To him, an act and a *habitus* of thinking are not the same kinds of things. Surely, in the *QDA* we generally take as the object of our study *intellectus* as it is actualized in the immaterial human intellect of a given agent of intellection, but our goal in the *QNE* is, instead, to understand *intellectus* as a virtuous disposition, i.e. as a potentiality and not as it is actualized. There is a marked distinction, first, between *intellectus* as an act and *intellectus* as a *habitus* in that the two are different qualities, i.e., different kinds of

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<sup>422</sup> As I have mentioned earlier, the *QNE* is taken to be Buridan's last piece of writing, left uncomplete upon his death, in the 1360s. The *QDA* is estimated to have been written sometime before 1352 (cf. Zupko, 2018).

things (*res*).<sup>423</sup> Moreover, there is also a difference between each of these qualities and the faculty of *intellectus* (i.e., the intellect), which is not an accident, but rather a substantial part of human beings. This difference,<sup>424</sup> as Buridan explains in *QDA* III, 11, is that the human intellect cannot actually entertain opposing complex thoughts at once, but it can be disposed to entertain both of these opposing thoughts, so long as each is entertained at a different moment. We can consider a usual pair of propositions as an example: “Socrates is sitting” and “Socrates is standing.” The intellect as a faculty cannot actually entertain both at the same time as acts of thinking. It can, however, have both as dispositions, potentialities, to be actualized – i.e., transformed into acts of thinking – depending on the scenarios presented, e.g. to the senses, at different moments.

Although the *QDA* presents a sufficient account of the ontology of the *habitus* of understanding, I argue that a more robust account, which avoids important pitfalls, can be provided if we consider that ontology in light of the *QNE*, for reasons which will become clear after we take into account other issues linked to the metaphysics of *habitus* more broadly. In an article dedicated precisely to a discussion of this issue, Klima claims that there is a fundamental difference between Aquinas’ and Buridan’s view on the metaphysics of *habitus*.<sup>425</sup> According to Klima, Aquinas argues that the natural powers of the soul are innate, inseparable, accidental qualities which are really distinct and inseparable from the subjects in which they inhere. Thus, for the *Doctor Angelicus*, the essence of soul is really distinct from its powers, but inseparable from them. Still according to Klima, Buridan would have a radically different stance: for the

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<sup>423</sup> Zupko (2018), p. 344.

<sup>424</sup> In *QDA* III, 15, Buridan also raises the possibility of a distinction in degree between the act and the disposition, according to which the disposition would simply be a lesser degree of the act. But he dismisses it right away, claiming that there’s no sufficient reason that would explain a certain loss in degree when something goes from being in act to being as a disposition – as opposed to a complete corruption, for instance – and why certain degrees would remain while others would be eliminated. That alone, without a real difference in kind, would not suffice (cf. Zupko, 2018, p. 343).

<sup>425</sup> Klima (2018) in Faucher & Roques, pp. 321-331.

Picardian arts master, there is no real distinction between the soul and its principal powers to begin with. There is evidence of this in *QDA* II, 5,<sup>426</sup> where Buridan says that if the soul is really distinct from its powers, then it would either receive its accidents on its own or it would need the mediation of another power. Given that the latter possibility would lead to an infinite regress (by means of an infinite mediation of powers), we are left with the alternative, i.e., the claim that the soul is distinct from its powers and receives its accidents without any mediation whatsoever from other powers:

To cut a long story short, Buridan accepts without further ado this argument concerning principal powers [i.e., that they are really indistinguishable from the soul]. But then it seems that he would have to accept the same type of argument concerning habits as well, given that in his *Ethics* he argues that habits—especially moral habits, that is virtues and vices—inhere in the powers of the soul, in particular, in the will and in the sensitive appetite. However, if these powers are the same as the substance of the soul, then on the strength of the argument cited earlier, the habits perfecting these powers must also be identical with it.<sup>427</sup>

The main claim I take issue with here is the very last sentence of this excerpt: “[...] if these powers are the same as the substance of the soul, then on the strength of the argument cited earlier, the habits perfecting these powers must also be identical with it.” While, on the basis of *QDA* II, 5, I am willing to accept Klima’s first conclusion (i.e., the one arguing that principal powers are indistinguishable from the soul), I think his extrapolation of this conclusion to the *Ethics* is somewhat unwarranted – or, at least, it requires further clarification and qualification since, as he notes, this poses a problem for our consideration that the “*habitus* perfecting these powers” – i.e., the virtues – would “be identical with [the substance of the soul].”<sup>428</sup> To be clear, according to

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<sup>426</sup> For this question, I am using, respectively, Peter Sobol’s and Gyula Klima’s unpublished Latin edition and English translation.

<sup>427</sup> Klima (2018), p. 329, with minor changes.

<sup>428</sup> Klima (2018), p. 329, with minor changes.

Klima, bringing together a series of claims that Buridan holds in *QDA* II, 5 makes for an unexpected conclusion: First, we take Buridan's claim that the soul is equivalent to its principal powers. Then we consider that, in the context of the *Ethics*, *habitus* (particularly moral *habitus*) inhere in the powers of the soul. Thus, in light of the first claim that these powers of the soul are the very substance of the soul, we would be led to the conclusion that *habitus* are the substance of the soul. However, as Klima notes, this is implausible for many reasons. He points to one based on *QNE* I, 22, and reminds us that "the moral virtues are required to incline the will to choosing in accordance with the dictates of reason, from which it might be drawn away by the sensitive appetite, which therefore also needs to be tamed by having its own virtuous habits"<sup>429</sup> and this signals to virtues – at least the moral ones on this account – not being equal to the substance of the soul. Moreover, following my consideration of what has been said in *QNE* VI, 1, I remind the reader that Buridan also claims that intellectual *habitus* are acquired (or not) depending on the teachings we receive and experiences we have – and thus even the intellectual *habitus* would not be substantial but rather accidental.

Although Klima rightfully notes that ethical considerations have probably led Buridan to revise some of his positions from the *QDA*, I argue that the *QNE* simply consolidates some ideas which had in fact already been presented in the *QDA*. If we examine the *Questions on the De Anima*, we find some evidence that even in that commentary, and thus even before Buridan's more systematic focus on the ontology of *habitus* in the ethical context, he had already given us a path out of the undesired conclusion that *habitus* are the substance of the soul. In *QDA* III, 11, he directly replies to the question "whether the act or the disposition of the intellect is the same as the intellective soul, or a thing superadded to it,"<sup>430</sup> and he explicitly argues that "[...] the act of thinking and the knowledge are dispositions distinct from it [i.e., from the intellect] and inhering in

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<sup>429</sup> Klima (2018), p. 329.

<sup>430</sup> *QDA* III, 11: "[...] quaeritur undecimo utrum actus vel habitus intellectualis sit idemquod anima intellectiva, vel sit res sibi super addita." (unpublished edition and translation by Jack Zupko).

it.”<sup>431</sup> So, Buridan dedicates a whole question to explaining how we cannot simply conflate the *habitus* which inhere in certain powers of the soul with said powers, or, as Zupko puts it, “Buridan stops short of reducing accidents to their subjects.”<sup>432</sup>

Taking *intellectus* as our exemplar here will perhaps not help us resolve all conundrums related to our comprehension of the ontology of *habitus* in general but it will certainly help shed some light on how an intellectual *habitus* differs from the power in which it inheres, which might, in turn, serve as a torch to help us further illuminate the larger issue of moral *habitus* and their ontological status. And we can do that not only on the basis of *QDA* III, 11 but also of *QNE* VI, 11.

I think an important caveat can be added to this examination when we consider what Buridan says about the nature of *intellectus* in *QNE* VI, 11. I refer more precisely to the first objection raised at the very beginning of the *quæstio*, as well as Buridan’s main thesis, and his emphatic considerations at the very end of his discussion. In this text, as our exegetical summary has already explained, Buridan advances the thesis that understanding is indeed a virtue. A fairly minute part of the argument relies on explaining that it is not a power nor an emotion, but it is precisely this minute part that adds the clarification we need to add some important nuance to Klima’s point. The objector in Buridan’s *quæstio* could argue, as Scotus did, that “*intellectus*” is an ambiguous term, referring sometimes to the intellective power of the soul – therefore, not being a virtue in this sense – sometimes to the *habitus* of evident and indemonstrable principles – thus being a virtue in this sense. But Buridan counters that this is not how one should go about this. In fact, he claims that if *intellectus* is a power, and one being sufficiently determined to say the truth about first principles, and even

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<sup>431</sup> *QDA* III, 11: “[...] intellectio et scientia sunt dispositiones diversae ab eo et sibi inhaerentes.” (unpublished edition and translation by Jack Zupko).

<sup>432</sup> Zupko (2018), p. 339.

of first-mode principles, it does not need an added *habitus* (*habitus superadditus*) to be determined to act that way. So, if we follow the objector's reasoning, understanding is *but* a power of the soul – the postulation of *intellectus* as a *habitus* thus becomes superfluous. This view, however, is categorically rejected by Buridan, as we have seen.

In Klima's argument above, based on the *QDA*, we see a point similar to Buridan's objector's: the conflation of the claim that something inheres in the power of the soul with the claim that it is absolutely reducible to a power of the soul. However, as we see in the *solutiones* to *QNE VI*, 11, the *habitus* of understanding is something "superadded" (*superadditus*) with respect to the act of saying the truth about first principles. What it adds is a qualifier, because although the power of understanding "is determined to say the truth about some principles [...], it is not determined to say the truth *firmly, without any fear whatsoever*."<sup>433</sup> Given Buridan's insistence on that point in his reply to the other three objections, this seems to be a non-negligible point:

To the other [objection], it should be said that if it is not difficult to say the truth, *it is still difficult to say it firmly and without fear*.

To the other [objection], it should be said that we are determined by nature to say the truth about some principles, *but not to say firmly that which is true, and without fear*.

To the other [objection], it should be said that, even if we cannot err about some principles by denying them, *it is still possible not to assent entirely firmly to them*.<sup>434</sup>

It seems, thus, that without the added *habitus* of understanding, the assent our power of understanding gives to some principles is not firm and free from fear. The fact that the addition of the *habitus* may not determine whether we assent to the truth of a first

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<sup>433</sup> *QNE VI*, 11, §34 (*ad primam*), my emphasis.

<sup>434</sup> Buridan, *QNE VI*, 11, §35-37 (my emphasis). For the Latin text, cf. section 3.4.1 *supra*.

principle but does change how we assent to it, thereby changing how the act is performed by the power, still means that the *habitus* and the power are not ontologically the same. Therefore, Klima's conclusion would not hold because while intellectual powers may indeed be the substance of the soul, according to Buridan, intellectual *habitus* are not.

Therefore, concerning second-mode principles, there seems to be no doubt that, in order to be able to say the truth promptly, easily and firmly, we need an acquired *habitus* in addition to the intellective power, since, with respect to those [principles] about which it is capable by nature to steer straight or to err, the [intellective] power is not of itself sufficiently determined to firmly, promptly and easily steer straight and never err without the superadded *habitus*.<sup>435</sup>

To be sure, even in light of what Buridan grants in *QNE VI*, 1, in saying that we have some *habitus* or virtues *a natura*, this does not at all mean that our *habitus* are in any way substantial. As I have explained in the discussion of that question, having a certain *habitus* “by nature” in that broad, non-technical sense employed there, is simply having some sort of baseline makeup which allows for *habitus* to be acquired and disposed in certain ways.<sup>436</sup> In light of what has been said, I reiterate Economos' claim that “intellectus is a special intellectual virtue which commands assent to the truth of principles and which goes beyond the normal intellective powers of the agent intellect,”<sup>437</sup> and add that, also on the basis of *QNE VI*, 1 and *QNE VI*, 11, all our virtues and dispositions, including moral ones, are added to the powers of the soul and only come to inhere in them accidentally. This also means that, on the basis of the

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<sup>435</sup> *QNE VI*, 11 §22. For the Latin text, cf. section 3.4.1 *supra*.

<sup>436</sup> The history and reception of the first Latin translations of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (namely, Burgundio de Pisa's and Robert Grosseteste's) are in part to blame for these apparent incongruences or inconsistencies, in particular due to the ambiguous translations of ἀρετή and δόναμις employed by these philosophers. Cf. Bossier, Fernand (1998), esp. pp. 410-414.

<sup>437</sup> Economos (2009), p. 9.

arguments of these two questions concerning how virtues must be actualized and habituated through repetition, among other things, dispositions can be lost.<sup>438</sup>

### 5.3 Understanding as a virtue

From what has been said above we can see why Buridan's view of understanding is compatible with what Barnes calls the "unorthodox" interpretation of Aristotle,<sup>439</sup> i.e., that understanding is a state or disposition of grasping principles, rather than some sort of "intuitive faculty" or "intuitive method." But we must not allow Barnes' terminology to mislead us: this interpretation of *intellectus* is standard among medieval commentators of Aristotle.<sup>440</sup> What is not standard at the time, however, is the way Buridan explains the ontological status of *intellectus* as a virtue. Although they are grouped under a general, universal term, each of the accomplishments of a grasping of first principles is its own *habitus* of *intellectus*. In other words, there is a particular *habitus* of *intellectus* corresponding to the actual grasping of each principle. Hence, just as we cannot restrict *intellectus* to the mere faculty or power of the soul, we cannot restrict it, as a *habitus*, to one single "umbrella *habitus*", for it is potentially numerically infinite. Nevertheless, it is also the case that Buridan, agreeing with Aristotle, says that there are *five* intellectual virtues, and not an infinite number of them, each one corresponding to the trace left by each act of assenting to some truth. Just as, in considering *intellectus* as an act, Buridan's task was "to explain universal cognition as

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<sup>438</sup> As we have seen Buridan clearly state in *QNE* VI, 9 §12: "Propter solutionem prime rationis sciendum est quod ex hoc obliuio circa quosdam intellectuales habitus contingere videtur, quia tales habitus non sepe transeunt in actuale opus."

<sup>439</sup> Barnes (1975/2002), p. 268, as Economos (2009) points out in pp. 29-30.

<sup>440</sup> Cf. Economos (2009), pp. 30-31. Here, one must just be wary of Albert's discussion of first principles, which comes to include first *practical* principles. On this matter, cf., for instance Crowe, (2013), p. 26: "It was [...] Albert the Great, in the thirteenth century, who posited the habit of first principles in the practical intellect, thereby marking an important innovation for the theory of the natural law. It would be a mistake to attribute this view to Aristotle."

a one-many relation between a particular intellect and particular things in the world,<sup>441</sup> i.e., “[h]ow [...] an apparently transient act [...] can] have numerous particular objects (‘plura’, in the accusative case),”<sup>442</sup> we can ask the analogous question regarding *intellectus* as a disposition or, more precisely, as a virtue: how can a single virtue of understanding account for the grasping of so many numerically distinct principles?

On the basis of the questions we have looked at above, it also seems that, in addition to the *habitus* corresponding to each indemonstrable principle, there is also a more general disposition of *intellectus*: not one specifically preventing us from rejecting a given true axiom, for instance, but one more generally inclining us to assent firmly and promptly to indemonstrable principles in general and preventing us from falling prey to sophistry and getting tangled up in quibbles or red herrings. Evidence of this can be found when Buridan says, in *QDA* III, 16 that “the Commentator, commenting on *On the Soul* III, [...] says that the intellect understands infinitely many things in a universal proposition; therefore, it understands more than one thing at once.”<sup>443</sup> When someone understands, e.g., the principle of non-contradiction, what that person understands is not simply a particular first-mode principle, but a whole range of particular principles (e.g., that “something alive is not dead”, “whiteness is not blackness”, “nothing rational is irrational” etc.). So, not only is it the case that (a) there is a genus of intellectual *habitus* under which we can group all particular *habitus* of assent to principles and that (b) our assent to some principles make us more prone to assenting firmly and readily to those same principles, but it is particularly important to also note that (c) our assent to some principles make us more disposed to assent to *other* principles. This is one of the reasons why Buridan can say that “it is possible to understand more than one thing at the same time according to diverse concepts, for otherwise, we would could not form

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<sup>441</sup> Zupko (2017), p. 184.

<sup>442</sup> Zupko (2017), p. 184.

<sup>443</sup> *QDA* III, 16: “[...] per Commentatorem tertio De Anima, dicentem quod intellectus intelligit infinita in propositione universali, igitur plura simul.” (unpublished edition and translation by Jack Zupko).

and know such propositions as ‘A man is not an ass’, and ‘A man and an ass are two things’.”<sup>444</sup> Saying that “a man is an ass” would be tantamount to saying that “a man is not a man.” Thus, I must say that “a man is not an ass” and, therefore, that “a man and an ass are two things.”

Moreover, Buridan argues,

[...] it is possible to know more than one thing in a single concept, and even to understand infinitely many things at the same time, because by the concept from which the name “stone” is taken, I understand all stones: not only those which are present, but past, future, and possible stones as well. And since there is no reason why one of them is understood more than another, either I understand none of them, which is absurd, or I understand all of them. In this way the Commentator correctly states that we understand infinitely many things in a universal proposition; indeed, we also understand infinitely many things by a universal or common term.<sup>445</sup>

If we can understand infinitely many things through a universal term or proposition, we can have infinite numerically distinct *habitus* of assenting to those propositions, but all of these *habitus* are bound by the consideration of the same term or terms – and this whether or not they are currently present to our intellect. If, just as *QNE* VI, 6 argues, the scientific knowledge we have as a disposition is timeless,<sup>446</sup> so is our understanding.

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<sup>444</sup> *QDA* III, 16: “[...] contingit intelligere plura simul secundum diversos conceptus, non enim aliter possemus formare et scire tales propositiones, Homo non est asinus et Homo et asinus sunt duae res.” (unpublished edition and translation by Jack Zupko).

<sup>445</sup> *QDA* III, 16: “[...] contingit in uno conceptu plura scire, immo infinita simul intelligere, quia conceptu a quo sumitur hoc nomen lapis, omnes lapides intelligo, non solum praesentes, immo etiam praeteritos et futuros et possibles. Et quia non est ratio quare magis istum quam illum, ideo vel nullum intelligo, quod est inconveniens, vel omnes. Et ita bene dicit Commentator quod intelligimus infinita in propositione universali, immo etiam per terminum universalem sive communem.” (unpublished edition and translation by Jack Zupko).

<sup>446</sup> Cf. *QNE* VI, 6: “Sed ego puto quod universale non sit preter animam distinctum a singularibus, quod ad presens suppono ex septimo Metaphysice, et si esset distinctum, tamen nisi esset idea separata, non posset manere omnibus eius singularibus corruptis, et tamen notum est, ut mihi videtur, quod si omnes rose nunc essent corrupte sic quod nullo modo essent, vel modo si nulla sint tonitrua, nulle stelle comate, aut nulle eclipses solis aut lune, tamen medicus ob hoc non amitteret scientiam quam habet de rosa, nec

Thus, even our *habitus* of assent to the universal second-mode principle “fire is hot” entails the *habitus* of assenting to multiple different instances of the proposition “this fire is hot,” as explained through induction. This seems to suggest that, for Buridan, there seems to be a concurrence of the accidental existence, in the subject, of each particular *habitus* of understanding they have acquired and of the existence of a few more general “umbrella *habitus*” of understanding, obtained, for instance, through induction, or through an immediate grasp of a first-mode principle, such as the principle of non-contradiction. And this seems to entail that these multiple, particular *habitus* of understanding could ultimately be ascended up (from particulars) to a broadly-encompassing virtue of *intellectus*, structured in a way as to prevent us from being entrapped by fallacious reasoning. Thus, it also seems, in that sense, that *intellectus* can be said to be one virtue, and not a mere collection of *habitus* of assent to principles.

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astrologus scientiam quam habet de eclipsibus, nec tu scientiam, quam habes de libro Meteorum de tonitruis et stellis comatis. Immo tu posses me docere scientiam libri Meteorum, sicut si essent mille tonitrua. Ideo talis distinctio de universali et singulari pro re si concederetur, tamen non valeret propositum. [...] Alii autem ponentes universalialia, prout sunt distincta a singularibus, non nisi per operationem anime (sicut Aristoteles et Commentator, ut puto, velle videntur) dicunt quod scibile pro re extra sic debet esse eternum, quod semper sit aliqua res, vel semper sint aliquae res pro qua vel pro quibus termini conclusionis scibilis supponant ad quod non requiritur aliquam illarum rerum esse perpetuam, sed sufficit individua, eiusdem speciei perpetuo sibi succedere per generationem. Ita scilicet quod exemplificando de equis vel asinis, nunquam sit verum dicere, nullus est equus, nullus est asinus.” (Buridan (1637), pp. 499-500).

## CHAPTER 6

### KNOWLEDGE

The first thing to note in the account of *scientia* which I present here is that, unlike the other Buridanian themes I address in this dissertation, *scientia* is the one which has received the most systematic treatment, something which is most evident in Joël Biard's book *Science et nature: la théorie buridaniennne du savoir*, in which he considers *scientia* from multiple angles, and which is thus the basis for most of what I develop below. My approach here, however, differs from Biard's and from other preceding accounts in that, although I consider Buridan's general account of *scientia*, my primary focus will be in its framework as presented in the *Ethics*.

"*Scientia*" qualifies as what we nowadays call a suitcase term, packing multiple meanings into it: it can be directly translated as "science", referring to a certain domain or field of study, it can be broadly taken as any particular kind of knowledge one might have, it can be used to describe a specific kind of method of investigation (as when we talk about the scientific method) or even a manner of describing phenomena (e.g., when we talk about scientific discourse). However, as a technical term in the context of medieval virtue theory, as I am using it here, it refers to scientific knowledge as a virtue, i.e. a *habitus* acquired syllogistically. More specifically, in Buridan's case, a *habitus* putting humans directly in touch with particular objects and shying away from the

hyposthesis of substance found in realist theories, as we shall see. *Scientia* is the *habitus* that allows for the intellect to reason promptly and easily about the intelligized intelligible. Indeed, “there can be *scientia* of either a single sentence or a body of sentences; the former is most naturally translated ‘knowledge’ and the latter ‘science,’ but this [distinction] blurs the continuities Buridan finds between the two.”<sup>447</sup> Here, as in my translations, I will be using the terms “knowledge” and “scientific knowledge” interchangeably to refer to *scientia*. My use of the expression “scientific knowledge” aims at reflecting Buridan’s usage in a way that does not look implausible to the contemporary reader. However, as will soon be clear, my focus will primarily be on the first sense, since my interest is in *scientia* as an epistemic virtue as it is discussed in the *Nicomachean Ethics* commentary, and not particularly as it is discussed in the *Questions on the Analytics* or in the *Questions on the Physics*, for instance.

Moreover, two things are worthy of note concerning this presentation of knowledge in Buridan’s *Ethics*. First, it is interesting to note how little of *QNE VI* Buridan dedicates to knowledge as a virtue: only questions 4, 6 and 12 have *scientia* as their main subject-matter. While I have proposed a full Latin transcription and English translation of q. 12 (section 3.5.1), in my discussion here I will also draw a lot from q. 6. I have not proposed a transcription and translation of this question in this dissertation because that text had already been translated and published, almost in full, by Walsh.<sup>448</sup> One very important difference between his treatment of the text and mine must be noted though: Walsh’s translation skips a few sentences at the very beginning of the text and a

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<sup>447</sup> King (1987), p. 112. This distinction in Buridan’s own usage is explained in *QAPo.* 1, 27: “si loquamur de *scientia* simplici, tu habes tot *scientias* de linea quot sunt conclusiones tibi scite de isto termino ‘linea’ vel de suis per se passionibus; sed si loquamur de *scientia* congregata, tunc de linea tu haberes unicam *scientiam*, congregatam ex omnibus processibus et conclusionibus formati de isto termino ‘linea’ vel <de> habentibus per se attributionem ad ipsum, dum tamen non transcendant <metas>.” (apud Biard, p. 40, n. 1).

<sup>2</sup> In Hyman, Walsh and Williams (2010), pp. 692-696. Here I provide my own transcriptions of the Latin text and although I have relied on Walsh’s translation for the most part, I occasionally modify it or provide my own, for standardization purposes, especially with regard to the terminology I have chosen for my own translations.

paragraph at the end, right before Buridan's replies to the initial objections. Although this seems to be a deliberate editing choice on Walsh's part and in no way connected to the early print edition and manuscript he used, which I have also consulted, the paragraph at the end which is missing from his translation is important for part of my argument here, and that text will thus appear in the last section (6.5) of this chapter. Furthermore, in this dissertation, I will not be relying much on q. 4, which deals mostly with the faculty or faculties through which we cognize and how *scientia* can be aptly distinguished from prudence. As this would lead us too far astray from some of the more precise issues I would like to discuss here, that *quæstio* will be bracketed and will be addressed at a further, more opportune moment, as an eventual development of the research done here. In addition to this distinction between the faculties responsible for knowledge and prudence, which I have bracketed above, some of the discussions focusing on the fine distinctions between some of the other intellectual virtues will also not be addressed here, for they seem to have dissipated by the time Buridan writes his commentary. For instance, the discussion we see in the beginning of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* concerning the difference between craft and knowledge, which I briefly alluded to in the chapter on craft, no longer seems particularly worthy of a long discussion in Buridan's eyes. This may have been due to Aristotle having clarified this point with his classification of both of these alethic dispositional states according to their objects and according to their cause.<sup>449</sup> Some discussion concerning what science is about, however, is still in order – not only because of how the object of science differs from the objects of other intellectual virtues, but also concerning its difference from the object of mere opinion.

One of the first themes motivating the discussion of intellectual virtues is to clearly demarcate each and every one of them. One of the criteria used to establish the five intellectual virtues, as we have seen, is to distinguish them according to their objects.

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<sup>449</sup> Cf. Petit (1997), p. 64.

Traditionally, what draws the line between prudence and craft, on the one hand, and the other three intellectual virtues, on the other, is that the objects of the former are contingent, while the objects of the latter are seen as necessary. But Buridan needs to specify which other unique characteristics knowledge has that makes it different from the other two theoretical virtues which have necessary objects. This is also accounted for in q. 12, as we have seen. A few further details of Buridan's account of *scientia* will be highlighted as follows: ontologically, knowledge, for Buridan, just like for Ockham before him, is an accident. Being a particular mental accident of a particular individual, it is an individual quality, a particular psychological state. As we have seen in Buridan's treatment of "*scientia*" in *quaestio* 12, knowledge is not an act but a *habitus* of a special kind, corresponding to the trace left in us (in our intellect, namely) by a certain act of knowing: it is a settled disposition to repeat a similar cognitive act,<sup>450</sup> which is aimed at something that is true. *Scientia*, in the context of my discussion here is, then, a settled kind of quality of the intellect (i.e., a *habitus*) with regard to the conclusion of some valid syllogism, expressed in the form of a true proposition – and it is in this way that it is different from *intellectus*, the *habitus* of first principles, and *sapientia*, the *habitus* of the ultimate causes. Based. On this definition of *scientia* as the *habitus* of assenting to conclusions obtained from true, valid syllogisms, the object of the *habitus* of scientific knowledge seems to be, thus, a proposition. Surely, that is the case for Ockham.<sup>451</sup> But whether that is also the case for Buridan needs to be examined. Now, if a *habitus* originates from an act, we must also look at the kinds of acts that can generate the sort of assent required for the acquisition of the *habitus*.

In what follows, I will primarily refer to Ockham as a point of comparison for Buridan, even though that is something I have insisted on less with the other intellectual virtues, with the exception of prudence. And that is because, as Pelletier says, "when it comes

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<sup>450</sup> Panaccio (2016), p. 93.

<sup>451</sup> Panaccio (2016), pp. 100-101.

to the intellectual virtues Ockham is chiefly interested in knowledge (*scientia*), and specifically scientific knowledge, as well as prudence (*prudencia*).<sup>452</sup> In order to draw these comparisons, I will not merely rely on Biard and Panaccio, but also on Pelletier's 2013 book, whose first chapter, especially, offers a systematic treatment of Ockham's notion of *scientia*.

### 6.1 The ontology of *scientia*

To understand the sense of *scientia* as Buridan uses the term in the *QNE* we ought to disambiguate it as much as we can. First, by looking at *SD* 8.4.3, where Buridan provides a somewhat detailed comparison between knowledge and opinion, we find a few key statements about *scientia*. Following Buridan's five sections, we come to the following five statements presented in the *lemma*:<sup>453</sup>

- (1) *Scientia* is not a proposition, but that by which we assent to propositions;
- (2) *Scientia* is sometimes actual and sometimes habitual;
- (3) *Scientia* is had of a knowable proposition;<sup>454</sup>
- (4) *Scientia* is an intellectual act or *habitus*;
- (5) Not every item of *scientia* is acquired through demonstration.

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<sup>452</sup> Pelletier (2021).

<sup>453</sup> These five claims are taken from *SD* 8.4.3. In Klima's translation, which is the one I have used, this corresponds to pp. 703-706 (italics mine).

<sup>454</sup> This is, of course, an oversimplification. In *SD* 8.4.3, Buridan gives a detailed explanation of how we can say to have knowledge of terms or things (then signified through terms) insofar as we can have knowledge of propositions made up of these terms (see Klima, p. 704).

One of the first things which are worthy of note is that, in his explanation of claim (5), Buridan distinguishes four senses of *scientia*.<sup>455</sup> In the most general sense, *scientia* is “some steadfast [*adhesiva*] cognition of a proposition with certainty and evidentness in us, so that it can be distinguished from opinion”<sup>456</sup>. In this sense, we can have knowledge of both necessary or contingent propositions, and knowledge is not necessarily acquired through demonstration. There is, however, a strict sense, according to which *scientia* is defined as “the intellectual cognition of a necessary proposition. And this cognition is indeed not only of conclusions, but also of indemonstrable principles.”<sup>457</sup> Yet, as we have seen, e.g., in *QNE* VI, 11 and the *QAPo.*, indemonstrable principles are the proper object of *intellectus*. And this is precisely why Buridan adds a stricter sense to *scientia*, according to which it is “restricted to the intellectual cognition of a demonstrable conclusion, excluding the cognition of indemonstrable principles. [...] And thus every item of knowledge is acquired by demonstration.”<sup>458</sup> And there is yet the strictest sense, which allows us to distinguish *scientia* not only from *intellectus*, but also from craft and prudence, and that is the one according to which *scientia* is

a steadfast intellectual cognition with the certainty and evidentness of a necessary and demonstrable speculative conclusion. [...] So in this sense, every item of knowledge is acquired by demonstration, but not every necessary and evidently demonstrated conclusion is some [item of] knowledge: for there are necessary and evident demonstrations in craft and in prudence, as well as in moral philosophy and medicine, and the conclusions thus demonstrated do not belong to knowledge in the above-described manner, but rather to craft or prudence.<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> This is another instance where conflating Buridan and Ockham under a generic “nominalist approach” proves unproductive. Although Ockham also described four senses of *scientia* in his *Expositio Physicorum* (Prol. §2), his description of these four senses are quite different from Buridan’s. For a presentation of Ockham’s view, cf. Pelletier (2013), pp. 17-26.

<sup>456</sup> Buridan, *SD* 8.4.3, trans. Klima, pp. 705-706. N.B.: The distinction between *scientia* and *opinio* will be discussed below, in section 6.3.

<sup>457</sup> Buridan, *SD* 8.4.3, trans. Klima, p. 706.

<sup>458</sup> Buridan, *SD* 8.4.3, trans. Klima, p. 706.

<sup>459</sup> Buridan, *SD* 8.4.3, trans. Klima, p. 706.

It is thus in this fourth, strictest sense that Buridan takes *scientia* in most of *QNE VI*, so that it can be properly distinguished from the other four intellectual virtues, as required by *QNE VI*, 1.

Now, to address an issue raised by claims (2) and (4): as I have mentioned, the account of *scientia* I am providing here is first and foremost that of a virtuous *habitus* (associated with that fourth meaning), i.e. a quality of the intellect<sup>460</sup> which has an act, also of the intellect, as a condition for its existence. The act by which the *habitus* of *scientia* is acquired is a judicative act: it is through judgment that we can assent to the conclusions of reasonings, more specifically, of syllogistic reasoning, provided, of course, that the premises are true and that the syllogism is valid. Once the *habitus* is acquired, for Buridan, just as for Ockham in this case, “knowledge is an intellectual habit capable of causing particular intellectual acts rendered distinct in kind by its object.”<sup>461</sup> Although there are reasons why Ockham posits *habitus* – namely to explain how we are able to repeat certain intellectual or volitional acts *in absentia* of a particular object and how we incrementally become more prone to acting in certain ways –<sup>462</sup> we do not have such a precise account of how this *habitus* comes to be. The same difficulty is found in Buridan. According to Zupko:

Buridan is not clear about the precise relation between thoughts and beliefs; in particular, he does not explain how the act of thinking can give rise to something of a different species, or conversely, how the disposition to assent gets activated under the right conditions. Also, it appears that the number of dispositions created

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<sup>460</sup> I am generally positing intellectual *habitus* as *habitus* of the intellect in keeping, of course, with what Buridan describes in *QNE VI*, 1, which was a common view at the time. There are, of course, exceptions to this: most notably, Durand of Saint-Pourçain and Prosper de Reggio Emilia, whose peculiar views Hartman examines in his 2018 article.

<sup>461</sup> Pelletier (2013), p. 15.

<sup>462</sup> Pelletier (2013), pp. 14-15.

by our thinking must far outnumber our actual thoughts if the notion of a *scientia* is to make any sense, for the mathematician is disposed to assent to truths he or she has never considered. But Buridan does not address this.<sup>463</sup>

Although the exact mechanics of the act-habitus relation might look a bit puzzling, it seems safe to assume that Buridan qualified *scientia* as what Pelletier calls “an enduring dynamic cognitive state.”<sup>464</sup> While it might be tempting to clearly draw lines between the different meanings of *scientia*, in truth “it is not merely a state or an act; it is a mental process that refers simultaneously to a state (habitual knowledge) and to the acts that issue from it (actual knowledge).”<sup>465</sup> Although Pelletier is describing Ockham’s view, this is fully in line with what Buridan says in *QNE* VI, 1 about intellectual virtues corresponding to intellectual acts (unlike moral virtues, which need an added deed for a virtue to be acted out). But even though the intellectual act of assent to a proposition and the operation of the virtue which facilitates this assent are simultaneous, act and *habitus* are ontologically distinct. Buridan follows Ockham<sup>466</sup> in accepting that intellective acts and *habitus* are qualities of the soul, inhering in the intellect but distinct from it, and distinct from one another.

Now, in order to address claim (1) above, we still need to investigate the kind of attitude that is required for *scientia* to come about. As we have seen, an act of assent is required for the *habitus* of *scientia* to be begotten. But how does this assent come to be? The act of assent is the result of a demonstration from premises. As Ashworth suggests, we must pay attention to the role of assent with regard to *scientia* and the propositions we may or may not assent to:

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<sup>463</sup> Zupko (2017), p. 192.

<sup>464</sup> Pelletier (2013), p. 17.

<sup>465</sup> Pelletier (2013) p. 17.

<sup>466</sup> In, e.g., *Expos. Phys.* Prol. §2 (*Oph.* IV, 5:9-18)

It is true that we can form propositions without either assenting or dissenting, by regarding them as mere examples or as objects of doubt and investigation, and it is also true [...] that we can assent or dissent carelessly and mistakenly. Nonetheless, science and opinion require the further mental act of assent to a proposition, so that the immediate subjects of science and opinion are not mere conclusions but the conclusions that we accept, and the remote objects are the things themselves (*QAPo* I, q. 32).<sup>467</sup>

This claim prompts us to investigate two main points: (I) if both knowledge and opinion require an act of assent, what is the difference between the two? i.e., what kind of assent is needed for *scientia*, and (II) what are these subjects and objects of *scientia* that this discussion invokes?, a point which is directly concerned with the issue of the knowables, brought up in claim (3) at the beginning of this section. These are the two questions to which the following sections are dedicated.

## 6.2 What *scientia* requires: assent, certitude, evidentness

As Buridan says, and following what has been just explained, “scientific knowledge is, properly speaking, a mental disposition acquired through a demonstration or by demonstrations.”<sup>468</sup> And, as Biard puts it, knowledge, this “disposition of the mind, an accident of the immaterial substance which is the soul, can be defined more precisely as that which results from an assent (*assensus*) to a proposition.”<sup>469</sup> But Biard also notes that while knowledge is about things signified – and these are always singular – it is a disposition of the mind, i.e., a *habitus*, which results from demonstrations, which are, in turn, necessary and universal.<sup>470</sup> Now, the understanding of scientific knowledge as

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<sup>467</sup> Ashworth (2017), p. 249.

<sup>468</sup> Buridan, *QPhys.* I, 1, *apud* Biard (2012), p. 18: “*Scientia proprie dicta est habitus per demonstrationem vel demonstrationibus acquisitus.*”

<sup>469</sup> Biard (2012), p. 18 (my translation).

<sup>470</sup> Biard (2012), p. 53 (my translation).

a settled disposition is not new. As Biard notes in the very opening of his book, Augustine and Boethius already had a conception of knowledge which was conducive to this interpretation. The more specific idea of *scientia* as a disposition, although presented with different wording, is already found in Abelard, for whom “*scientia* is neither thought [*intellectus*] nor estimation; instead it is the soul’s very certainty, which endures even without estimation or thought.”<sup>471</sup> In this tradition, we also have Ockham, for whom knowledge as an act consists of the agent’s act of giving their assent to a proposition and, as a *habitus*, it is a “mental disposition to produce certain judicative acts, an interiorized inclination of taking certain propositions to be true.”<sup>472</sup> Buridan, once again, comes from a long tradition of treatment of this issue, but presents a view which is unique in a number of ways.

But before we get to Buridan’s idiosyncrasies, let us start with Ockham, whose point of departure is an idea not far from the traditional understanding that *scientia* is some sort of justified true belief (JTB). What is particular to Ockham’s framework, however, is his idea that knowledge is somehow connected to evidentness.<sup>473</sup> For something to be evident, it has to be true, which keeps us in the JTB framework, but we can also say, as Ockham does, that evident knowledge is caused in the knowing agent by cognition of the terms of the proposition.<sup>474</sup> This second condition needs unpacking. On the one hand, the mechanism by which an epistemic agent has *scientia* must be causal, in the sense that the human mind assents to certain propositions mechanically, because of natural causal processes.<sup>475</sup> In addition to this, for something to be called evident knowledge, these causal processes “must be triggered by what [Ockham] calls

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<sup>471</sup> *De intellectibus*, n. 27, trans. and *apud* Pasnau (2017), p. 174.

<sup>472</sup> Panaccio (2016), p. 94, my translation.

<sup>473</sup> This idea, as Pasnau notes (Pasnau, 2017, p. 175), becomes ubiquitous from the thirteenth century on. He cites Bonaventure as an example: “For scientific [*scientialem*] cognition there is necessarily required unchanging truth on the part of what is knowable and infallible certainty on the part of the knower.” (*Sermones de diversis* 33.6, trans. Pasnau).

<sup>474</sup> Panaccio (2016), p. 96.

<sup>475</sup> Panaccio (2016), p. 97.

‘cognition of the terms’ of the proposition,”<sup>476</sup> i.e., cognitive apprehensions of the objects to which the terms refer, which are not themselves propositional but which instead correspond to the elements of the proposition known.<sup>477</sup> Ockham espouses an epistemological externalism, in the sense that propositions (which are the objects of knowledge) are true and often refer to the external world. For Ockham, thus, it is impossible for a belief to be false if it is caused in the right way by cognition of the terms of the proposition.

Buridan proposes a framework of *scientia* whose bases are quite similar to Ockham’s, in that the Picardian arts master’s account could also be reduced to our JTB formula. Nevertheless, Buridan’s theory of knowledge is founded on psychology and how it is connected to the cognitive aspects of the mind (i.e., how the soul can apprehend objects).<sup>478</sup> There are two features which will play an important role in his specific version of JTB, in addition to assent and the causal relationship between the truth of the propositions and the assent given by the agent.<sup>479</sup> The first one of these additional features is certitude, understood as firmness of assent together with considerations about the object of assent (i.e., the proposition being assented to) and about the act of assenting. This certitude condition means that for some instantiation of knowledge to be certain it has to be true (in keeping with the standard “*nihil scitur nisi verum*”) and that for the assent to be firm the belief has to have a certain quality. If these conditions are not met, we are not said to have knowledge, but mere belief that something is or is not the case. It should be noted that the causal relation between the assent of the agent and the truth of the proposition which is the conclusion from a demonstrable syllogism

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<sup>476</sup> Panaccio (2016), p. 97.

<sup>477</sup> Cf. Panaccio (2016), p. 97.

<sup>478</sup> Cf. Biard (2012), pp. 22-28.

<sup>479</sup> Cf. *SL VIII*, 4, 3, p. 109: “notitia propositionis adhaesiva com certitudine et evidentia,” and *QAPo*. 2: “Scientia est notitia certa et evidens,” both quoted in Biard (2012), p. 22, n. 2. These two features are prominent in Buridan’s work as they were in the Parisian context of the time (especially with Nicholas of Autrecourt), as Zupko discusses in his 1993 paper.

is not to be taken in a less strict sense than the one required for wisdom (which demands a grasp that a certain conclusion is true because of the truth of the premises and the validity of the syllogism, as Buridan says in *QNE* VI, 12). The main difference between *scientia* and *sapientia* is described by Buridan in *QMet.* 2, where he explains that even though in a loose sense we might call wisdom and knowledge “*scientiæ*” insofar as they both deal with some kind of demonstrative speculative *habitus*, in the strict sense, only wisdom contemplates first causes and first principles, while knowledge deals with inferior and posterior causes.<sup>480</sup> In addition to this, wisdom requires a series of other conditions from the agent, which knowledge does not.<sup>481</sup>

Now, although Buridan does not go into much detail concerning the notion of assent, he does give us some general thoughts, which allow us to understand it, as De Rijk does, “as the trust by which we believe or think (*‘credimus vel putamus’*) the proposition to be true.”<sup>482</sup> And this helps us address claim (1) from section 6.1 insofar as “[t]he assent cannot be the proposition itself, Buridan argues, because contradictory propositions may exist simultaneously in one and the same subject, whereas

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<sup>480</sup> *QMet.* 2: “Notandum est breviter quod scientia etiam demonstrativa aliquando accipitur large pro omni habitu demonstrativo; et sic scientia non distinguitur contra sapientiam, contra artem vel contra prudentiam, immo tam sapientia quam ars quam prudentia est dicto modo scientia. Alio modo capitur scientia propriissime sive strictissime; et tunc in sexto Ethicorum distinguitur contra sapientiam, prudentiam et artem. Ars enim et prudentia sunt habitus practici, sapientia et scientia sunt habitus speculativi. Sed differunt quia: sapientia est considerativa causarum primarum et primorum principiorum, scientia vero versatur circa causas inferiores et posteriores, sicut debet videri in sexto Physicorum.” (Draft transcription by van der Lecq).

<sup>481</sup> Buridan, *QMet.* 2: “Postea notandum est quod in isto proemio Aristoteles enumerat sex conditiones sapientis. Prima est maxime omnia cognoscere. Unde ad sapientem maxime spectat de omnibus posse respondere. Secunda conditio est difficilima cognoscere. Unde propter aliqua facilia non vocaremus hominem sapientem. Tertia conditio est esse certissimum quia firmæ debent esse sententiae sapientis. Quarta conditio est posse assignare causas mirabilium. Quinta conditio est posse docere; modo doctrina simpliciter demonstrativa est assignare causas rerum, ut patet primo Posteriorum. Sexta conditio est ad ipsum partem cetera ordinare, quia sicut dicit Aristoteles non ordinari sed ordinare sapientem oportet. Ultima conditio est habere scientiam sui ipsius gratia quaesitam, quia talis scientia est aliarum finalissima, et per consequens optima et principalissima, et debet talis esse sapientia.” (Draft transcription by van der Lecq).

<sup>482</sup> De Rijk (1994), pp. 282-283.

contradictory acts of consent cannot, as can be learnt from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, book IV."<sup>483</sup> Yet, assent is not like an on-and-off switch; it admits to degrees:

It must be noted that certitude and evidentness are required for knowledge. And there are two further requirements, namely, certitude of truth and certitude of assent. I say 'certitude of truth first, because if we assent most firmly and without any hesitation to a false proposition, as heretics do, who would sometimes rather die than deny what they have assented to, there is still no knowledge on account of assent of this kind, since it lacks truth, and the certitude and firmness of truth.<sup>484</sup>

The assent will further depend on two conditions, as I have suggested: certitude and evidentness. Certitude is divided in two: certitude of truth and certitude of assent. The certitude or steadfastness of truth pertains either to propositions which cannot be falsified, such as "God exists," or to all true propositions of natural philosophy, which follow from "the common course of nature."<sup>485</sup> Certitude of truth is a condition for knowledge because truth is, of course, a condition for knowledge. This is thus meant to exclude that the act of assenting firmly and without hesitation to a false proposition, as heretics do, would yield (the virtue of) *scientia* as a result.<sup>486</sup> Certitude of assent, in turn, is required because, according to what Buridan says in *QAPo.* I, 2, "we can have doubts about a proposition of the most firm and certain truth, and thus not assent to it firmly, and so in that case we would not have knowledge of it."<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> De Rijk (1994), p. 283. N.B.: In his article, De Rijk provides a rather comprehensive discussion of assent. I do not follow it, however, because most of the discussion he presents in it, taken from the *De Anima* commentary, are based on what came to be known as "Patar's Buridan" or Pseudo-Buridan, and does not accurately represent Buridan's *QDA* as in its most recently accepted version (*tertia lectio*).

<sup>484</sup> Buridan, *QAPo.* I, 2 as quoted in and translated by Zupko (1993), p. 204.

<sup>485</sup> De Rijk (1994), p. 295.

<sup>486</sup> Zupko, (1993), p. 203.

<sup>487</sup> Translated by and quoted in Zupko (1993), p. 204.

In addition to certitude, as we have seen, Buridan also postulates evidentness as a condition for assent, which he describes operationally or dispositionally. Evidentness, for him, can be understood in a way similar as it was for Ockham, i.e., as something which imposes itself on the intellect, in the sense that the cognitive faculty is determined to assent to a truth following the nature of something that is attested to in the circumstances present to the knower. But here Buridan also distinguishes three kinds of evidentness regarding acts of assent to propositions that can be known:<sup>488</sup> “First, there is absolute evidentness [*evidentia simpliciter*], which commands our assent immediately,”<sup>489</sup> which is the kind of assent we give to first-mode principles. “Second, there is relative evidentness (*evidentia secundum quid*), or evidentness on the assumption (*evidentia ex suppositione*),”<sup>490</sup> which is precisely the evidentness “observed in entities in the common course of nature”. The third kind is the weakest kind, the one which sufficient for our dealing with moral affairs, where inquiry suffices to justify our deeds but cannot guarantee avoidance of errors.

Evidentness is, thus, one of the criteria that allows us to draw a line between an act of knowledge properly speaking on the one hand, and an act of faith (*fides, credulitas*) and opinion on the other:

In addition, let us note that there is a difference between faith, knowledge and opinion. Knowledge requires evidentness along with firmness of truth and assent, and faith and opinion do not require <evidentness>. Faith differs from opinion because faith requires firmness of truth and assent, and opinion requires neither of these. However, opinion can be placed with these two, as was previously said; it differs from faith because opinion is deduced from the senses through human reasoning, while faith comes from the will, on the authority of the sacred scriptures alone.<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> *QAPo.* I, 2. Note that this description excludes propositions that are the object of opinion, i.e. propositions that can be true, as well as those that must be true but are believed through acts of willing, as is the case of articles of faith.

<sup>489</sup> Zupko (1993), p. 205.

<sup>490</sup> Zupko (1993), p. 205.

<sup>491</sup> Buridan, *QAPo.*, I, 2: “Unde juxta hoc notandum est quod differentia est inter fidem, scientiam et opinionem. Scientia enim, cum firmitate veritatis et assensus requirit evidentiam, quam non habet fides

Now, even though we could actually assent rather firmly and with nearly no hesitation to opinions, whether true or false, the intellect's stance in this case is not the same as in knowledge. In the latter case, because it is compelled by evidentness, the intellect is determined to assent to and cannot dissent from scientific principles and conclusions derived from them, lest for the intervention of sophistry, as we have seen in the chapter on intellectus,<sup>492</sup> whereas in the former case, "the voluntary suspension of judgement or the refusal to assent remain possible, at least theoretically."<sup>493</sup>

But both evidentness and certitude come in degrees and are not all-or-nothing criteria, thus "Buridan partially weakens the notion of evidentness by introducing the idea of relative evidentness which is enough for natural science and moral action."<sup>494</sup> For, surely, one could consider skeptical objections and the possibility of divine intervention, but disregarding cases of divine intervention, for they are extraordinary, and considering that it is impossible for humans to have perfect evidentness of natural sciences, relative evidentness should suffice for our knowledge of what is under the umbrella of natural sciences, and this relative evidentness is simply based on the assumption that nature is following its normal course,<sup>495</sup> as Buridan says in his *Questiones super libros de generatione et corruptione* I, 6.<sup>496</sup>

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vel opinio. Sed fides differt ab opinione quia fides requirit firmitatem veritatis et assensus, quorum neutrum requirit opinio. Tamen opinio cum illis duabus stare potest, ut dictum fuit; et differt a fide quia opinio est per humanam rationem ex sensibus deductam, fides autem ex voluntate, propter auctoritatem sacrae scripturae solum." (Transcription and translation: Economos, 2009, p. 163, slightly modified).

<sup>492</sup> Cf. also *QAPo.* I, 6.

<sup>493</sup> Grellard (2015), p. 134 (my translation).

<sup>494</sup> Grellard (2014), p. 92.

<sup>495</sup> Biard (2012), p. 33.

<sup>496</sup> As Biard (2012), p. 33, n. 2 points out. Buridan writes: "Et haec evidentia sufficit ad scientias naturales. Unde absurdum est negare scientias naturales ex eo quod non est circa eas evidentia simpliciter perfecta." (ed. M. Streiger, P. J. J. M. Bakker, J. M. M. H. Thijssen, 2010, p. 72, ll. 13-15).

Likewise, the assent that our intellect gives to conclusions of demonstrations is not always clear-cut, as Buridan explains in *QNE* VII, 6.<sup>497</sup> As Grellard formulates it:

First of all, assent may be suspended because of the undecidability of the object, for example, when we wonder whether the number of stars is even or odd. Second, suspension of assent may occur when the probable arguments *pro et contra* are equally compelling. Third, we can assent with hesitation when we possess a conclusive, but non-demonstrative, argument. Fourth, and finally, we can assent without hesitation when the intellect is completely determined, for example, when the object is grasped in a complete way or when we possess a syllogistic demonstration.<sup>498</sup>

Thus, we may not only assent to a proposition with or without hesitation, but in Buridan's account there is also room for a suspension or postponement of assent. And our assent, as Biard and Grellard both note,<sup>499</sup> depends both on psychological aspects (*ex parte nostri*) and on an "objectual" aspect (*ex parte obiecti*).

The issue of certitude as it relates to the object of knowledge (which must be true) will be addressed according to its different aspects in sections 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5 below, but the psychological aspect depends on how firm our assent is, and while our assent might have various degrees of firmness, only an assent which is *sine dubitatione seu*

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<sup>497</sup> "Sed oportebit videre quod intellectus noster habens in se formatam propositionem potest ad iudicium de veritate ipsius se habere quadrupliciter. Uno modo quod ratione vel apparentia careat ad utramque partem, sicut forte esset de problemate an astra sint paria. Alio modo quod habeat ad utramque partem rationes probabiles, sed tamen nondum determinantes ipsum ad unam partem vel ad aliam, sicut esset forte de problemate an formae substantiales elementorum maneant substantialiter in mixto. Tertio modo quod per rationes ex una parte vincentes determinetur ad iudicium unius partis, sed tamen non sine formidine ad oppositum. Et iste intellectus est sicut vapor conversus jam in nubem qui, licet sit magis aqua quam aer, tamen multam habet dispositionem et tendentiam ad aerem. Quarto modo quod intellectus ex toto sit ad unam partem determinatus omni formidine remota." (unpublished transcription by Fabienne Pironet).

<sup>498</sup> Grellard (2014), p. 98.

<sup>499</sup> Biard (2011), p. 159 and Grellard (2015), p. 138

*formidine ad oppositum*<sup>500</sup> is good enough for knowledge. Hesitating assent would relegate us to the realm of opinion, as we shall see next.

### 6.3 Knowledge vs. sense and knowledge vs. opinion

Part of the work being done here relates to the Aristotelian enterprise of distinguishing knowledge from opinion. Buridan's methodology differs from that of his predecessors<sup>501</sup> and contemporaries in that it is not merely situated in the object of δόξα as compared to the object of ἐπιστήμη, but rather in the structure of assent and what it requires:<sup>502</sup> “the criteria of necessity and perpetuity, which qualified the object of science as such in the Aristotelian tradition are transferred by Buridan to the demonstrative procedures and to the assent thus produced.”<sup>503</sup> That is also what allows him to postulate *scientia* as a virtue, since it is the resulting *habitus* that meets all of those requirements; but opinion is not a virtue for, although it can be a *habitus*, in the sense that we could have a settled disposition to believe certain things, it fails to meet the certitude and evidentness criteria. The differences between knowledge and sense and knowledge and opinion, for Buridan, are in their acts and how they relate to their objects:

And this can be clarified by the difference between knowledge, sense, and opinion. Although sense and knowledge judge of the truth and falsity of different propositions, they differ further in that sense only judges with certitude of what is sensibly present. But through the *habitus* of knowledge the intellect judge truly in the absence as well as in the presence of what is intelligible. Knowledge differs

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<sup>500</sup> Cf. *QNE* VI, 6 and 11; *SD*, VIII, 4, 4, p. 111; *QMet* II, 1; *QAPo*. I, 32.

<sup>501</sup> A comparison between Buridan's, Grosseteste's and Aquinas' way of dealing with this distinction, for instance, is found in Grellard (2015), esp. pp. 135-138.

<sup>502</sup> Grellard (2015), p. 131.

<sup>503</sup> Grellard (2015), p. 143.

from opinion because, although both can judge in the absence of intelligible things, opinion does not judge with certainty, but with fear, and knowledge judges with certainty and without fear. And all this ought to be assumed from the meaning of the terms “knowledge” and “opinion.”<sup>504</sup>

In the first pair, both sense and knowledge employ judgment to establish the truth or falsehood of propositions. They differ, however, in when there is certitude: while sense can only judge with certitude when it is in the presence of the sensible thing about which it is judging, the *habitus* of *scientia* can also aptly judge when its object is absent.<sup>505</sup> The difference between (scientific) knowledge and opinion, or belief, is that although both are able to judge *in absentia*, they diverge at the level of certitude: not with regard to *when* but to *how* we judge. According to Buridan, while knowledge judges with certainty (*certitudo*), belief judges with fear (*formido*),<sup>506</sup> i.e. it judges that something is the case while being afraid that the opposite might actually turn out to hold true.

There is, of course, an issue that is not brought up in this discussion in the *QNE*, but which is important elsewhere, as I have alluded to in the previous section: faith (*fides*),

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<sup>504</sup> Buridan, *QNE* VI, 6: “[...] per differentiam scientie ad sensum et opinionem. Licet enim sensus et scientia judicent de veritate et falsitate aliarum propositionum, tamen differunt, quia sensus non iudicat certitudinaliter, nisi apud presentiam sensibilis. Intellectus autem per habitum scientie iudicat vere ita in absentia sicut in presentia intelligibilis. Scientia autem differt ab opinione, quia licet utraque vere possit iudicare in absentia rerum intelligibilium; tamen opinio non iudicat cum certitudine, sed cum formidine. Scientia autem iudicat cum certitudine et sine formidine. Hoc totum oportet supponere de differentia scientie et opinionis.” (Translation Walsh, modified; Latin transcription mine. See: Buridan (1637), p. 498).

<sup>505</sup> Buridan, *QNE* VI, 6: “Licet enim sensus et scientia judicent de veritate et falsitate aliarum propositionum, tamen differunt, quia sensus non iudicat certitudinaliter, nisi apud presentiam sensibilis. Intellectus autem per habitum scientie iudicat vere ita in absentia sicut in presentia intelligibilis.” (Buridan (1637), p. 498)

<sup>506</sup> Buridan, *QNE* VI, 6: “Scientia autem differt ab opinione, quia licet utraque vere possit iudicare in absentia rerum intelligibilium; tamen opinio non iudicat cum certitudine, sed cum formidine. Scientia autem iudicat cum certitudine et sine formidine. Hoc totum oportet supponere de differentia scientie et opinionis.” (Buridan (1637), p. 498) Cf. also Buridan *QAPo*. I, 2, where Buridan has a very similar explanation to the distinction between knowledge and opinion: “per hoc differt scientia ab opinione, scilicet quia scientia requirit certitudinem, quam opinio non requirit.” (As quoted in Biard (2012), p. 23)

understood as a religious belief. In this case, there can also be certitude, according to Buridan, for “articles of faith are true and certain, even though they are not evident (which will thus be the complementary characteristic of [scientific] knowledge).”<sup>507</sup> Faith also involves assent but, as Ashworth explains it, the difference between faith, on the one hand, and both *scientia* and *opinio*, on the other is at the level of evidentness, which faith simply lacks, whereas opinion involves “weaker evidentness and weaker assent” than knowledge.<sup>508</sup> So, faith and scientific knowledge coincide with regard to the truth and certainty of their objects but faith lacks the evidentness that *scientia* requires.

This set of features required for *scientia* is what allows Grellard to summarize Buridan’s solution to the problem of necessity related to Aristotle’s requirements for knowledge as follows:

Therefore, there is no necessity on the side of the object of science in the broad sense, [the sense of] the things signified by the terms, but there is rather a necessity on the side of the conclusion of a demonstrative syllogism, a necessity which expresses the evidentness of the inferential link and of the transfer of justification between premises and conclusion. The necessity of the conclusions, the objects of knowledge, is nothing but the firmness and the evidentness of the assent, caused by the permanence (or the identical repetition) of the phenomena.<sup>509</sup>

For Buridan, knowledge and opinion, thus, are not the same kind of act having different kinds of objects, but are rather different kinds of cognitive *habitus* or “two kinds of relationship between the mind and a world composed of contingent things.”<sup>510</sup> But a few things still require an explanation, as I have suggested above: what things qualify

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<sup>507</sup> Biard (2011), p. 161 (my translation).

<sup>508</sup> Ashworth (2017), p. 249.

<sup>509</sup> Grellard (2015), p. 143 (my translation).

<sup>510</sup> Grellard (2015), p. 143 (my translation).

as the objects of *scientia* and how objects of knowledge must be present to the knower in order to be indeed knowable and known.

#### 6.4 The subject and object of *scientia*

I begin this section by drawing the reader's attention to yet another brief consideration on terminology. References to the "subject" and "object" of *scientia* may seem disorienting to the twenty-first century reader because the Latin expressions *subjectum scientiæ* and *objectum scientiæ* do not correspond to what might seem like the most obvious translations of these terms. The *subjectum scientiæ* does not usually refer to the "subject of *scientia*" as a kind of "bearer of knowledge," "agent of knowledge" or "the knower", although it may.<sup>511</sup> Even though we might call the mind or the intellect which contains the knowledge the *subjectum scientiæ*,<sup>512</sup> that is not how I will be using that expression here for it is not how medieval philosophers normally used it. To avoid ambiguity, whenever I mean to talk about the agent of knowledge or the knower, I will simply use either of those two English expressions and when I refer to the bearer of knowledge, I will call it "the intellect," as I have so far. Going back to our original medieval meaning, we can understand the scope of the *subjectum scientiæ* as being threefold, as Aquinas describes in *In I Sententiarum*,<sup>513</sup> and as Ribeiro do Nascimento explains:

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<sup>511</sup> Cf. Ockham *Expos. Phys.* Prol. §3 (*Oph.* IV, pp. 8-9: ll. 70-75) and *Ord.* Prol. Q. 9 (*OTh.* I, 265, ll. 17-21), apud Pelletier (2013), p. 38, n. 72.

<sup>512</sup> Cf. Biard (2012), p. 47.

<sup>513</sup> Prologue, q. 1, a. 4: "Respondeo, quod subjectum habet ad scientiam ad minus tres comparationes. Prima est, quod quaecumque sunt in scientia debent contineri sub subjecto. Unde considerantes hanc conditionem, posuerunt res et signa esse subjectum hujus scientiæ; quidam autem totum Christum, idest caput et membra; eo quod quidquid in hac scientia traditur, ad hoc reduci videtur. Secunda comparatio est, quod subjecti cognitio principaliter attenditur in scientia. Unde, quia ista scientia principaliter est ad cognitionem Dei, posuerunt Deum esse subjectum ejus. Tertia comparatio est, quod per subjectum

A threefold relation situates the *subjectum scientiæ* considered formally in relation to scientific knowledge: 1) everything which scientific knowledge is about must be contained in the *subjectum*, which works as a universal whole; 2) what is mainly sought in scientific knowledge is knowledge of its *subjectum* – hence its behaving like the end of scientific knowledge; 3) the *subjectum* unifies the scientific knowledge and distinguishes it from others.<sup>514</sup>

In his explanation about what the *subjectum scientiæ* is, Aquinas essentially claims that the subject of the conclusion of a syllogism is the same as that of the minor premise, since the principle of demonstration is the definition of the subject used as a middle term. This is because Aquinas is talking about scientific knowledge as a system of demonstrations, based on the *Analytics*. The *subjectum scientiæ* is a main issue because the subject of a proposition which purports to be scientific is usually taken as a universal, since that which knowledge is about must be contained in the subject. Moreover, what scientific knowledge aims for is knowledge of its subject-matter. The *subjectum* also unifies a given scientific knowledge and distinguishes it from the others. In a further discussion of this issue, Aquinas also says, in a notable passage from *ST I* q. 1 a. 7, that “*Sic enim se habet subjectum ad scientiam sicut objectum ad potentiam vel habitum.*” This is one of the reasons why, by convention, we translate *subjectum scientiæ* as the object of science, as Aquinas scholars often do, but this can be misleading in our consideration of the difference between *subjectum* and *objectum scientiæ*, as we will see below. The *subjectum scientia* is the object of science in the sense that it is the subject-matter of science. It is what we try to account for in scientific explanations.

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distinguitur scientia ab omnibus aliis; quia secantur scientiæ quemadmodum et res, ut dicitur in 3 de anima: et secundum hanc considerationem, posuerunt quidam, credibile esse subjectum hujus scientiæ.”

<sup>514</sup> Ribeiro do Nascimento (2019), p. 67, my translation, which slightly modifies the text, mainly by substituting the vernacular “sujeito” for the Latin “*subjectum*.”

So far, I have presented a Thomist framework concerning the terminology I will be using simply because it provides both the standard for the scholastic philosophical vocabulary and the backdrop against which Buridan demarcates himself. Since Aquinas is a realist with regard to ontology, he has a view of *scientia* which is very different from that of nominalists.<sup>515</sup> In what follows, thus, I will be relying mostly on Ockham to draw similarities with and contrasts to Buridan's view of *scientia*.

To add to the terminological clarifications, we must also consider what the *objectum scientiæ* is. In fact, the issue of what the object of knowledge is, as Willing notes,<sup>516</sup> was one of the main points of controversy among fourteenth-century philosophers. What needed to be established was whether the objects of scientific knowledge are propositions, things these propositions designate, or other kinds of entities, such as *complexe significabile*.<sup>517</sup> This question about the object of knowledge is particularly interesting in the nominalist context, where we need to account for *scientia* aiming for universality and necessity, all while operating in a world which consists of nothing but particular, contingent entities. As King summarizes it, "How can there be the sort of necessity Aristotle required for the demonstrations involved in natural science if one is a good nominalist, holding that in the natural world only contingent mutable particulars exist?"<sup>518</sup>

Ockham's clever solution to this problem begins in the definition of the object of *scientia*:<sup>519</sup> the objects of *scientia* for him are propositions, especially mental

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<sup>515</sup> Since these competing views have been contrasted and compared in a lot of detail elsewhere, in papers and books whose subject matters range from Aquinas and Ockham to Peirce, I will not endeavour on this path here.

<sup>516</sup> Willing (1999), p. 203.

<sup>517</sup> Scott (1965), p. 654.

<sup>518</sup> King (1987), p. 119.

<sup>519</sup> My account here relies heavily on Panaccio (2016).

propositions,<sup>520</sup> for only propositions and propositional entities can be true or false. If the *subiectum scientiæ* was taken almost in a grammatical sense, the object of knowledge, on the other hand, was not. Here, we are not particularly concerned with what *grammatically* follows the subject in any given proposition, but rather with what (simpliciter) one knows when one knows something. As Panaccio and Spade explain,<sup>521</sup> for Ockham there are two senses in which one can be said to know something: to know can be understood as knowledge of a proposition or a term therein or to know can be understood as knowing what the proposition is about, what its terms supposit for (or stand for). In the first sense, knowledge is universal, in the second, it is always individual. In the Aristotelian sense of the *Posterior Analytics* (the first sense explained by Panaccio and Spade), knowledge may require the cognition of particulars, but its true object is the proposition itself and not the particular object of cognition.

Furthermore, the subject of a given scientific knowledge, in the technical sense used by Ockham, is the grammatical subject of a scientific proposition, it is that about which we know something,<sup>522</sup> as we have seen with Aquinas. The *subjectum scientiæ* thus appears, in the proposition representing the conclusion of a demonstration, “as the term of [that] proposition preceding the copula of which the predicate term is predicated.”<sup>523</sup> In that sense, there is not just one *subjectum* to *scientia*, but many possible subjects for each science understood as a set of propositions concerning a specific domain of inquiry.<sup>524</sup> Thus, the subject of arithmetic can be any arithmetical term standing for any given number, variable or formula appearing as the logical subject of the conclusion of an arithmetical reasoning, the subject of geometry can be any term standing for a shape

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<sup>520</sup> Cf. Panaccio (2003), p. 41.

<sup>521</sup> Spade and Panaccio (2019), §5.

<sup>522</sup> Cf. Panaccio (2016), pp. 101-102 and Pelletier (2013), pp. 38-40.

<sup>523</sup> Pelletier (2013), p. 39. Cf. also Ockham, *SL* I, c. 30.

<sup>524</sup> But this would be an improper usage of the term, as Pelletier remarks (2013, p. 40). Following Ockham, however, if we wanted to reduce a science to one subject, we could do it according to what its first subject is, i.e., according to the primacy of subjects. Cf. Pelletier (2013), p. 43.

or for any property of space (e.g., length, area, volume) as it appears as the subject of a proposition which is the conclusion of some geometrical demonstration. Thus, it is only in a non-technical sense that we can say that we have knowledge of anything extra-mental. According to Ockham, the subject of a science (and here what I have in mind, for the most part, are natural sciences and the scientific statements we often associate with them) is a mental concept suppositing for – usually in personal supposition – a certain individual thing that mental concept refers to in multiple propositions. Take, for instance, the proposition “*Omnis homo est rationalis*”. “*Homo*” – the *subjectum scientiæ* – stands in personal supposition for any and all individual human beings through a descent in the supposition (confused supposition). Thus, I could say that this human being in front of me is rational, that other human being over there is rational, that other one also and so on. Thus, “*homo*”, as the subject of that proposition is a universal mental concept suppositing for individual, extra-mental human beings, all of whom are rational. “*Omnis homo est rationalis*,” taken as the whole mental proposition (and not necessarily as an actual written or spoken proposition in Latin or any given language), is the *objectum scientiæ* insofar as it is assented to in the mind of a knower who came to it by means of a valid syllogism.

Later, Buridan seems to have abided by one of the clauses of the 1340 statute of the Faculty of Arts at Paris proclaiming that “*nullus dicat scientiam nullam esse de rebus que non sunt signa, id est, que non sunt termini vel orationes,*”<sup>525</sup> and held a similar position to Ockham’s about the *subjectum* and *objectum scientiæ*. Regarding the object of knowledge, Buridan states:

Of singulars there is no scientific knowledge [*scientia*]; but there is scientific knowledge of the propositions ‘man is a species,’ ‘animal is a genus.’ This is

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<sup>525</sup> Denifle et al. (1891) *apud* Moody (1975), p. 144. However, it must be stressed, as we shall see below, that Buridan does not subscribe to the idea that knowledge can be had of terms alone, without their being within a proposition.

clear, for we know that a proposition like ‘man is a species’ has always been true according to material supposition, whenever it was propounded, just as well as we know that a proposition like ‘man is capable of laughter’ has always been true; therefore, it is not singular.<sup>526</sup>

According to Buridan, in every act of *scientia* a cognitive agent forms and assents to a proposition. This means that, for the Picardian arts master, propositions are also the objects of knowledge,<sup>527</sup> in agreement with what Ockham had established. This is the sense according to which a proposition can be the immediate object of *scientia*. In another sense, though, the knowables, the objects of knowledge are the *designata* of the terms of the conclusions of a demonstration.<sup>528</sup> So, Buridan also postulates two senses according to which one can be said to know something:

The *scientia* of something is twofold: (i) in one way there is *scientia* of something insofar as it is of a demonstrated or demonstrable conclusion; we speak here of demonstrative *scientia*. And in another way (ii) there is *scientia* of something insofar as it is the thing signified by some term of the conclusion.<sup>529</sup>

This is very similar to what we find in the *QNE*, where he also presents a twofold distinction between things that can be the object of knowledge:

It must be known that a knowable can be grasped in two ways. In one way, it stands for a demonstrable conclusion. In another way, for the thing signified, or for the things signified, by the terms of the conclusion, or for that which the terms of the conclusion supposit. In fact, this conclusion: “every human is capable of laughter” is knowable and demonstrable, and in knowing this conclusion we have knowledge of all humans, and of all capable of laughter.<sup>530</sup>

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<sup>526</sup> Buridan, *QiPI*, q. 6, pp. 147 *apud* Klima (2009), p. 23.

<sup>527</sup> And here I follow the established usage found in, e.g., Panaccio (1999), esp. pp. 254-258.

<sup>528</sup> Scott (1965), p. 661.

<sup>529</sup> *QMet* VI q. 3, fol. 34va *apud* King (1987), p. 112.

<sup>530</sup> *QNE* VI, 6: “Sciendum est quod scibile potest capi dupliciter. Uno modo, pro conclusione demonstrabili. Alio modo pro re significata, vel rebus significatis per terminos conclusionis, sive pro qua, vel pro quibus termini conclusionis supponunt: hec enim conclusio, omnis homo est risibilis est scibilis et demonstrabilis et sciendo eam nos habemos scientiam de omnibus hominibus, et de omnibus risibilibus.” (My transcription and my translation based on J.J. Walsh, In Hyman, Walsh & Williams (2010), p. 692. See: Buridan (1637), p. 497)

In his survey of Buridan's *scientia*, however, Biard writes that we find three senses of *scibile* in Buridan, namely the conclusion, the terms of the conclusion and the things signified by the terms of the conclusion.<sup>531</sup> This reading, which more clearly states that the terms of the conclusion (i.e., mental terms) are admissible as objects of knowledge for Buridan, is based on a passage from the *QAPo* I, 2, where Buridan says:

It must be known that the knowable is threefold, namely by demonstration. The first and immediately knowable is the demonstrable conclusion [of a syllogism], which is said to be known because it is concluded from the cognized premises. In a second way, knowables are said to be those which compose the demonstrable conclusion [of syllogism]. Whence, just as we say that we know a certain conclusion and it has been demonstrated to us, we often indeed say that a certain predicate is known and demonstrated about a certain subject. Finally, in a third way, knowables are things signified by the terms of demonstrable conclusions, and we indeed say that we have knowledge about animals and rocks, about God and the intelligences, and about other things.<sup>532</sup>

What Buridan ultimately takes to be the object of knowledge is rather different from what Ockham and Gregory of Rimini, for instance, propose, since, on the one hand, the latter is more permissible on this matter and admits that *complexe significabile* (i.e., a sort of “propositional entity”, a “subsistent, intensional entity”)<sup>533</sup> can also be the object of knowledge,<sup>534</sup> while the *venerabilis inceptor*, on the other hand, holds a more radical position, according to which only propositions are the objects of science. Here, the

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<sup>531</sup> Biard (2012), p. 51.

<sup>532</sup> “Et tunc sciendum est quod triplex est scibile, scilicet per demonstrationem. Primum et immediatum scibile est conclusio demonstrabilis, que ex eo dicitur sciri quia ex premissis notis concluditur. Secundo modo, scibilia dicuntur ex quibus conclusio demonstrabilis componitur. Unde, sicut dicimus nos scire talem conclusionem et eam nobis esse demonstratam, ita sepe dicimus tale predicatum esse scitum et demonstratum de tali subiecto. Deinde, tertio modo, scibilia sunt res significate per terminos conclusionum demonstrabilium, et ita dicimus nos habere scientiam de animalibus et lapidibus, de Deo et intelligentiis, et sic de aliis.” (my translation from Biard's transcription in Biard (2012), p. 51)

<sup>533</sup> Scott (1965), p. 656.

<sup>534</sup> On the comparison between Buridan and Gregory of Rimini, which I do not discuss in much detail here, see: Biard (2004), Biard (2012), esp. pp. 111-116, and Scott (1965).

difference between Buridan and Ockham seems significant. According to Biard,<sup>535</sup> this is ultimately due to Ockham's approach to nominalism starting from the idea that mental language is already properly structured semantically, and he only has to further account for cases where spoken language fails to perfectly map onto mental language because of our manner of speaking (e.g., in cases of ambiguity). Buridan, on the other hand, prioritizes spoken language and, still according to Biard, draws a thicker line between spoken and mental language, where the latter would be but a semantic criterion for the interpretation of the former. This difference would also lead to Ockham and Buridan conceiving of the object of knowledge in significantly different manners. In the prologue to his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, Ockham says:

properly speaking natural scientia is about mental intentions. . . nevertheless, metaphorically and improperly speaking, natural scientia is said to be about corruptible and mobile things, since it is of the terms which supposit for those things.<sup>536</sup>

This view, as King points out, is discussed by Buridan in his *Sophismata* 4, 13,<sup>537</sup> where, by means of the so-called Converse-Entailment Principle,<sup>538</sup> we can infer "There is some triangle that S knows to have two right angles as the sum of its internal angles" from "S knows that the sum of the internal angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles." This, according to King, is Buridan's effort to criticize Ockham's claim that "natural scientia is about mental intentions," and bring *scientia* to the realm of the physical and, thus, widen the domain of possible objects of knowledge.

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<sup>535</sup> Biard (2012), pp. 110-111.

<sup>536</sup> Apud King (1987), p. 112, n. 8.

<sup>537</sup> And this reference to the *Sophismata* is not an ad hoc choice made by a Buridan scholar. It was probably intended by Buridan himself in his writing of the *QNE* VI. Note that the triangle examples Buridan uses in *QNE* VI, 6 and *QNE* VI, 22 are precisely what the thirteenth sophism in *Sophismata* 4 is about: "Thirteenth sophism: Whoever knows that every triangle has three angles equal to two right angles [every isosceles knows to have three angles equal to two right angles]" (Klima's translation, p. 898).

<sup>538</sup> King (1987), p. 118

According to Panaccio,<sup>539</sup> however, the difference between Ockham's and Buridan's views concerning the object of knowledge is not that stark; it is rather a mere terminological issue: ultimately, since the two authors use different terms to express similar ideas this would entail that their interpretation of what the objects of knowledge are would also be terminologically different. Panaccio describes how, for Ockham, a spoken word is subordinated to a concept and signifies the very thing.<sup>540</sup> For Buridan, on the other hand, the spoken word immediately signifies the corresponding concept and ultimately signifies the things themselves. Here, the terminology is such that Buridan's usage of the phrase "ultimate signification" is the same as Ockham's use of "signification" *tout court*; however, the phrase "immediate signification," as Buridan employs it, is equivalent to Ockham's "subordination." But both philosophers concur in that *scientia* is an act and/or *habitus* of assent to a mental proposition (provided that the required conditions of truth, assent, certitude, and/or evidentness, described above have been met) which, in turn, may be about extra-mental things, whenever the terms of the proposition indeed supposit for extra-mental things – e.g., "*Brunellus est asinus.*" It is thus quite an overstatement on King's part to say that "Ockham's account of *scientia* leaves us only in the realm of the mental; Buridan's allows us to be directly in contact with items in the world,"<sup>541</sup> since supposition theory is precisely the guarantor of the link between the terms (and, by extension, the extra-mental things to which they refer) and propositions which can be the object of knowledge; and since Buridan and Ockham have fairly similar views on supposition theory, it is to be expected that their investigation as to what can be known would yield similar results. So, Buridan and Ockham might indeed disagree about what is rightfully called "object of knowledge" – with Buridan extending it beyond Ockham's mere propositions so as to allow for extra-mental things to be called "objects of knowledge" and thus rendering the

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<sup>539</sup> Panaccio, in personal communication.

<sup>540</sup> Panaccio (1999), pp. 297-298.

<sup>541</sup> King (1987), p. 118.

relationship between knowledge and extra-mental things unambiguous – but both philosophers admit that for there to be any *scientia* whatsoever, the proposition, the real things to which its terms refer, and an assent to that proposition are required, even though their criteria for assent are different. Although Ockham’s consideration of propositions only as objects of *scientia* might seem restrictive and entailing a world that is purely mental, we cannot ignore what Ockham says in his lengthy discussion on whether universals are real things outside the mind.<sup>542</sup> Part of the discussion relies on a technical distinction between *scientia rationis* and *scientia realis*, both of which Ockham admits of. While the *scientia rationis* corresponds to knowledge of reason or thought, which is why it is often equated with logic, *scientia realis* is knowledge of the extra-mental things – for Ockham, physics and metaphysics.<sup>543</sup> The fact that Ockham states, in his response to the second main argument, that “real knowledge is not always about things as they are immediately known but about other things suppositing for things”<sup>544</sup> should be sufficient indication that knowledge can occasionally be about things, provided, of course, that this knowledge (*scientia realis*) is about things as particulars, and “not about universal things, since these is no supposition for them [i.e., for universal things].”<sup>545</sup> Consider the proposition “*Asinus est species.*” In it, “*asinus*” appears in simple supposition, i.e. suppositing for a concept, since “*asinus*” here does not signify any given donkey nor the totality of donkeys, but stands for the concept of donkey. “Species,” in turn, although it is in personal supposition within that proposition, it also supposits for a concept, namely, the concept of the species of “donkey.” And that is because, for Ockham, “species” is a term of second intention.<sup>546</sup> The scientific knowledge of this sort of proposition is what, according to Ockham,

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<sup>542</sup> *Ord.* I, dist. 2, q. 4, *OTh* II.

<sup>543</sup> Cf. Moody (1947), esp. pp. 130-131 and Pelletier (2013), pp. 50-54.

<sup>544</sup> *Ord.* I, dist. 2, q. 4, *OTh* II, p. 134, ll. 4-6: “[...] *scientia realis* non est semper de rebus tamquam de illis quae immediate sciuntur sed de aliis pro rebus tantum supponentibus.” (my translation)

<sup>545</sup> *Ord.* I, dist. 2, q. 4, *OTh* II, p. 137, ll. 21-22: “[...] non de rebus universalibus, quia pro illis non sit suppositio.” (my translation).

<sup>546</sup> It is a term of second intention because it is a categorematic term signifying a concept, according to what Ockham says in *SL* II, 11, ll. 49-52. Cf. also Panaccio (2004), p. 175.

belongs to a *scientia rationis*. In contrast, consider the proposition “*Omnis homo est animal*.” Since, according to Ockham, propositions can be universal but things (*res*) cannot, and terms within a proposition “signify and stand for or refer to all the singulars of a given sort,”<sup>547</sup> the term “*homo*,” being in confused and distributive personal supposition, refers (via a descent to singulars which is conjunctive) to all humans, while the term “*animal*” is in merely confused personal supposition (via a descent to singulars which is disjunctive). This is thus an example of a proposition which is the object of a *scientia realis* (natural philosophy, for instance), for, within the proposition that is known, the terms “*homo*” and “*animal*” signify extra-mental humans and animals.<sup>548</sup> Accordingly, even though the natural sciences are as much about propositions as, say, logic, we can say in a broad, improper sense that *scientia realis* is also about things.<sup>549</sup> But natural philosophy and the *scientiæ reales* in general still have a claim to scientificity in the Aristotelian sense for their propositions, insofar as they are composed of terms (and not of things, of course), are universal. The universality of this immediate *objectum scientiæ* guarantees that it fulfils the requirements of the *Analytics* and, furthermore, “we might say that real sciences are first-order sciences whereas rational sciences are second-order sciences.”<sup>550</sup> Therefore, contrary to what King claims, “Ockham consistently holds that propositions are the objects of scientific knowledge to preserve the necessity of scientific knowledge in the face of the total contingency of the world.”<sup>551</sup>

Moreover, King is incorrect in asserting that “to know” can have an objectual complement:<sup>552</sup> that is surely the case in English, but would certainly not have been the

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<sup>547</sup> Pelletier (2013), p. 50.

<sup>548</sup> Surely, not all *scientiæ reales* are about extra-mental things. Psychology, for instance, is about intramental things like *habitus* and acts, as Pelletier (2013), p. 54 aptly points out.

<sup>549</sup> Cf. Pelletier, p. 51-52.

<sup>550</sup> Pelletier (2013), p. 54.

<sup>551</sup> Pelletier (2013), p. 41.

<sup>552</sup> King (1987), p. 118.

case for Buridan,<sup>553</sup> for whom it would be acceptable for someone to say “*Scio aliquem/aliquid esse*” or “*Scio quod aliquis/aliquid sit*” but certainly not simply “*Scio aliquem/aliquid,*” since in Latin *scire* does require a propositional complement, usually expressed through a subordinate clause or indirect statement – curiously enough, a feature most modern Romance languages seem to have lost for their equivalents of the verb *scire*,<sup>554</sup> with the notable exception of French.

Now, although Biard presents a very detailed account of Buridan’s position, highlighting some differences between him and Ockham which do not seem to be merely terminological but seem rather to pertain to the ordering of the structure of mental language, I still agree with Panaccio that, at least in what concerns the objects of knowledge specifically, the difference is indeed merely terminological. And this precisely for the reasons Biard provides in his development concerning Buridan’s semantic theory and how he wants to avoid Gregory’s position of attributing the status of object of knowledge to the *complexe significabile*. If we follow what Buridan says in the *Sophismata*, Biard himself acknowledges that, for Buridan, “the signification of a spoken propositional expression is first a mental proposition.”<sup>555</sup> So, surely, although Buridan admits that the *designata* of the terms of the conclusion are also objects of knowledge, they can only be objects of knowledge insofar as they are found within a

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<sup>553</sup> At this point in his text, King adds, in a footnote, that “Strictly speaking, for Buridan an accusative-infinitive phrase or declarative clause introduced by ‘quod’ is not a sentence, but we can ignore this distinction here.” Indeed, grammatically, an *accusativus cum infinitivo* or a *quod*-clause are not sentences on their own but rather dependent clauses. But that does not make them objectual complements of *scire* in a strict sense. In Latin, we cannot simply “know mathematics” (“*scire mathematicam,*” sic) but we can “know mathematics to be a science” (“*scire mathematicam scientiam esse*”) or “know that mathematics exists” (“*scire quod mathematicam sit*”), in which cases we do not merely know something but know that something is something else or is in a particular way in the sense that they are related to the subordinate verb (in the infinitive or subjunctive) but not to verb in the main clause, in the present. The condition for me to know that mathematics is a science is not in the truth value of the “*scio*” but rather in the truth value of “*mathematicam scientiam esse*” as a clause.

<sup>554</sup> This is the case, at least, for Italian (*sapere*), Catalan, Galician, Portuguese and Spanish (*saber*), and Romanian (*ști*), all of which admit of at least some form of objectual complement to those verbs.

<sup>555</sup> Biard (2012), p. 115 (my translation).

preposition or a complex expression (such as “a horse capable of laughing,” to use Panaccio’s example) to which we can attribute truth or falsehood. So, for Buridan, while the proposition is the immediate object of knowledge without definite referents, what is ultimately signified are the singular things for which the terms stand.<sup>556</sup> Ultimately, for the Picardian philosopher, “we may speak of *scientia* of either a sentence or of what the sentence is about (roughly),” as King puts it,<sup>557</sup> but Buridan seems interested in how we come to know items according to their *rationes*, i.e. according to the imposition of the term which signifies the item. Ultimately, then, the fact that Buridan thinks objects, too, can be the *objectum scientiæ* does not lead him that far apart from Ockham.

Moreover, in the *Ethics* commentary, we can see a focus on the fact that the phrase “the knowable” can stand not merely for a term but also for the things signified. This further confirms Biard’s account of Buridan having a realist orientation in his epistemology, which, despite his nominalism, does not entail that he was completely confined to language. Instead, it serves as a reminder that Buridan’s epistemology “aims at accounting for the knowledge of extra-mental things.”<sup>558</sup> And this prompts a further question: if *scientia* is a *habitus* (acquired, surely, from one or multiple acts of knowing) which can refer ultimately to an extra-mental object which is known, does the *habitus* persist even if the object ceases to exist?

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<sup>556</sup> Scott (1965), p. 662.

<sup>557</sup> King (1987), p. 112.

<sup>558</sup> Biard (2012), p. 51 (my translation).

## 6.5 The knowable

What we have seen so far gives us a picture of knowledge which is infallibilist, i.e., *scientia* cannot be wrong, since truth is one of the conditions for there to be knowledge. Surely this is only the case if we consider knowledge in the strictest sense. In a broad sense though, we can claim to have known propositions which are no longer true, or whose objects are no longer present to us (e.g., “Justin Trudeau is having a press conference.”). But what happens with our virtue of *scientia* in the strictest sense if the things supposed for in the true conclusion to which we assented simply ceases to exist? For instance, how could we account for the *scientia* of the proposition “Dodos are flightless birds”?

*QNE VI*, 6 helps us understand this remaining issue by addressing the eternity of the things that can be known or knowables (*scibilia*) for short. At the beginning of his answer to the question whether the knowable is eternal, Buridan quotes a passage from Book I of the *Posterior Analytics* and goes on to formulate his point:

“Knowledge is a *habitus* which is firm, which is always determined to truth, and which cannot be made to err, nor can it be removed from the intellect, unless perhaps by forgetting.” These words would not be true unless the knowable were eternal, since, as is said in the *Categories*, “the object of knowledge, if it ceases to exist, cancels at the same time the knowledge [which was its correlative]”<sup>559</sup> etc. So, if there are no knowables, there is no science.<sup>560</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> *Cat.* 7b27-30.

<sup>560</sup> Buridan, *QNE VI*, 6: “Item, scientia est habitus firmus et semper determinans ad verum, qui non potest verti in errorem, nec ab intellectu removeri, nisi forte per oblivionem’ hec autem non essent vera, nisi scibile esset eternum, quia, sicut dicitur in *Praedicamentis*, scibile sublatum, simul aufert scientiam etc. Nam si scibile non sit, non est scientia.” (Buridan (1637), p. 497, my transcription and English translation).

Following Aristotle's explanation from the *Categories*, if an object of knowledge ceases to exist, so does the knowledge which is its correlate. The issue is precisely accounting for the fact that scientific knowledge as a virtue is a settled disposition to assent to a conclusion which is about something (i.e., about the objects of *scientia*). But while scientific knowledge purports to be universal, necessary and eternal, the things which scientific propositions and their terms stand or supposit for are particular, contingent, and corruptible. On this issue, Buridan says:

I believe that the things which are knowable, for which the terms of the conclusion supposit, are not required to be eternal in any of the ways mentioned above, but it is possible that they be corruptible from the whole, because whenever it is true to say that "there is no such a thing" [or "some thing is not"] (*nulla talis res est*). For instance, I would believe I have true knowledge of thunder and comets, although presently there is no thunder or there are no comets, and I am not surprised, because if it had been demonstrated to me that every triangle has three angles [adding up to 180°] etc., through a demonstration of this sort, I would not only have a cognition of triangles which exist now, but also of past or future triangles, as well of present triangles. Otherwise it would follow that, if tomorrow another triangle were created, I would not know that every triangle has three [angles adding up to 180°], unless the demonstration were reiterated, only now including this new triangle, which is an absurd thing to say. Therefore, I say that through the *Meteorology* I have knowledge of all thunder past, present, and future, and if there is currently none, then I have knowledge only of past and future thunder.<sup>561</sup>

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<sup>561</sup> Buridan, *QNE VI*, 6: "Credo tamen quod res scibiles pro quibus termini conclusionis supponunt non oportet esse perpetuas aliquo predictorum modorum, sed possibile est eas sic ex toto esse corruptibiles, quod aliquando sit verum dicere quod nulla talis res est. Verbi gratia, crederem me veram scientiam habere de tonitruis et cometis, licet nulla modo essent tonitrua et nulle stelle comete, neque mirum quia si mihi demonstratum fuit, quod omnis triangulus habet tres angulos etc., ego per huiusmodi demonstrationem non solum haberem notitiam de triangulis qui nunc sunt, sed de preteritis, vel futuris, et presentibus. Aliter sequeretur, quod si cras fieret novus triangulus, ego nescirem tunc quod omnis triangulus habet tres, nisi mihi reiteraretur demonstratio tunc continens illum novum triangulum, quod est absurdum dicere. Dico igitur quod per librum *Meteorum* ego habeo scientiam de omnibus tonitruis preteritis presentibus et futuris, si aliqua sint presentia, et si nulla sint presentia tunc habeo notitiam de preteritis et futuris solum." (Buridan (1637), p. 500, my Latin transcription and translation).

This is in keeping with what we have seen in the previous section with regard to the object of *scientia*: knowledge is not directly and immediately about extra-mental things but rather of propositions, terms in certain propositions or the things those terms signify insofar as they are in personal *suppositio*. Buridan is still operating in that framework here and he argues that we must somehow be able to account for knowledge of things past, present and future, as per the example retrieved from the *Categories* in the previous passage, whence I would otherwise lose knowledge of a term or a proposition containing that term if that thing ceased to exist. For, if something ceases to exist, then there is no *suppositio*, since the term referring to something which no longer exists would not supposit for anything. This would suggest that knowledge must be coexistent with its object(s), and that for knowledge to persist over time, its object(s) would also have to persist. Thus:

[...] a doubt is raised, because knowledge requires conformity or adequacy to knowable things, because knowledge demands that conclusions be true, and truth consists in the adequacy of the intellect to the things intelligized. But when there are no intelligized things, there is no adequacy to things, because since there is nothing, there is no adequacy; therefore, knowledge cannot be had of things which do not exist.<sup>562</sup>

There appears to be a requirement for adequacy between things “known” (in a non-strict sense) and terms and propositions known (through which we “know” things, also in a non-strict sense). But then again, what if things cease to be present to us or cease to exist altogether? It would be a very hard bullet to bite to claim that the knowledge

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<sup>562</sup> Buridan, *QNE* VI, 6: “Sed tunc occurrit dubitatio, quoniam scientia requirit conformitatem, seu adaequationem ad res scibiles, quia scientia exigit quod sit vere conclusionis, et veritas consistit in adaequatione intellectus ad res intellectas. Cum autem res intellecte non essent, nulla erit ad ea adaequatio, quod enim nihil est, nulli adaequatur, ergo de his que non sunt, scientia haberi non potest.” (Buridan (1637), p. 500, my transcription and translation).

we once had of those things simply gets automatically annihilated. So, there must be a way for accounting for the possible disappearance of certain things without the accompanying loss of the knowledge of a proposition containing terms suppositing for those things. If *scientia*, as an act, wants to maintain any claim to the universality and necessity required in the *Analytics*, it seems that the knowable must follow suit; and that is why in *QNE VI, 6*, still in the *responsio*, Buridan argues that the knowable is indeed “eternal, necessary, impossible to be otherwise, begotten, incorruptible.”<sup>563</sup> To understand how that can be the case within supposition theory (more specifically, in the case of personal supposition),<sup>564</sup> and thus how one could respond to the *dubitatio* raised in the except above, the key lies in considering how Buridan understands ampliation to work. As Buridan describes it, a few paragraphs later, in his *responsio*:

I myself believe that such a great controversy among those holding these opinions sprang from a lack of logic. For it seems to me that names that signify things and do not consignify any determinate time signify present, past and future things indifferently. And that is not strange, since I can intelligize a thing without co-intelligizing a determined time. So I can form a composite in the intellect from the concept of a thing and the concept of a time, past or future as well as present, such as in saying “Caesar was; Caesar will be.” And so it is not unsuitable for a term to sometimes supposit for past and future things just as for present ones.<sup>565</sup>

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<sup>563</sup> Buridan, *QNE VI, 6*: “Hoc igitur modo dicendum quod omne scibile (loquendo primo modo de scibili et loquendo proprie de scientia) est eternum, necessarium, impossibile aliter se habere, ingenitum, incorruptibile.” (Buridan (1637), p. 498, my transcription).

<sup>564</sup> The particular difficulties of other kinds of supposition are also taken up by Buridan, but are less relevant to my analysis. For a discussion of material supposition, e.g., see Buridan, *QiPI*, q. 6, p. 147 *apud* Klima (2009), p. 23.

<sup>565</sup> Buridan, *QNE VI, 6*: “Et credo quod tanta fuit orta controversia inter opinantes ex defectu logice: videtur enim mihi, quod nomina que significant res, nullum consignificando tempus determinatum, significant indifferenter res presentes, preteritas, et futuras. Nec mirum, quia possum intelligere rem, nullum cointelligendo tempus determinatum, unde possum apud intellectum componere inter conceptum rei, et conceptum temporis, ita preteriti vel futuri, sicut presentis, ut dicendo, Cesar fuit, Cesar erit, et ita non est inconueniens aliquando terminum supponere pro preteritis et futuris, sicut pro presentibus.”

As we have seen, Buridan describes the object of scientific knowledge and its relation to scientia by talking about the knowable either as a demonstrable conclusion or as the things signified by its terms. He then goes on to say that if the knowable is taken in the first sense, as a demonstrable conclusion, then in one sense, the one concerning its reality, it cannot be eternal, for although we can have knowledge of things, the reality of our demonstrable conclusions about these things is contingent. If, then, we consider these demonstrable conclusions not according to their reality but rather to their truth, in a non-technical sense, they are not necessary nor eternal, for they are only true insofar as they are real, and since their reality is not eternal, neither is their truth. Propositions from demonstrable conclusions, thus, are true if and only if (and whenever) they are articulated, uttered, written or formed in our minds, and only then can they not be false, but rather eternal and necessary. But this seems unfitting for our theory of scientific knowledge, especially considered as a *habitus*. This is where ampliation (*ampliatio*) comes in for the strictest sense of knowledge: “scientia of a sentence ampliates the terms appearing in it to stand for all times.”<sup>566</sup> Ampliation here functions as an appeal to the earlier notion of “natural supposition” (*suppositio naturalis*), used by Parisian philosophers in the thirteenth century to describe the kind of supposition a term has when it stands for all past, present and future things it signifies (as opposed to accidental supposition, where the term would only stand for a limited number of things, usually determined by context, verb tense etc.). This notion, which had been discussed in the *Treatise on Supposition*,<sup>567</sup> gets picked up again by Buridan in the *QNE*:

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(Trans. Walsh in Hyman, Walsh and Williams (2010), p. 695, modified; Latin transcription mine. See: Buridan (1637), p. 501)

<sup>566</sup> King (1987), p. 120.

<sup>567</sup> Cf. King (1985), p. 43. Buridan, *TS* 3.4.1: “Supposition is called ‘natural’ when a term indifferently supposits for everything for which it can supposit, past and future as well as present; this is the sort of supposition we use in demonstrative science,” as quoted by King (1985), p. 43.

For according to the older logicians, the supposition of a common term is twofold, namely, natural and accidental. It is accidental when the term only supposits for its supposita at some determinate time; it is natural when it supposits for all its supposita indifferently, whether they are present, past, or future. And the demonstrative sciences use this latter supposition.<sup>568</sup>

Following this, the subject and predicate of a proposition like “Dodos are flightless birds” can be amplified and be taken in natural supposition. Ampliation is the “widening of the normal referential domain of a term, which becomes more ‘ample’ by including more items.”<sup>569</sup> Thus, even if there are no dodos alive in the world in the twenty-first century, by ampliation the term “dodos” in my proposition above is referring to dodos which once existed (before becoming extinct), and which were, indeed, flightless birds. This sentence is true and we can have knowledge of it (as an act and as a *habitus*) even if the thing to which the term refers no longer exists (and is not eternal).<sup>570</sup>

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<sup>568</sup> *QNE* VI, 6: “Duplex enim secundum antiquos et logicos est termini communis suppositio, scilicet naturalis et accidentalis. Accidentalisis est quando terminus solum supponit pro suppositis alicuius determinati temporis naturalis, aut est quando supponit indifferenter pro omnibus suis suppositis, sive sine presentia, sive preterita sive futura, et hac suppositione utuntur scientie demonstrative.” (Trans. Walsh in Hyman, Walsh and Williams (2010), p. 695 Latin transcription mine. See: Buridan (1637, p. 501).

<sup>569</sup> King (1987), p. 120. Cf. Buridan *TC*, 4.6. This text also gives us insight into the issue of the verb “to know” discussed in the previous section, for Buridan says “it should be noted that some verbs, whatever their tense, render indifferent to time the accusatives that follow them and that they govern, such as the verbs ‘know,’ ‘think,’ and ‘understand,’ in that something can be understood without any reference to time. For example, the difference between the expressions ‘I strike a horse,’ ‘I set fire to a house,’ ‘I boil water,’ and suchlike on one hand, and these on the other, ‘I think of a rose,’ ‘I hope for health,’ ‘I desire a good wine,’ and suchlike whereas uses of the first type of verb listed apply to things of the present without a mediating concept, uses of verbs of the second type apply to things that are not concepts by means of mediating concepts that may be indifferent to the present, the past and the future. For example, if I think of a human, it certainly follows that I have that concept present to me, but it does not follow that the human of whom I am thinking is present, because that concept can be absent of things, either past or future.” (Trans. Read, (2015), p. 72)

<sup>570</sup> My account here is, of course, an oversimplification. Besides Buridan’s *TC* 4.6 and *TS* 3.4.1 as well as *Sophismata* ch. 5, various detailed accounts of ampliation (and restriction) exist in the secondary literature, a quite thorough and most interesting one being Parsons’ (2014), pp. 276-305.

This is one of the instances where we can see Buridan's ontology of virtue to be clearly in tune with his nominalism, which is dependent on his supposition theory. Consider, for instance, this other excerpt from an earlier paragraph of *QNE VI*, 6:

But I think that the universal does not exist outside the soul distinct from singulars, which for the present I assume from Book 7 of the *Metaphysics*. And even if it were distinct, it could persist with all its singulars destroyed only if it were a separated idea. And yet it is acknowledged, as it seems to me, that if all roses were now destroyed so that they did not exist in any way, or if there were no thunders, nor comets, nor eclipses of the sun and moon, still, the doctor would not on that account lose the knowledge they have of the rose, nor the astronomer the knowledge of eclipses, nor you the knowledge you have from the book *Meteorology* about thunders and comets. On the contrary, you could teach me the knowledge of the *Meteorology* just as if there were a thousand thunders. Therefore, if such a distinction between universal and singular in reality were conceded, the proposed thesis [advanced by Buridan's opponents that knowledge is about that which presently exists] would not hold.<sup>571</sup>

Here, there seems to be an advantage to holding Buridan's nominalist view: even though our acts of knowledge rely on singular entities in some sense – as the source of empirical data on the basis of which we produce statements, such as individual thunders or comets – since our knowledge is actually about the terms suppositing for those things set in “perpetual” propositions, such as “thunder is the sound caused by lightning”, we can acquire a *habitus* of knowledge which is a *habitus* of assenting to the truth of those sorts propositions with certitude, and the *habitus* can persist even *in absentia*.

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<sup>571</sup> Buridan, *QNE VI*, 6: “Sed ego puto quod universale non sit preter animam distinctum a singularibus, quod ad presens suppono ex septimo *Metaphysice*, et si esset distinctum, tamen nisi esset idea separata, non posset manere omnibus eius singularibus corruptis, et tamen notum est, ut mihi videtur, quod si omnes rose nunc essent corrupte sic quod nullo modo essent, vel modo si nulla sint tonitrua, nulle stelle comate, aut nulle eclipses solis aut lune, tamen medicus ob hoc non amitteret scientiam quam habet de rosa, nec astrologus scientiam quam habet de eclipsibus, nec tu scientiam, quam habes de libro *Meteorum* de tonitruis et stellis comatis. Immo tu posses me docere scientiam libri *Meteorum*, sicut si essent mille tonitrua. Ideo talis distinctio de universali et singulari pro re si concederetur, tamen non valeret propositum.” (Walsh's translation in Hyman, Walsh and Williams (2010), pp. 693-694, modified; Latin transcription mine. See: Buridan (1637), p. 499)

The virtue of *scientia* thus, likely because of the equivocity of that term, seems to be an emblematic case of the articulation of medieval logic and ontology with themes issued from moral theory and, as Biard argues,<sup>572</sup> this equivocity is not necessarily detrimental to its study, but can instead be turned into a tool for philosophical analysis.

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<sup>572</sup> Biard (2012), p. 8 *et passim*.

## CHAPTER 7

### PRUDENCE

*Prudentia* is the intellectual virtue which is at the centre of most questions in *QNE* VI,<sup>573</sup> and the reasons for that become clear already in the first question of that book, once we understand the role played by prudence as an intellectual virtue which is also connected to the moral virtues as we have seen. Moreover, in our discussion of *prudentia* we will face some interesting issues, many of which are methodological, linked to the very goals of Buridan's *Ethics* commentary.

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<sup>573</sup> More than half of the twenty-two questions in *QNE* VI are centrally concerned with prudence. Besides q. 9 and q. 22, which I have presented, we also have q. 10 (*utrum prudentia sit ab omni arte distincta*), q. 13 (*utrum prudentia sit una tantum circa obiecta omnium virtutum moralium*), q. 14 (*utrum prudentia monastica et prudentia civilis et prudentia economica sint idem habitus aut diversi*), q. 15 (*utrum prudentia politica et prudentia legispositiva sint idem habitus*), q. 16 (*utrum prudentia sit circa singularia*), q. 17 (*utrum prudentia sit idem habitus cum scientia morali tradita in libris ethicorum, politicorum et economicorum, et etiam in libris legum et decretarum*), q. 18 (*utrum eubulia, sinesis et gnome sint virtutes ab invicem et ab prudentia distincte*), q. 19 (*utrum virtus moralis faciat intentionem rectam prudentia autem qua ad hanc*), q. 20 (*utrum virtus moralis possit nobis acquiri sine prudentia*).

In this chapter, one of my goals is to discuss (7.1) the role of prudence as an intellectual virtue operating as the manager of the virtues of the appetite. This will lead us to understand why prudence is also important for the intellectual virtues, especially for wisdom, and then to examine by what means it is able to perform this role. In our investigation of the mechanisms through which it operates, we will (7.2) delve into the idea of moral logic which will, in turn, lead us to briefly consider the main project of a study of ethics and (7.3) examine the possibility of a moral science and what role prudence plays in it. Finally, considering the versatility of roles and uses Buridan and his contemporaries found for prudence, I briefly examine the issue of the decline of prudence as a virtue (7.4), after the Middle Ages, and whether this could have been influenced in any way by the different interpretations it received in scholasticism.

But before we delve into that, a little preamble is in order, in which I should address an important terminological point. In my discussion here, “prudence” translates solely the term *prudentia* (as the Latin equivalent of φρόνησις) as “the *habitus* determining the soul to say the truth about how we can act.”<sup>574</sup> Since we are dealing with a commentary which was written after a fairly long tradition of full *Ethics* commentaries had been established,<sup>575</sup> we will not run into the terminological issues which Albert the Great, most notably, had to deal with a little over a century before Buridan. But when we

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<sup>574</sup> *QNE* VI, 9 §10 (“per prudentiam nihil aliud intelligimus quam habitum determinatum ad verum dicendum circa agibilia”) and *QNE* VI, 16, “recta ratio agibilia.”

<sup>575</sup> Full translations of the *Ethics* into Latin became available by the mid-13th century, but the *Ethica vetus* had been around since the end of the 12th century, with the addition of the *Ethica nova* in the beginning of the 13th century (before 1230), as Cunningham (2008) recounts: “Latin versions of the complete Nicomachean Ethics were wanting until Hermannus Teutonicus secured an Arabic-Latin translation (derived from Averroes *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, and sometimes cited as *Translatio hispanica*) in June of 1240. Another Latin translation, the *Translatio alexandrina*, began to circulate in 1243 or 1244. Both of these translations emerged at about the same time that Albert was composing or beginning to compose the centerpiece of his moral writings – the *De bono*. Finally, what Gauthier and Jolif call “the reign” of the *Nicomachean Ethics* really begins with the appearance (1246-1247) of a remarkable layered translation and commentary composed by Robert Grosseteste, first chancellor of Oxford University and bishop of Lincoln.” (pp. 25-26).

compare Buridan's commentary to those of his predecessors, we ought to bear in mind how terms which pertained specifically to *Ethics* commentaries were used.<sup>576</sup> In contemporary usage, “φρόνησις” might be translated as “practical wisdom”, and common understanding of the term “wisdom” alone, even in its technical sense, tends to include reasoning about contingent, practical things or a formulation of the sort. However, this was certainly not the case in the late Middle Ages, where wisdom (*sapientia*) and prudence (*prudentia*) were strictly separated – a point to which we shall return later.

Before the Latin translation of the full text of the *Nichomachean Ethics* became available, the list of intellectual virtues was limited to wisdom, prudence<sup>577</sup> and understanding.<sup>578</sup> It is thus not insignificant that philosophers in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century, having a complete list comprised of the five intellectual virtues, were trying to give a more robust and somewhat unifying account of prudence, one which shies away from the earlier view found in the *Ethica vetus* and *Ethica nova*, according to which *phronesis* (or *fronesis*, according to some), referring back strictly to the Aristotelian tradition, was an intellectual virtue, while *prudentia*, being associated with the Stoic tradition, was rather taken to be a moral, cardinal virtue.<sup>579</sup> The relationship between the Aristotelian terms φρόνησις, νοῦς, and ἐπιστήμη also goes through some turbulent – and extremely equivocal – history before Buridan, in his treatise, uses what

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<sup>576</sup> This will be of particular interest when we compare *prudentia* to *sapientia* in Buridan (cf. below), and will be especially noteworthy once we consider how our modern-language equivalents, i.e., prudence and wisdom, do not tend to refer to these respective virtues as presented in the medieval discussion. Cf. the usage of expressions such as “theoretical reason” and “practical reason” or “theoretical wisdom” and “practical reason” in contemporary philosophy.

<sup>577</sup> Since book VI was not available, philosophers' understanding of φρόνησις was also peculiar, and did not exactly correspond to how philosophers would later understand *prudentia*. Cf. Cervera Novo (2016).

<sup>578</sup> Cf. Cervera Novo (2016).

<sup>579</sup> According to Kilwardby, for instance, *phronesis* becomes a kind of prudence: it is the intellectual version of prudence. While prudence keeps its larger scope and contains practical aspects, *phronesis* remains a strictly intellectual virtue. Cf. Celano (1999). For other philosophers' use of *prudentia* Cf. Cervera Novo (2016).

is now considered a somewhat standard translation of the terms. Here are a few examples of how befuddling some of the translations could be: while Grosseteste and Buridan both translate φρόνησις as *prudentia*, the *magistri artium* responsible for different versions of the *Ethica vetus* and *Ethica nova* occasionally made the above-mentioned distinction between *fronesis* and *prudentia*, sometimes even associating one or the other with *scientia* and/or *intelligentia*.<sup>580</sup> Things could get even more complicated when we added εὐβουλία and σύνεσις to the equation, the latter of which some *magistri artium* would equate with *intelligentia*, as a near-equivalent of νοῦς – something even Grosseteste admits to, translating σύνεσις as *intellectus*,<sup>581</sup> but Buridan does not follow, referring to “σύνεσις” by transliteration only, “*synesis*”.<sup>582</sup> Buridan, however, while keeping Grosseteste’s standard for translating “*sapientia*” and “*prudentia*”, will use “*intellectus*” exclusively as a translation of “νοῦς”. Judged by contemporary standards, Buridan’s own terminology seems much less peculiar and prone to ambiguity or confusion than that of his predecessors. This makes his interpretation of the Aristotelian text look much closer to what we now consider to be the more straightforward, standard terminology for ethical terms in the late Middle Ages than to the terminology used by other Parisian arts masters.<sup>583</sup> Buridan is thus in near agreement with the terminology used, for instance, by Albert (save for the above-mentioned deviations), Aquinas, and Ockham, for instance. And they are all in agreement about the fact that prudence is one of the conditions of possibility for virtue, in general, for

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<sup>580</sup> The translations, of course, vary from one commentator to the next. For a more detailed account of the common understanding of *prudentia*/*fronesis* distinction in 13th-century arts masters, cf. Cervera Novo (2016). However, we could also consider others, such as Arnoul de Provence and Pseudo-Peckham, who would have a different account of *prudentia*, as Zavatiero (2007) points out (p. 239): “*Les maîtres n’identifient jamais la recta ratio à la prudence (prudentia traduisant phronesis) car ils ont des difficultés à saisir le rôle même de cette vertu: le Ps.-Peckham et Arnoul de Provence la considèrent comme la «vertu mystique suprême»<sup>17</sup> et le Commentaire de Paris lui attribue la fonction de discernere mais aussi d’eligere, de consentire et de diriger.*”

<sup>581</sup> Cf. Grosseteste, *Ethica ad Nicomachum*. I have consulted: New Haven, Beinecke, Mellon MS 3.

<sup>582</sup> Cf., for instance, *QNE* VI, 18.

<sup>583</sup> The peculiar terminology of previous Parisian arts masters can be attested, e.g., in Cervera Novo’s 2017 dissertation.

*Prudentia* [...] focuses on practical philosophy: it examines the human and the contents that can be considered and decided on. That is why it is the decisive instance of the soul, which allows for the behaviour of the individual to turn into an ethical virtue [*sic*]; only when an action is guided by the right insight (*recta ratio*) does it turn into a virtue [*sic*]– there is no ethical virtue without *prudentia*.<sup>584</sup>

The role of prudence described by Stammkötter as applying to Albert could just as well apply to Aquinas, Buridan and Ockham. What is more,

[t]he ethical virtues are directly interrelated with *prudentia*: Nobody can act well in the sense of the ethical virtues if they act without deliberation, that is without *prudentia*; and nobody can be good exclusively through *prudentia*, without acting. Aristotle attaches great importance to the fact that one does not exist without the other. In the second book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* he expresses it emphatically: Whoever only thinks about ethics without orienting their actions to the results of their thinking only believes to be philosophizing.<sup>585</sup>

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<sup>584</sup> Stammkötter (2001), p. 305: “Die *prudentia* richtet sich dagegen auf die praktische Philosophie: Sie untersucht das Menschliche und die Inhalte, die überlegt und entschieden werden können. Daher ist sie die entscheidende Instanz der Seele, die das Verhalten des Einzelnen zur ethischen Tugend werden läßt; erst wenn eine Handlung durch die richtige Einsicht (*recta ratio*) geleitet ist, wird sie zur Tugend – es gibt keine ethische Tugend ohne die *prudentia*.” (my translation) N.B.: Although Stammkötter describes the individual’s behaviour and action as “turning into” or “becoming” (*werden, wird zu*) a virtue, we must note that this is not, strictly speaking, a transformation of an act into a virtue. In fact, a given virtue comes to be or derives from the behaviour and action, in the sense that the act and behaviour are conducive to the production of a virtuous, firm disposition.

<sup>585</sup> Stammkötter (2001), pp. 305-306: “Die ethische Tugenden stehen dabei in einem direkten Wechselverhältnis mit der *prudentia*: Niemand kann gut in Sinne der ethischen Tugenden handeln, wenn er ohne Überlegung, also ohne die *prudentia* handelt; niemand kann aber auch allein durch die *prudentia* gut sein, ohne zu handeln. Aristoteles legt größten Wert darauf, daß es die eine ohne die anderen nicht gibt. Im zweiten Buch der "Nikomachischen Ethik" drückt er es eindringlich aus: Wer nur über die Ethik nachdenkt, ohne sein Handeln an den Ergebnissen seines Nachdenkens zu orientieren, glaubt nur zu philosophieren.” (my translation).

It is this necessary link between deliberation as a theoretical activity and the real-world actions that derive from it which will be the focus of the sections that follow.

### 7.1 Prudence as the manager of virtues

In addition to all historically interesting renditions of the term alone, prudence also has an interesting history regarding its status as a virtue. Nowadays, especially in non-philosophical circles,<sup>586</sup> it is often referred to as one of the cardinal virtues, alongside courage, temperance, and justice. But Buridan's approach, that of an Aristotelian framework<sup>587</sup> occasionally intertwined with Roman Stoicism, takes prudence under a different light, similar to the one we find in the rest of Europe at the time and considers

[...] the Aristotelian notion of prudence [...] as distinct from the cardinal virtue. This notion of Stoic origin involves indeed a sense of certainty, as suggested by the term "science" in its Ciceronian definition, derived from Chrysippus: "*Prudentia est rerum bonarum et malarum neutrarumque scientia*" (Achard 1994, p. 225). This feature was later maintained in the definitions of prudence offered by the Fathers of the Church, where it merged with the concept of wisdom. Aristotelian prudence, on its part, a humbler virtue, is essentially fallible because of the matter to which it applies: the contingent sphere of human action. It is also much more complex from a theoretical point of view, particularly for its ambiguous status, that of an intellectual virtue closely linked to the moral virtues,

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<sup>586</sup> E.g., in the context of theology or art history. Cf., e.g., Katzenellenbogen (1964).

<sup>587</sup> This "standard Aristotelian framework" of prudence is described by Kenny (2016), p. 163 as: "(1) [...] an intellectual virtue concerned with the truth about mutable matters and the whole good of man[;] (2) [...] the virtue of a particular part of the rational soul, and [...] distinguished from other intellectual virtues by being deliberative rather than intuitive and practical rather than theoretical [;] (3) [...] indissolubly wedded to moral virtue, providing the right reasoning necessary for the exercise of virtue, and dependent on virtue for the correctness of its own starting-points [; and] (4) [... its union with] moral virtue is dependent on the pre-existence of certain natural qualities, intellectual and affective."

which rightful medium it determines. In contrast, within the set of the cardinal and theological virtues, prudence loses this ambivalence and joins the category of the moral virtues.<sup>588</sup>

Prudence, in Buridan's use of the term, as we have seen, is an intellectual virtue which is described as the manager of moral virtues.<sup>589</sup> This is a very peculiar position for an *intellectual* virtue, as many of his predecessors had noted. And Buridan is no exception in reckoning this needs further clarification. The challenge is not so much to explain why it is the case that prudence manages moral virtues, but how that can be the case. Prudence is an intellectual virtue – and not a moral virtue – because it originates in the intellect.<sup>590</sup> The “seat” of prudence, as it were, is the intellect, but prudence is also understood as playing a role with regards to moral virtues, in that it can restrain our appetite and incline the will to act a certain way, depending on a specific set of circumstances. This is why, as will be seen in the passage below, Buridan says that prudence is the guide of human activity, for the contingency of human affairs makes it so that we rarely, if ever, act the same way. Thus, we must always reason anew and find new practical conclusions to our prudential judgments, according to what the specific circumstances demand. That is to say, even if the major premise remains the same, the minor tends to be different for every particular instance of prudential reasoning or practical judgment, but in such a way that prudential reasoning, based on principles acquired by experience of similar or proportional cases, is incremental: it tends to accrue in tandem with our experience, as Buridan explains in *QNE VI*, 1:

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<sup>588</sup> Jecker (2014), pp. 165-166.

<sup>589</sup> *QNE*, VI, 1.

<sup>590</sup> Cf. *QNE VI*, 1.

[...] prudence [...] is the guide to the greatest deeds. There is so much diversity of circumstances in human affairs that one seldom ought to act in the same way, but [one ought to act] according to what the circumstances demand, concluding another deed or another way [of acting] reasoning through prudence itself from the practical principles whose many principles must be known [to us] through experience of similar or proportional cases. The *habitus* from custom generated in us (if the custom is had from similar deeds) always inclines to similar deeds; that is why prudence does not seem to begin in us principally, but through experience and ratiocinative teaching.<sup>591</sup>

But it is worth noting that prudence has this “managerial role” not only with regards to moral virtues, but also to intellectual virtues, as we have seen in *QNE* VI, 22 §14, where Buridan argues that at the end of the *Magna Moralia*, Aristotle says that “prudence has the same relation to wisdom as the manager of a household to the householder, as she [i.e., prudence] arranges and prepares everything for the sake of the lord,” so that the householder, no longer needing to attend to trivial or base things, can do what is truly proper to his position. Prudence, thus, acts in an analogous manner: it attends to passions and moderates them, clearing the way for wisdom to operate with regards to higher things.

When we ask for what purpose and to what extent prudence is useful to us, Buridan adds that it will become obvious to whomever considers it that it pertains to *knowing and doing* what humans can do.<sup>592</sup> Both the intellectual and moral or practical aspects

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<sup>591</sup> *QNE*, VI, 1: “[...] prudentia que est magnorum operum directiva, tanta enim in rebus humanis contingit diversitas ex circumstantiis quod quasi nunquam est eodemmodo operandum, sed oportet secundum exigentiam circumstantiarum, aliud opus vel alium modum concludere ratiocinando per ipsam prudentiam ex practicis principiis quorum principiorum plura est necesse nota fieri per experientiam similium casuum vel proportionabilium. Habitus autem ex assuetudine nobis generatus (cum assuetudo fiat ex similibus operibus) semper inclinatur ad opera similia, propter quod non videtur prudentia per assuetudinem nobis infieri principaliter, sed per experientiam et doctrinam ratiocinativam.” (See section 3.1.1 of this dissertation)

<sup>592</sup> Buridan, *QNE*, VI, 22 §21: “Item videamus ad quid et quantum nobis valeat prudentia, et erit manifestum consideranti, quod ipsa est cognoscitiva agibilium humanorum et activa [...]”

are there, even if ultimately it is said<sup>593</sup> that prudence is the rule and measure of all human political goodness. The primary function of prudence both on the moral and the intellectual realm is dispositional: it prepares the other virtues which, in turn, lead us to the desired ends. Prudence may be nobler than other virtues in a certain sense, but it must be led to those desired ends somehow. Here, we find a fundamental difference between Buridan and some of his predecessors.

According to Albert, for instance, prudence is moved by synderesis (i.e., “the spark of consciousness”, *scintilla conscientiae*, to borrow from Jerome),<sup>594</sup> which gives it its end. The notion of synderesis had already been introduced in the discussion of Aristotelian ethics by the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, and turns out to be especially useful once all ten books of the *Ethics* become available, since it would aid scholastic philosophers in the comprehension of book X.<sup>595</sup> <sup>596</sup> Synderesis, as the source of the major premise in a practical syllogism,<sup>597</sup> guarantees the imperative of searching for the good, ordered to a higher end. In this framework, it is thus synderesis – and not prudence – which immediately orders human ends to divine ends.

Even though there is no mention of synderesis *ipsis litteris* in his corpus, that is the context within which Buridan writes his *QNE*, and we must not neglect how much his work is built upon that of his predecessors, at least in spirit. But since Buridan does not rely on the notion of synderesis, prudence must beget its ends elsewhere. As *QNE* VI, 1 §29 says, it is other mental *habitus* which help inform prudence and may therefore

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<sup>593</sup> Cf. Buridan, *QNE*, VI, 22 §34: “[...] potest dici quod prudentia est regula et mensura totius bonitatis humane politice [...]”

<sup>594</sup> Interpretation of Ezek 1:7 in Jerome’s *Commentarium in Ezechielem*. Cf. Greene (1991). On Albert’s use of synderesis, cf. esp. Dougherty (2019) and Trottmann (2001).

<sup>595</sup> Cf. Celano (2012).

<sup>596</sup> Albert the Great relies very heavily on the notion of synderesis in his own commentary on the *Ethics* – cf. Celano (2012) – and this would not have gone unnoticed by his successors, including Aquinas and Odonis.

<sup>597</sup> Cf. Dougherty (2018), p. 220.

help set its goals or directness, and prudence relies heavily on teachings and experience.

Korolec and Walsh had already noted that Buridan's ethics is, in many respects, very different from Albert's and Aquinas',<sup>598</sup> and although this is not how they justify it, I believe that this is in part due to Buridan's understanding of prudence. Like Albert, Buridan also saw in prudence a key element to resolve the tension between the theoretical and practical aspects of ethics. Taking his cues both from Cicero and Giles of Rome, as I have previously mentioned,<sup>599</sup> Buridan will consider the practical "science" of ethics or morality (i.e., *ethica utens*) as well as the truly scientific enterprise of moral logic as being mediated by a rhetorical aspect (i.e., *ethica docens*).<sup>600</sup> And this rhetorical aspect is one of the key features of prudence, as we shall see below. As the *recta ratio agibilia*,<sup>601</sup> prudence manages all moral virtues and all possible moral actions<sup>602</sup> and it ties together moral and epistemic virtues. What the next section intends to show, beyond that, is that although prudence is not ultimately taken by Buridan to be the noblest human virtue, one of the reasons why it is of particular interest is that it could be taken as somewhat comparable to moral logic,<sup>603</sup> and that lends it an important methodological role. It is in that sense that prudence does not only help us have a broader understanding of Buridan's scheme of virtues, but it also allows us to suggest ways in which to understand some oft-overlooked aspects of his logic, broadly construed.

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<sup>598</sup> Walsh (1966b), (1976) and (1986); Korolec (1975).

<sup>599</sup> Chapter 1.

<sup>600</sup> To be sure, *ethica docens* or *scientia moralis docens* is the one whose goal is knowledge, while *ethica utens* or *scientia moralis utens* has the practical goal of making humans good. Cf. Robert (2012), p. 34. This distinction was used by Albert the Great in the prologue of his *Super Ethica*: "*Dicendum quod dupliciter potest considerari scientia ista: secundum quod est docens, et sic finis est scire; vel secundum quod est utens, et sic finis est ut boni fiamus*". (ed. Kübel, 1968, p. 4), but it had been previously established by Pseudo-Peckham (cf. Müller (2001), p. 280 and Wieland (1981).)

<sup>601</sup> *QNE VI*, 16.

<sup>602</sup> Biard, p. 225.

<sup>603</sup> Cf. Robert (2012).

## 7.2 Prudence and moral logic

While it is true that moral logic has not been granted the same systematic treatment dedicated to Buridan's logic *simpliciter* – as we can attest throughout the secondary literature on the Picardian arts master – he does dedicate a fairly significant part of his *QNE*, as well as the *Questions on the Rhetoric* to this “*secundum quid*” form of logic.

In the proemium of the *QNE*, Buridan mentions that this work concerns moral philosophy or moral science (*scientia moralis*). But how will that expression fit within the framework of our discussion on *scientia*? The question of whether we can actually call moral philosophy a *scientia* is an important one, which will be examined soon. But we first need to focus on a few distinctions presented in the proemium of his *Ethics* commentary concerning what ethics is. What is noteworthy and rather unique about Buridan's approach to *philosophia moralis* is that he divides it in two, *principalis* and *adminiculativa*:

Moral science or moral philosophy itself has two first parts, one is the main part, and the other is the auxiliary or instrumental part. Just like in the speculative parts, the main part teaches the natures of things – to wit, metaphysics, physics and mathematics – and the auxiliary or instrumental provides it with the way of teaching and speaking – namely logic – so too in moral science, the main part ought to teach this moral life, and the auxiliary or instrumental part ought to provide it with a way of teaching. Thus, firstly the main part, namely the one which teaches to live well with regard to health is dealt with in the books of *Ethics*, *Economics*, and *Politics*. However, the second part, which teaches how to teach, is dealt with in the books of *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*. Whence science of what is said of those two books is truly and properly called not logic absolutely, nor moral science absolutely, but moral logic. But someone will wonder

immediately, why moral philosophy has a special logic, more than other arts or sciences.<sup>604</sup>

Thus, according to Buridan, moral philosophy has two parts: one main part, which is moral science absolutely speaking (i.e. moral science *simpliciter*) – or “ethics” or even “morality”, if you will, as we currently use those terms – which teaches us the good life, or how to live well, as in the aforementioned *ethica utens* (and this is what we find in Aristotle’s *Ethics*, *Politics* and *Economics*), and one instrumental part, which is found in the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*, and which *allows us to teach* the themes relating to the main part, and this is the so-called *ethica docens*. So, this instrumental or auxiliary part of moral science is the *modus docendi* of moral philosophy, the one that provides us with a way of teaching the first, main part – and this second, auxiliary part of moral science corresponds to what Buridan calls “moral logic.” We notice that what we have seen thus far in our considerations of the *QNE* only sets us up for half of the picture. Since it has been established that moral philosophy can be divided in two parts, the main one seems to be the one which might deservedly and properly be called “moral science” due to its privileged relationship to its goal, i.e., the good life, attained through proper use of the intellect or reason and submitted to practical syllogisms via prudential reasoning. This is the one we have been focusing on so far in our consideration of ethics, and this is the one we most often consider. But what about the second, auxiliary part of moral philosophy? Where could it fit the broader picture of this survey? And why call it moral *logic*?

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<sup>604</sup> *QNE*, Prohemium: “Ipsa autem scientia seu philosophia moralis duas habet partes primas, unam principalem, aliam adminiculativam seu instrumentalem. Sicut enim in speculativis, hec quidem scientia naturas rerum docet – videlicet metaphysica, physica et mathematica – illa vero modum docendi et dicendi subministrat – scilicet logica – sic in moralibus oportet hanc quidem docere moralem vitam, hanc autem illi modum docendi subministrare. Prima ergo de principalis pars, scilicet que docet bene vivere ad salutem, traditur in libris *Ethicorum*, *Economicorum* et *Politicorum*. Secunda vero pars que hunc modum docendi docet, traditur in libris *Rhetorice* et *Poetrie*. Unde scientia dictorum duorum librorum vere et proprie dicenda est non logica simpliciter neque moralis scientia simpliciter, sed logica moralis. Sed statim aliquis dubitabit, propter quid philosophia moralis habet specialem logicam, magis quam alie artes vel scientie.” (Buridan (1637), p. 2, my translation).

Although, as Zupko notes, no one seems to know exactly what Buridan meant by “moral logic”, it is fairly safe to assume, as he does, that it is “a dialectic sensitive to human affect and aimed at the practical side of moral instruction,”<sup>605</sup> or some sort of practice of formulating reasonings which would, for instance, convince someone to act in a certain way or persuade someone to favour a certain course of action in detriment of another, which we deem less worthy. This “special logic” which is proper to moral science, is one which articulates practical reasoning in such a manner as to facilitate the assent of others to a way of acting, and is associated with moral dialectic, as it is called in the *Rhetoric* commentary.<sup>606</sup>

There are two ways of approaching Buridan’s idea of moral logic. The first one is to begin with Buridan’s logic or dialectics. Most readers will know Buridan from his logical works and recognize him for his radical nominalism. What the usual encyclopedic story of John Buridan, the logician, does not tell us, however, is that the logic we find in the *Summulae de Dialectica* – for instance, what the Picardian master calls “*logica simpliciter*,” i.e., logic absolutely speaking – is not the only kind of logic there is. There is another kind, which he will relegate to other treatises, the so-called moral logic:

[...] according to book VI [of the *Ethics*], Aristotle says that the deed of the practical intellect, that is, that of the moral intellect, is the truth conforming to the right appetite. That is why we require a double logic or dialectic: one which teaches the way of reaching the doubtful truth absolutely, and that one we call “logic simpliciter” or “dialectic,” and the other one is a restricted one, which teaches the mode by which simultaneously what is doubtful and true is found and the appetite is moved and disposed in such a way that it determines, or at least does not impede, the intellect to grant what is concluded, and that one we call

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<sup>605</sup> Zupko (2012), p. 162.

<sup>606</sup> Buridan, *QRhet* I, 2.

“moral dialectic,” which is under dialectic simpliciter, as if a subalternate. On the one hand, dialectic simpliciter considers the intellect simpliciter. On the other hand, rhetoric or moral dialectic, considers the intellect under restricted reason, namely, according to what can be brought to it through the appetite. Therefore, since only by following morality there is an innate appetite to transfer elsewhere the judgment of reason, from that it follows that in other crafts and sciences logic simpliciter suffices, but in morality we need a special logic.<sup>607</sup>

Moral logic, referred to above, as well as in *QRhet* I, 2, as “moral dialectic” is this auxiliary form of logic which, in its teachings, is constrained by what is provided by the appetite. But what exactly is this “special logic” that occasionally gets mentioned in the Buridanian corpus, and why is it associated with rhetoric? The *magister* clarifies:

There are two parts to this moral logic, namely, rhetoric and poetics, which differ in this way: rhetoric aims at clear knowledge, and uses words restrained to their proper signification, while poetics delightfully strives to obscure knowledge, through the transumption of words, or in some other way. Moral philosophy, however, is divided in three parts.<sup>608 609</sup>

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<sup>607</sup> *QNE*, Prohemium: “Unde secundum hoc VI huius dicit Aristoteles quod opus practici, id est, moralis intellectus, est veritas conformiter se habens appetitui recto. Propter quod duplici logica, seu dialectica indigemus: una quidem que simpliciter docet modum inveniendi dubiam veritatem, et illam vocamus logica simpliciter, vel dialecticam, et alia contracta, que docet modum, quo simul et dubium et verum invenitur, et appetitus sic afficitur et disponitur, ut determinet, vel non impediatur intellectum ad concedendum conclusum et hec vocatur dialectica moralis, que subest dialectica simpliciter, sicut et subalternata; nam dialectica simpliciter respicit intellectum simpliciter; rhetorica vero, sive moralis dialectica respicit intellectum sub contracta ratione, scilicet secundum hoc quod trahibilis eis per appetitum. Cum igitur non nisi secundum moralia sit innatus appetitus alienare iudicium rationis, hinc est, quod in aliis artibus et scientiis sufficit nobis logica simpliciter, sed in moralibus indigemus speciali.” (Buridan (1637), p. 2)

<sup>608</sup> *QNE*, Prohemium: “Huius autem moralis logice due sunt partes, scilicet rhetorica et poetria, que sic differunt: quia rhetorica claram scientiam desiderat, et verbis utitur in sua propria significatione retentis. Poetria vero scientiam delectabiliter obscurare nititur, per verborum transumptionem, vel alio modo. Pars autem moralis philosophie principalis dividitur in tres partes.” (Buridan (1637), p. 2, my translation)

<sup>609</sup> The parts in question, as I have mentioned, are ethics, economics, and politics, according to the Buridanian description which follows (*QNE*, Prohemium): “Prima namque instruit hominem secundum se. Docet enim nos quomodo vivamus honeste, quemcunque statum indifferenter habeamus, vel gradum, in communicatione domestica vel civili. Propter quod illa pars prima et ultima morum principia determinat et virtutes secundum quas oportet omnem hominem vivere investigat, distinguit, explicat et pertractat, et illa pars traditur in decem libris *Ethicorum*. Secunda pars instruit hominem in quantum ipse est pars aliqua domestice communitatis. Nam supposito ex libro *Ethicorum*, quod omnes de domo vivant secundum morales virtutes, et tendant ad humanam felicitatem adipiscendam, prout possunt et status eorum permittit; tamen modus vivendi multas speciales differentias exigit, quoad diversas partes domus.

For some ancient and medieval philosophers, the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* were considered to be part of the *Organon*,<sup>610</sup> so it is not completely unreasonable that some of the contents of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* should correspond to what Buridan ended up labelling "moral logic."<sup>611</sup> So, while rhetoric presents us with, e.g., persuasive arguments, *topoi*, or enthymemes in which words are used in their literal sense and may try to sway us one way or another when it comes to deliberation, the poetics represents the sort of discourse in which words are used in less obvious ways, often through figures of speech, and this brings its use of language quite far from its use in "standard" logic, but which may still affect a subject's practical deliberation.

The diagram below purports to provide a visual for this: moral logic, thus, as the name suggests, is found at the intersection of moral philosophy and logic, and is linked to a "special" part of logic, which uses language and reasoning to deal with contingent claims, influences the appetite through a disposition of the appetite, and it is also

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Aliqua enim oportet operari servos, que non decerent patremfamilias, aliqua decent parentes, que non decerent filios, et aliqua virum, que non uxorem, et econtra. Similiter, secundum diversitatem domorum aliqua decent istam domum que non decent illam. Hec ergo secunda pars docet distincte quid agamus, et quomodo vivamus secundum exigentiam nostre domus, vel officii in ea nobis commisi et traditur in libris *Economicorum*. Tertia pars instruit hominem in quantum se ipse est pars aliqua civitatis, seu politice communitatis. Sicut enim diversis hominibus diverse debentur operationes, ac etiam diversis partibus eiusdem domus. Ita diversis politiis et diversis politie partibus operandum est aliquando aliter et vivendum, que omnia pars tertia perscrutatur distincte. Et ita manifestum est de *Economica*, quod ipsa presupponit *Ethicam*, subalternaturque ei. *Politica* autem presupponit *Economicam* et *Ethicam*, et subalternatur utrisque. Ut igitur hunc ordinem teneamus, vel observemus, incipiemus a libris *Ethicorum*." (Buridan (1637), pp. 2-3)

<sup>610</sup> On the status of the *Rhetoric*'s and the *Poetics*'s relationship to the *Organon*, especially in the Arabic reception of Aristotle, cf., e.g., Kleven (2015) and Black (1990).

<sup>611</sup> Following what has been said about ethics and moral logic, we could even argue that in order to fully understand Buridan's logic in its broadest scope, we must also consider what he says in his commentary on the *Rhetoric*. But as this is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I content myself in leaving this as an invitation for those who are only familiar with Buridan's logic and nominalism, and who have now become more familiar with some aspects of his ethics, to explore other important elements of his corpus and philosophy.

connected to moral philosophy insofar as it can function as an instrument for communicating moral propositions studied and used in ethics, politics and economics:

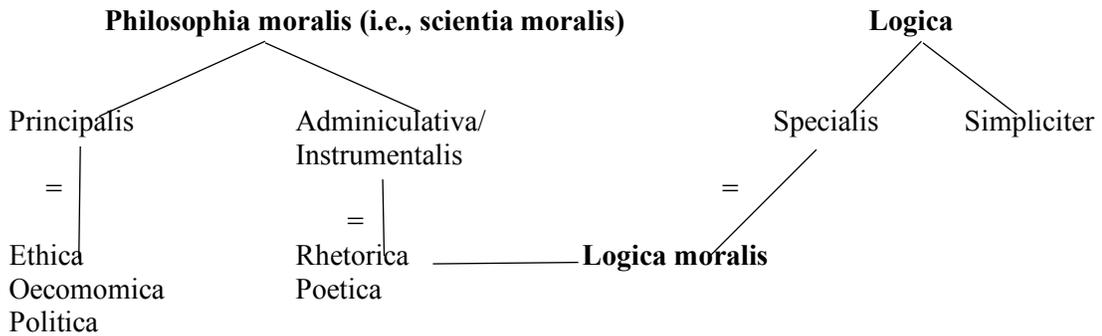


Figure 7.1: The intersection of moral philosophy and logic

And this brings us back to the question as to whether it is possible that there be a moral *science*, strictly speaking. One of the main questions Buridan considers in his philosophical investigations on the *Nicomachean Ethics* is whether ethics can even be taught or if could even be referred to as a “moral science”. This interrogation could be translated into the inquiry about the status of moral philosophy: is it a theoretical or a practical endeavour after all?

Unlike Aquinas, who says that moral philosophy is the science which considers the *ordinem actionum voluntarium*,<sup>612</sup> Buridan meant for moral philosophy to be a practical science which must teach people how to achieve the wellbeing which is proper to humans, and not a discipline aiming solely or mainly at knowing the principles of moral actions, systematizing moral virtues and determining their hierarchy.<sup>613</sup> In short,

<sup>612</sup> Aquinas, *In Eth.* I, lect. 1: “Ordo autem actionum voluntarium pertinet ad considerationem moralis philosophiae.”

<sup>613</sup> Cf. Korolec (1975), p. 56.

Buridan, departs slightly from Aquinas' idea,<sup>614</sup> and follows *ipsis litteris* Geraldus Odonis opening lines (*incipit*) in the prologue to his *Ethics* commentary in which Odonis states that “*quid est virtus scrutamur, ut boni efficiamur.*”<sup>615</sup> Buridan does not quite claim, as Korolec argues he does, that “*philosophia moralis bonum efficit.*”<sup>616</sup> In fact, that expression is nowhere to be found in Buridan's *QNE*, but the Picardian master does emphasize, in the *proemium*, this idea which he traces back to Aristotle that we are not investigating what virtue is merely in order to *know* it but rather, in order to *do* what is good:<sup>617</sup> the ultimate end of ethics, according to Buridan, is indeed not only *to know* the good, but *to become* good. Yet, it must be emphasized, Aquinas' and Buridan's goals are not in as stark an opposition as Korolec would have us believe:<sup>618</sup> Buridan does not establish a true rupture with Aquinas or any of his predecessors; he merely goes a bit further than Aquinas (and in that way his project resembles Odonis') into the practical implications of the study of moral philosophy. But that requires admitting, as Korolec himself does, that moral philosophy can do without systematizing its fundamental categories no more than it can do without speculating

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<sup>614</sup> Buridan seems to depart from Aquinas' words but he surely remains close to Aquinas in the general spirit of his reading, as we can attest, in this context, in the *responsio* of *QNE* I, 1, where similar methodological issues are being addressed: “Ad hoc autem respondendum est quod in homine preter rationem est appetitus sensitivus, sepe fortiter inclinans contrarium eius quod recta ratio dicitur, ut patet in fine primi huius. Propter quod est multo difficile secundum dictamen rationis operari et omnino tediosum ac displicens, nisi per consuetudinem acquisitus fuerit habitus virtuosus, moderans appetitum sensitivum, et inclinans ipsum ad precepta rationis. Unde decimo Ethicorum dicitur quod ‘temperate et perseveranter virtute non est delectabile multis.’ Hec autem non erunt tristia consueta facta. Consuetudo autem est altera natura. Ex quibus concluditur responsio affirmativa; *patet per Aristotelem, Albertum commentatorem, beatum Thomam, qui omnes hec concedunt.*” (Buridan (1637), p. 4, italics mine)

<sup>615</sup> As attested, e.g., in the following MSS: Vatican City, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. lat. 1027 f. 1ra and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16127, f. 2ra.

<sup>616</sup> Korolec (1975), p. 56.

<sup>617</sup> *QNE*, Prohemium: “‘Non enim,’ inquit, ‘ut sciamus quid est virtus scrutamur, sed ut boni efficiamur, quia nullum est utique proficuum eius. Hec autem verba non possunt simpliciter intelligi. [...] Oportet ergo ut prelegata verba Aristotelis sensum habeant respectivum, videlicet quod si, sicut dictum est, nobile et excellens est virtutum speculatio, adhuc multo nobilior et multo melior est virtutum operatio. Quid enim homini melius esse potest, quam quod ad felicitatem peroptatam perducatur? Hec autem felicitas est secundum virtutem operatio, ut determinat Aristoteles in primo et decimo *Ethicorum.*’” (Buridan (1637), p. 1)

<sup>618</sup> Korolec (1975), especially pp. 56-57.

about virtues and moral actions.<sup>619</sup> Hence, Buridan's practical goal does not replace Aquinas' theoretical one; rather, it requires that the practical considerations be studied in addition to the full theoretical investigation and systematization.

Because of that and also due to Seneca's well-known influence on Buridan's moral philosophy (about which Walsh and Zupko have written extensively),<sup>620</sup> from the very beginning of his commentary the Picardian arts master asks questions about the nature of virtues and about the possibility of a science of moral virtues (he asks, e.g., *utrum de virtutibus (moralibus) sit scientia*). So, although Buridan seems concerned with becoming good as a practical enterprise, he does talk about a moral *science* or ways of becoming familiar with the foundational elements of morality. This is why, in his picture of the division of moral philosophy, he did not completely do away with the part that is concerned with theoretical knowledge and the possibility of teaching morality. If moral philosophy, in the Aristotelian tradition in which Buridan finds himself, is virtue ethics, we must turn an inquisitive eye to the role virtues play in the bigger picture, and in which aspect of moral philosophy they fit.

When we look at Buridan's general treatment of the virtues, we find another salient aspect of his ethics, which is directly related to his nominalism: the idea that virtues are qualities; thus, they are singulars. In reality, there is no one virtue of prudence, of courage, of generosity etc. There are many virtues of prudence, courage and generosity, for instance, each one corresponding to each individual virtuous act. But virtues leave traces, either in the intellect or in the appetite (depending on the kind of virtue, as explained in *QNE VI, 1*), as virtues are wont to do every time a virtuous act is performed. That trace is what turns the mere disposition into a *habitus* (i.e., a firm disposition), and *it is also what allows for it to be taught*. The "trace," conceptually

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<sup>619</sup> Korolec (1975), p. 57.

<sup>620</sup> Cf., e.g., Walsh (1966a) and Zupko (2012).

grasped by the intellect as a universal can be communicated generally; in other words, it can be taught as a *deliberative procedure*. And this is why prudence turns out to be fundamental to moral logic: because it is through prudence that humans deliberate and, thus, learn and/or teach virtues.

Prudence, being an intellectual virtue that manages moral and intellectual virtues alike – as we have previously seen – seems to be the ideal candidate not only for the manager of virtues, but also for the title of “queen of moral logic,” and indeed Buridan does establish a link between prudence and rhetoric in the sense we have previously seen, understood as a moral science:<sup>621</sup> if, above, we divided ethics in *docens* and *utens*, i.e. theoretical and practical, Buridan also proposes the same distinction for the rhetoric:<sup>622</sup> while *rhetorica docens* is the theoretical or dialectical part concerned with enthymemes and how rhetorical syllogisms are composed, *rhetorica utens*, the practical aspect of rhetoric, concerned with rhetorical syllogisms as they are used (i.e., as instruments) is compared to prudence,<sup>623</sup> and corresponds to a “moral science” in the sense that it can be taught. Thus, prudence, as a key aspect of moral logic, which provides it with prudential reasoning or content, belongs to moral philosophy as a virtue, to rhetoric as *rhetorica utens*, and, as an aspect of rhetoric, it finds a way into logic and dialectics.

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<sup>621</sup> Although this equivalence may be established in a certain sense, strictly speaking we must remember that rhetoric and moral philosophy are actually distinct. As Lines says (2005, p. 14), “although the two may work towards the same end of moral perfection, their functions should not be confused and are in no way interchangeable.”

<sup>622</sup> Buridan, *Quaestiones in Rhetoricam Aristotelis* I, 1: “Puto, quod rhetorica distingui debet in docentem et utentem. Docens est illa, quae sensus argumentationum rhetoricarum habet distinguere et in suas causas resolvere et earum proprietates per illas, prout est condens et possibile declarans. Utens autem est, quae ad aliquid suadendum vel dissuadendum utitur rhetoricis argumentationibus, sicut de dialectica diceremus.” (unpublished 1990s collective transcription, made available by Preben-Hansen).

<sup>623</sup> “Dico ergo, quod rhetorica utens non est scientia, prout scientia distinguitur contra artem et prudentiam, intellectum et sapientiam sexto Ethicorum; immo est ipsa prudentia, et hoc declara, sicut tu vis.” (unpublished 1990s collective transcription, made available by Preben-Hansen).

### 7.3 Prudence's reign as the guarantor of a moral science

One of the questions driving the discussion thus far was: how is a moral science possible? In other words, we may ask, as Robert summarizes it, “how can moral reasoning be at once informative – in the sense that it is possible to learn something true in ethics within a system of scientificity which is proper to it – and also inclining, or motivating – in the sense that action must be able to be ruled and managed by such a reasoning?”<sup>624</sup>

If we consider the traditional Aristotelian framework,

scientific knowledge is based on deduction, and the principles or presuppositions of this deduction are necessarily true. In consequence, scientific knowledge, at least according to Aristotle's considerations in the *Posterior Analytics*, is at the same time deductive and categorical, that is: absolutely true. On the other hand, this ideal model of science obviously does not cover all branches of philosophical knowledge. In his ethics, Aristotle ascribes probability rather than certainty to ethical arguments, because the subject-matter of ethics does not permit absolute certainty. But he nevertheless depicts ethics as a science [...].<sup>625</sup>

Thus, we are faced with two possibilities: either science must be understood in a broader sense than that described in the *Posterior Analytics*, or ethics cannot be a true science.

In his *Super Ethica*, Albert claims that a scientific ethics is possible. To make such a claim, he must respond to important objections, some of which I have alluded to above.

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<sup>624</sup> Robert (2012), pp. 27-28 (my translation).

<sup>625</sup> Müller (2001), p. 277.

One of the main ones comes from the tension between the practical aspect of ethics and the fact that it purports to be applicable to all human actions and its pretense as a science in a truly “scientific” sense, i.e. in the sense of a theoretical knowledge which is usually desired or aimed at for itself, and not in view of another action. The tension here is clear: on the one hand, if we prove that ethics can fulfill the conditions for science established by the *Posterior Analytics*, it risks losing its practical aspect; on the other hand, if we save its practical side, it becomes hard to maintain its scientific status.

To solve this puzzle, Albert proposes an explanation that could already be found in older treatises of moral philosophy, such as the *Ethica nova et vetus* by pseudo-Peckham. He suggests that we make a distinction between the *ethica docens* (i.e., theoretical ethics, as it is taught) and the *ethica utens* (i.e., practical or “applied” ethics).<sup>626</sup> As we have seen above, this would allow for ethics to have two aspects: a theoretical aspect whose goal is science, true moral knowledge based on syllogistical proofs, and an applied or practical aspect, geared toward action and based on persuasive arguments. Hence, ethics can be saved both as a scientific and as a practical subject: as *ethica docens* it is scientific, and as *ethica utens* it is practical.

But a problem remains, as the proposed split only results in a philosophical buck-passing: how can we establish a link between these two *ethicæ*? That is to say, in proposing this *docens-utens* split how can we ensure the unity of ethics as a single discipline? According to some, like Albert, the link is established by the virtues, specifically prudence. Prudence plays a key role in keeping ethics together because it is an action-guiding principle; it is responsible for the formation of concrete practical syllogisms. It connects the subjects of the *ethica docens* and those of the *ethica utens* as it links the ethical universal to the particular circumstances of the action. Prudence

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<sup>626</sup> Cf. n. 600 above.

aids in the development of virtues (as a *causa remota*)<sup>627</sup> and it also applies the conceptual scheme to particular circumstances. With Albert, thus, the way out of the apparent conundrum is to highlight prudence's conciliatory role. But we have yet to see how prudence can actually accomplish that.

Aquinas, on the other hand, will not fully agree with his master on this matter. With his broader idea of natural law, Thomas wants to argue that "human morality is rooted in the ends of actions that exist in nature and can be discovered by reason."<sup>628</sup> Thus, the unity of ethics comes not from joining a theoretical project with a practical one, but rather from the pre-existing ends of virtues and from the conclusions we whence reach. For Aquinas, both theoretical and practical science depend on the conclusions reached from principles which we know naturally, and this is their uniting factor. In the *ST II-II*, q. 47 a. 15, he says:

Now the right ends of human life are fixed; wherefore there can be a natural inclination in respect of these ends; thus it has been stated above (*ST I-II*, q. 51, a. 1 and *ST I-II*, q. 63, a. 1) that some, from a natural inclination, have certain virtues whereby they are inclined to right ends; and consequently they also have naturally a right judgment about such like ends.<sup>629</sup>

So, prudence also depends on an intellectual apprehension of natural practical principles and then it determines which actions are the most appropriate in view of a certain end. For Aquinas, the ends are determined within the human being by nature, but the means are not. Thus, only the means are subjected to a discursive human reasoning. That is to say, there is no deliberation by the practical judgment concerning the ends. Consequently, the role of prudence is reduced: prudence no longer has the role it used to in Albert, i.e. that of prescribing an end to moral virtues. In the Thomistic

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<sup>627</sup> Müller (2001), p. 283.

<sup>628</sup> Celano (1995), p. 239.

<sup>629</sup> Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province

framework, prudence simply recognizes predetermined ends and deliberates about the means to reach them. This is what he reminds us of in the *sed contra* of his *ST II-II*, q. 47 a. 6:

The Philosopher says (*Ethic.* vi, 12) that “moral virtue ensures the rectitude of the intention of the end, while prudence ensures the rectitude of the means.” Therefore it does not belong to prudence to appoint the end to moral virtues, but only to regulate the means.<sup>630</sup>

The primary role of prudence for Aquinas is that of a disposition: it prepares other virtues which lead us to the desired end. Prudence may in a certain sense be “managerial” of other virtues, but it is moved by *synderesis*, which provides it with its end.<sup>631</sup> It is *synderesis* which ensures the imperative to seek the good, which is ordered toward a higher end. Thus, it is *synderesis* – and not prudence – which orders human ends to divine ends. This is similar to Albert’s view which relies heavily on *synderesis*, as I mentioned earlier: the *Doctor Universalis* entrusts to *synderesis* the role of providing prudence with an end toward which it will direct itself. For Albert and Aquinas, thus, prudence does guarantee the grounding of ethics but it is guided by a somewhat mysterious force. The problem of offering a solid foundation for ethics as a science is yet again pushed back, for there is no elaborate explanation as to whence *synderesis* begets the goals it assigns to prudence.

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<sup>630</sup> Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province.

<sup>631</sup> *ST II-II* q. 47 a. 6, *ad 1*: “Natural reason known by the name of “*synderesis*” appoints the end to moral virtues, as stated above (*ST I-I*, q. 79, a. 12): but prudence does not do this for the reason given above.” and *ad 3*: “The end concerns the moral virtues, not as though they appointed the end, but because they tend to the end which is appointed by natural reason. In this they are helped by prudence, which prepares the way for them, by disposing the means. Hence it follows that prudence is more excellent than the moral virtues, and moves them: yet “*synderesis*” moves prudence, just as the understanding of principles moves science.” (Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province”)

Without appealing to *synderesis*, Buridan also suggests that the double role of ethics as both theoretical and practical kinds of knowledge is guaranteed by prudence. But then, the question which arises is one about the relationship between *prudentia* and *scientia*. How can *prudentia* also be, at least in a certain sense, a *scientia*, if they have clearly been set as distinct virtues? This concern was not originally Buridan's, and not even Albert's or Aquinas', but had been expressed in the writings of previous philosophers who had commented on the *Ethics*, including some *artistæ*.<sup>632</sup> Part of the problem seems to hinge on how we ought to understand "science," beyond the rigid interpretation of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*. Most strategies to do that in the Middle Ages came down to trying to break down possible meanings of the term. This is what the anonymous of Avranches, for instance, does, and proposes four kinds of *scientia*: one is equivalent to beatitude, and orders all virtues, another one is the science of the greatest good, which simply disposes habitual virtues, a third one is the science which disposes us to habitual virtues concerning what is to be done and what it to be avoided, and finally, there is a science which disposes us to intellectual virtue.<sup>633</sup> At least one account seems to be missing here, the account of *scientia* as an intellectual virtue simpliciter. But that view would only be consolidated after Grosseteste's full Latin translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* into Latin, as was to be expected.

This strategy of breaking down the different uses of "*scientia*" was used by many. Costa's Anonymous of Paris had noted that science could be twofold:<sup>634</sup> speculative,

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<sup>632</sup> Cf. Cervera Novo (2016), pp. 22-25.

<sup>633</sup> Cervera Novo (2016), p. 22.

<sup>634</sup> Costa (2010), esp. pp. 128-129: "Est autem intelligendum quod scientia duplex est: quedam speculatiua et quedam practica; speculativa est propter scire, practica autem refertur ad opus. Inter autem scientias quedam sunt introductorie, sicut gramatia et logica, quedam autem reales, que habent finem in se, sicut scientia diuina, mathematica et naturalis. De istis autem scientiis nichil ad presens. Scientia autem practica refertur ad opus et est duplx, quia quedam est factiua et quedam actiua, que dicitur moralis scientia. Factiua est de factibilibus a nobis, unde est de operationibus que transeunt in materiam exteriorem, et tales artes mechanicæ. Scientia autem actiua est de agibilibus a nobis, unde uersatur circa actiones que non transeunt in materiam exteriorem, sicut uelle, intelligere, consiliari et similia, et talis dicitur moralis, unde tota intentio moralis uersatur circa operationes humanas. [...]"

in its proper sense, and practical, when it concerns the usual dealings of life. The latter, in turn, is also twofold: factive and active; the active one being equivalent to moral science and being under the jurisdiction of prudence, for similar reasons as those we saw in Buridan, in the diagram of the previous section. And this is also how Albert and Radulphus would go about dealing with this issue.<sup>635</sup>

If the term “ἐπιστήμη” was already subject to many less proper uses by association (as we have seen in our discussion of craft and how it could be distinguished from scientific knowledge), through the Middle Ages and to this day it is very likely that most people would easily and readily accept that the terms “*scientia*” or “science” occasionally be used in a broad and loose sense. Nevertheless, this seems to be slightly more contentious in our usage of “prudence”. Indeed, in common parlance we may often use it and its correlates to mean “caution”, but in philosophical discussions, its meaning and scope are pretty solidly established, save for when the discussion of the scientificity of ethics is invoked. In these cases, the meaning and scope of *prudentia* and *scientia* get muddled. To be sure, this blurring of the lines between *scientia* and *prudentia* while trying to describe different uses of the terms is neither a novelty nor something happening exclusively on the side of science. The joust between knowledge and prudence, as Cervera Novo remarks, is an influence from the Stoic philosophy inherited from Chrysippus via Cicero, Ambrose, and Augustine.<sup>636</sup> That is to say, it is not only science that gets the bounds of its definition somewhat loosened or stretched in order to accommodate a so-called “moral science”. According to Philip the Chancellor, for

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<sup>635</sup> Cf. Costa (2008), pp. 172-173: “Iste autem scientie inter alias scientias sunt multum necessarie nature humane, et hoc apparet per Albertum in principio commenti sui, vbi dat dignitatem istius scientie inter alias, et hoc declarat ex quinque, et est vna ratio sua ista, scilicet vltima: quia illa scientia maxime debet ab omnibus appeti, que est directiua omnium humanarum operationum; modo ista scientia libri Ethicorum est huiusmodi; quare etc. Probatio minoris: quia nulla alia scientia de istis operationibus humanis recta ratione regulatis se intromittit, nisi sola philosophia moralis. Hoc etiam apparet auctoritate Socratis, qui vult quod scientia de moralibus est domina omnium scientiarum, et finaliter humanum intellectum terminat. [...]”

<sup>636</sup> Cervera Novo (2016), p. 21.

instance, we also have a twofold version of the role of prudence to go with that, which Cervera Novo schematizes as follows:

Table 7.1: Prudence according to Philip the Chancellor<sup>637</sup>

(1) <i>Prudentia-scientia: dirigit ad virtutem. Scientia boni et mali per modum incomplexus; huius scibilia sunt ipsa operabilia. Est in practico intellecto</i>	
(2) <i>Prudentia-scientia:</i>	
(2.a) <i>Disponit ad virtutem a propinquiori. Scientia &lt;boni et mali&gt; per modum complexum; huius scibilia pertinent ad moralem scientiam et ad sacram Scripturam. Harum inquisitio est in speculativo intellectu, operationes ad quas hortantur et instruunt in practico.</i>	(2.b) <i>Disponit ad virtutem a remotiori. Cognitio omnium mirabilium que facta sunt propter hominem. Huius scibilia sunt opera Dei. Pertinet ad virtutem intellectualem.</i>
(3) <i>Prudentia-virtus moralis: proprie dicitur prudentia; relinquitur ex delectatione bone discretionis in operandis et fugiendis.</i>	

According to this interpretation of prudence, developed before book VI of the *NE* became available in Latin, we had two main “varieties” of prudence, one of which could be further broken down in two: On the one hand, we have prudence considered as a moral virtue (3), which, according to Philip the Chancellor, is prudence in its proper sense. On the other hand, we also have the “scientific” (perhaps more properly called speculative) side of prudence, as it were – where it is taken as an intellectual virtue – which either directs us toward virtue (1), and/or disposes us toward virtue (2):

<sup>637</sup> The table is a reproduction of the one found in Cervera Novo (2016), p. 25. Italics in the original.

Thus, when it is said that knowledge contributes “little or not at all” to virtue, only moral virtue is being referenced (and, therefore, prudence in its proper sense); only the will and the firmness in operating are determining: it is possible to have knowledge of good and evil without choosing good over evil. On the contrary, knowledge contributes to the formation of intellectual virtue, and through [the former], the latter “*multum habet ex doctrina, generationem et augmentum.*”<sup>638</sup>

Knowledge by definition contributes to intellectual virtue but only knowledge translated into practical considerations can contribute to moral virtue, namely knowledge about good and evil through which prudence can influence and direct – but not quite determine – the will. It seems that here we have a first hint of how the virtues get articulated in such a way that our practical dealings, those which are at the heart of morality, can be given a stricter guidance criterion. There seems to be a suggestion of an articulation between the roles of prudence, where, on the one hand, it has the rigour of a proper science when taking apart good from bad, while, on the other, it can bend to the contingencies of practical life. But while this is still rudimentary here, with the discussion of book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the possibility of a more accurate understanding of what prudence is, this project gets a more solid theoretical basis.

A little after Philip, but with a more robust Aristotelian corpus at hand, Albert also makes a distinction between kinds of prudence, but he contents himself with two, “which somehow mirror the distinction between *ethica docens* and *ethica utens*”:<sup>639</sup> foundational prudence (*prudentia architectonica*) and ordering prudence (*prudentia ordinativa* or *prudentia ordinatrix*).<sup>640</sup> Unfortunately, Albert’s mirroring as well as his

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<sup>638</sup> My translation of Cervera Novo (2016), p. 11: “Así pues, cuando se dice que el saber contribuye “poco y nada” a la virtud, se habla únicamente de la virtud moral (y por tanto, de la prudencia en sentido propio); solo la voluntad y la firmeza en el operar son determinantes: es posible tener la ciencia del bien y del mal sin elegir el bien por sobre el mal. Por el contrario, el saber contribuye a la formación de la virtud intelectual, y por ello esta última ‘Multum habet ex doctrina, generationem et augmentum.’”

<sup>639</sup> Müller, p. 283, n. 33.

<sup>640</sup> *Super Ethica* 1, IV, tr. 2, c. 23, as cited and corrected by Müller (p. 283, n. 3): “...propter quod oportet ambas habere in prudentia, scilicet universalium et singularium *cognitionem* (cognitiones *p*), si perfecta

reliance on synderesis still do not offer a solid ground upon which ethics can stand as a science.

In Ockham, however, we find a similar methodology of articulating possible different meanings of terms but one which is heftier and more prosperous than Albert's. Ockham describes two different kinds of moral science, and proposes varied understandings of prudence.<sup>641</sup> Regarding moral science, he says:

It should be understood that moral science is taken in two ways. In one way it is taken for any scientific knowledge that can evidently be had through learning (*doctrinam*). And this [moral science] proceeds from principles known per se [...] In another way [moral science] is taken for evident scientific knowledge that is only had, and can [only] be had, through experience, and in no way evidently through learning.<sup>642</sup>

Moral science, thus, is (a) a scientific evident “knowing”, which proceeds from first principles<sup>643</sup> and acquired through learning, or (b) a scientific “knowing” based on experience (and independent of learning). An example of (a) is Ockham's claim that “Every blameworthy evil should be avoided.”<sup>644</sup> Or “Every benefactor should be

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debeat esse prudentia... Cum autem ambae sint in prudentia, una erit architectonica, hoc est princeps et *ordinatrix* (ordinativa *p*) alterius, altera autem usualis et ordinata. Quae enim circa universalis est, theoretica et architectonica est; quae vero circa singularia, usualis est et practica.”

<sup>641</sup> For this section I am relying heavily on Freppert (1988), especially pp. 15-31, and on Dee (2019), especially pp. 25-42 – both of these being sources where a much more thorough account of Ockham's understanding of moral science and prudence can be found.

<sup>642</sup> *QV* 6.10, *OT* VIII, 281.220-282.227: “Intelligendum est quod scientia moralis accipitur dupliciter. Uno modo accipitur pro omni notitia scientifica quae evidenter haberi potest per doctrinam. Et haec procedit ex principiis per se notis... Alio modo accipitur pro notitia scientifica evidenti quae solum habetur et haberi potest per experientiam et nullo modo evidenter per doctrinam.” (Trans. M. Dee).

<sup>643</sup> As a reminder, Ockham's definition of knowing something evidently is similar to the one we find, e.g., in Buridan's *QAPo*. For Ockham's view, cf.: *Ord.*, Prol., q.1, *OT* I, 5.19-21: “notitia evidens est cognitio alicuius veri complexi, ex notitia terminorum incompleta immediate vel mediate nata sufficienter causari.” And *Ord.*, Prol., q.2, *OT* I, 81.20-21: “propositio per se nota praecise cognoscitur ex notitia terminorum.”

<sup>644</sup> *Quod* 2.14, *OT* IX, 178.40-41: “voluntas debet se conformare rectae rationi, omne malum vituperabile est fugiendum.”

benefited”<sup>645</sup> An example of (b) is “Any irascible person should, on such an occasion [i.e., when they are angry], be soothed and calmed with fine words.” This is not learned from the knowledge of the terms of the proposition, but through experience or through our being taught “that this [person] should be calmed and that [person too], and so on concerning [other] singular [experiences].”<sup>646</sup> Thus, propositions of moral science operate as major premises in a practical syllogism. Let us think of a classical example of a practical syllogism, proposed by Albert:<sup>647</sup>

M: Every good is to be done  
 m: This is good.  
 C: Therefore, this is to be done

Ockham’s examples of propositions belonging to moral science (both in senses (a) and (b)), thus, are general statements with epistemic standing, and correspond to the major premise in this sort of syllogism.<sup>648</sup> We thus see that the Ockhamist view of moral science resembles what Albert and Aquinas called *synderesis*, i.e., an infallible habit that provides agents general moral propositions that are self-evident,<sup>649</sup> but Ockham does not seem to be using it as an *ad hoc* device to keep his philosophical schema from crumbling. Rather, it is presented in conjunction with a manifold understanding of prudence, which helps build his case:

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<sup>645</sup> *QV* 6.10, *OT* VIII, 281.223-4: “omni benefactori est benefaciendum.”

<sup>646</sup> *QV* 6.10, *OT* VIII, 282.227-9: “Verbi gratia, haec ‘quilibet iracundus ex tali occasione est per pulcra verba leniendus et mitigandus.’” And *QV* 6.10, *OT* VIII, 282.231-2: “puta quod iste sit mitigandus et ille et sic de singulis.” – We can also see how the formulations here are similar to those used by Buridan in *QAPo*.

<sup>647</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa de creaturis*, ii, q. 72, a. 1, sol., in Borgnet xxxviii:599, *apud* Dougherty (2018), p. 220.

<sup>648</sup> Dee (2019), p. 30.

<sup>649</sup> Dougherty (2018), p. 221.

prudence is taken in two ways. In one way strictly (*proprie*) for evident knowledge of some singular proposition which is had only by means of experience. [...] In another way [prudence] is broadly (*communiter*) taken for evident knowledge of any universal practical [proposition] which is evidently known only through experience.<sup>650</sup>

Thus, prudence in either sense is begotten through experience. If, in its broad sense, prudence is expressed through a universal proposition, in its proper sense, it corresponds to the assent given to a singular proposition, in such a way that, to go with the example above, we would have the following practical syllogism:

M: Any irascible person should be soothed with fine words when they are angry.

m: This person is an irascible person.

C: This person should be soothed with fine words.<sup>651</sup>

Prudence, in its broad sense, corresponds to the major and, in its proper sense, is the virtue of assenting to the conclusion of this practical syllogism, whose *habitus* is acquired through experience.<sup>652</sup> Now, if we take prudence in its broad sense and moral science in its second sense (b), they are equivalent:<sup>653</sup> they correspond to an assent to the major premise of a practical syllogism, but one begotten through experience. This

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<sup>650</sup> *QV* 6.10, *OT* VIII, 282.233-240: “[...] prudentia accipitur dupliciter. Uno modo proprie pro notitia evidenti alicuius propositionis singularis quae solum habetur mediante experientia. [...] Alio modo accipitur communiter pro notitia evidenti alicuius universalis practicae quae solum evidenter cognoscitur per experientiam.”

<sup>651</sup> Cf. *QV* 6.10, *OT* VIII, 282 : “Similiter prudentia accipitur dupliciter. Uno modo proprie pro notitia evidenti alicuius propositionis singularis quae solum habetur mediante experientia. Verbi gratia, notitia haec evidens ‘iste est mitigandus per pulchra verba’ quae est evidens virtute huius contingentis ‘ille mitigatur per talem viam’ et hoc cognoscitur per experientiam. Alio modo accipitur communiter pro notitia evidenti alicuius <propositionis> universalis practicae quae solum evidenter cognoscitur per experientiam, ut quod omnis iracundus est sic leniendus.”

<sup>652</sup> As it happens, this is similar to Scotus’s view in *Ord.* 1, d.17, part 1, qq.1-2, n. 93.

<sup>653</sup> *QV* 6.10, *OT* VIII, 282.246-8: “Accipiendo scientiam moralem secundo modo, sic scientia moralis et prudentia communiter dicta sunt idem.”

apparent deliberate confusion on Ockham's part is justified by the scholastics' quest to explain the Aristotelian claim in 1142a that "prudence is concerned with particulars as well as universals." So, while moral science is necessarily about universals (for it is a science), prudence can be taken to be about particulars, in its proper sense, or about universals, in its broader sense.

But let us further consider what Ockham has to say about prudence. He seems to claim there are more than merely the two senses of prudence (proper and broad) we have mentioned above:

In one sense, [prudence] is taken for any knowledge giving direction with respect to any possible actions, mediately or immediately, just as Augustine takes prudence in *On Free Choice*, Book I. And in this [first] sense prudence is both (i) evident knowledge of some universal proposition which is cognized evidently through instruction since it proceeds from propositions known per se – that scientific knowledge is properly moral science –, and (ii) evident knowledge of a universal proposition which is cognized evidently through experience alone – that [scientific] knowledge is also moral science.<sup>654</sup>

In this first sense, prudence is equivalent to moral science in senses (a) and (b), in that it corresponds to the habitual assent to the major premise of a practical syllogism which is either evident or begotten through experience.

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<sup>654</sup> *QV* 7.2, *OT* VIII, 330.3-11: "uno modo, accipitur pro omni notitia directiva respectu cuiuscumque agibilis mediate vel immediate, sicut accipit Augustinus prudentiam, I *De libero arbitrio*. Et isto modo tam notitia evidens alicuius universalis propositionis quae evidenter cognoscitur per doctrinam, quia procedit ex propositionibus per se notis, quae notitia scientifica proprie est scientia moralis, quam notitia evidens propositionis universalis quae solum evidenter cognoscitur per experientiam, quae notitia etiam est scientia moralis, est prudentia."

Then, there is another sense:

In a second sense, [prudence] is taken for knowledge immediately giving direction concerning some possible action in particular, and this for knowledge of some particular proposition which evidently follows from a universal proposition in a major [premise] known per se as on account of learning. For example: "This person should be benefitted," which follows evidently from "Every benefactor" etc.<sup>655</sup>

In this sense, prudence is the *habitus* of assent to the conclusion of a practical syllogism which follows evidently and necessarily from the premisses, provided those are true – thus, again, a mix of (a) and (b). The example Ockham gives could be broken down as:

M: Every benefactor should be benefitted.

m: This person is a benefactor.

C: This person should be benefitted.

Here, it is clear that prudence would command assent to the truth of the conclusion, and would thus direct the will. But kinds of prudence still abound:

In a third sense, [prudence] is taken for knowledge immediately giving direction with respect to some possible action, when received through experience alone. For example: 'This irascible person should be soothed through fine words.' And this knowledge is only with respect to some particular proposition cognized through experience.<sup>656</sup>

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<sup>655</sup> *QV* 7.2, *OT* VIII, 330.14-331.19: "Alio modo, accipitur pro notitia evidenti immediate directiva circa aliquod agibile particulare, et hoc pro notitia alicuius propositionis particularis quae evidenter sequitur ex universali propositione per se nota tamquam maiori et per doctrinam. Exemplum: 'isti est sic benefaciendum,' quae sequitur evidenter ex ista 'omni benefactor' etc."

<sup>656</sup> *QV* 7.2, *OT* VIII, 331.20-4: "Tertio modo, accipitur pro notitia immediate directiva accepta per experientiam solum respectu alicuius agibilis. Exemplum: 'iste iracundus est leniendus per pulchra verba.' Et haec notitia est solum respectu alicuius propositionis particularis cognitae per experientiam."

The third sense of prudence provides guidance with respect to some particular action, but here it does not rely on a syllogism, but on experience alone – thus corresponding to (b). In this sense, it is distinguished from moral science in the stricter sense (a). And yet, there is a fourth sense of prudence:

In the fourth sense, [prudence] is taken as an aggregate of all knowledge giving direction immediately, whether it is had through learning or through experience, concerning every human operation required to live well simpliciter. And in this sense prudence is not merely a single knowledge, but it includes as many knowledges as there are moral virtues required to live well simpliciter, for any moral virtue whatever has [its] own (*proprium*) prudence and knowledge giving direction.<sup>657</sup>

This looks like the most generic sense of them all, in that it can be either the consideration of a major premise or assent to the conclusion in a practical syllogism or assent to a practical conclusion from experience,<sup>658</sup> and it encompasses things known through learning or experience. But this looks like the most improper sense of prudence. I thus side with Freppert<sup>659</sup> over Dee in understanding this fourth sense not as one which encompasses all others (as the first sense, that of prudence as moral science, seems to be completely missing here) but merely as prudence used as a tool to unify virtues. Hence, this fourth sense seems to be directed at a different problem from that posed by the universal/particular aspect of prudence/moral science and the question about the possibility of a science of morality. This last sense of prudence is important for Ockham to talk about the connection among the virtues and is thus also

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<sup>657</sup> *QV* 7.2, *OT* VIII, 331.27-30: “Quarto modo, accipitur pro aliquo aggregato ex omni notitia immediate directiva, sive habeatur per doctrinam sive per experientiam, circa omnia opera humana requisita ad bene vivere simpliciter. Et isto modo prudentia non est una notitia tantum, sed includit tot notitias quot sunt virtutes morales requisitae ad simpliciter bene vivere, quia quaelibet virtus moralis habet propriam prudentiam et notitiam directivam.”

<sup>658</sup> *QV* 7.3, *OT* VIII, 375.793-4: “...prudence taken in this [fourth] sense includes prudence taken in the first three senses” (“prudentia sic accepta includit prudentiam tribus primis modis acceptam”). (Trans. M. Dee).

<sup>659</sup> Freppert (1988).

responsible for unifying the virtues in such a way that even though virtues are all separated particulars, generated from separate, particular actions,<sup>660</sup> they can be conceptually united under a main “umbrella *habitus*” of prudence.

As is to be expected, having been influenced by the *magistri artium* and possibly (although less evidently in the case of the ethics) by Ockham, Buridan also has an account of prudence in which it is understood in many ways. This account is presented, e.g., in *QNE* IV, 18. This question goes into a lot of details concerning *synesis* and *eubulia*, which I refrain from discussing here, for this would take us too far from the issue I am trying to resolve.<sup>661</sup> Instead, I will focus on the parts of that discussion which are particularly relevant to our treatment of the issue of prudence in its role as a guarantor of ethics as a moral science:

Some [...] say that prudence has four main roles. The first is to find the means which agree with the established end. The second is to judge the honesty and the fit (*congruentia*) of the found means. The third is to offer these judgments as instructions. The fourth is to execute these instructions. I think, however, that the fourth is not a role obtained from prudence, as I have said before, but either from the will or from the powers of the soul or from their bodies and virtues. If, however, it were as they claim, then those four roles would be the four principal parts of prudence, namely the deliberative, the judicative, the instructive and the executive [...]<sup>662</sup>

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<sup>660</sup> This is meant in the strictest sense possible, since a principle which is numerically the same can be the major premise in different syllogisms, each containing a different minor premise and, therefore, yielding different particular conclusions. Cf. *QV* 7.3, *OT* VIII, 347.142-50: “virtutes morales omnes connectuntur in quibusdam principiis universalibus, puta ‘omne honestum est faciendum’, ‘omne bonum est diligendum’, ‘omne dictatum a recta ratione est faciendum’...Et potest idem principium numero esse maior cum diversis minoribus acceptis sub, ad concludendum diversas conclusiones particulares.”

<sup>661</sup> For a detailed discussion of this, cf. Saarinen (2003).

<sup>662</sup> Buridan, *QNE* VI, 18: “Dicunt ergo aliqui quod prudentiae sunt quatuor opera principalia. Primum est inventio mediorum ad finem statutum congruorum. Secundum est iudicium de honestate et congruentia mediorum inventorum. Tertium est praeceptum, iudicatorum. Quartum est executio praeceptorum. Puto tamen quod hoc quartum non sit opus elicited a prudentia, ut dixi prius, sed vel a voluntate, vel potentiis animae aut corporis et virtutibus earum. Si tamen ita esset ut dicunt, tunc essent (sic) sed illa quatuor opera quatuor partes principales prudentiae, scilicet inventiva, iudicativa, praeceptiva, et executiva” (transcription from Walsh (1976), p. 242; translation mine).

As Saarinen notes, “prudence consists in the totality of (1) deliberation (*consilium/eubulia*), (2) judgement (*iudicium/synesis*), (3) the resulting command, and (4) its execution. Prudence is thus not one *simpliciter*, but it is nevertheless a unified whole which is constituted by these parts.”<sup>663</sup> The fourth part, however, does not belong to prudence as an intellectual virtue, as Buridan notes, but rather to the will. It is only part of prudence insofar as an action is needed for a virtue to emerge. In this sense, it is derived from the conclusion of the practical syllogism, but it is not identical to it. The remaining three parts all relate to a more proper understanding of prudence as an intellectual virtue, but I will focus on the second and third, because they are the ones which can be mapped onto the practical syllogism and thus provide us with a clearer understanding of where the different interpretations of prudence could fit into our scheme. Unlike Ockham, however, Buridan attributes to prudence a role not only concerning the major premise and the conclusion of the practical syllogism, but also a role concerning the minor premise. In fact, it is judgment (*iudicium/synesis*), the second part of prudence, that operates both at the level of the major and of the minor premises: in the major in acts of intellect and circumspection, and in the minor in judicative acts.<sup>664</sup> The third part (the resulting command), as one might expect, relates to the conclusion of the syllogism and how we come to it, and has four requirements according to Saarinen,

two of which pertain to the intellect, two to the appetitive powers. First, (1) a determination with certainty is needed. The intellect further needs (2) an effective persuasion (*suasio efficax*) in order to convince the appetitive powers properly. A persuasion which remains ambiguous or unconvincing does not bring about the expected result. The appetitive powers must be equipped with (3) benevolence and (4) constancy.<sup>665</sup>

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<sup>663</sup> Saarinen (2003), p. 751.

<sup>664</sup> Cf. Saarinen (2003), p. 752, and Buridan *QNE*, VI, 18.

<sup>665</sup> Saarinen (2003), p. 752.

Thus, it becomes clear that the third part of prudence is the one which is concerned with the particular conclusions reached from the premises and whether or not we assent to them. But the second part involves reasonings both of universals and of particulars, in the major and minor premises, and thus cannot guarantee that there is anything strictly universal to prudential reasoning. In fact, we could separate the second part in two sub-parts: one regarding with intellect and circumspection and concerned with the assent to the major premise, and the other concerned with the particulars of the minor premise and those of the conclusion. It seems, thus, that the former could ensure that there is a universal component to morality. But separating these parts and calling the former a “part of the second part” is not enough; we need more details about what it is and how it is distinct from the other. Although looking for how the kinds of prudence may map onto the practical syllogism might be useful, in Buridan’s theory it does not quite resolve the issue of how prudence can guarantee a moral science, because Buridan’s distinction of where each part of prudence falls does not strictly follow Ockham’s, so we cannot say that prudence in only one of the above senses corresponds only to assent to the major premise of the practical syllogism and thus grant the universality of the moral enterprise. Buridan needs a similar distinction to Albert’s, proposing versions of prudence which mirror the *docens/utens* distinction applied to moral philosophy, as “[p]rudence is itself an indispensable link between the subject matters of *ethica docens* and *utens*, between the ethical universal and the circumstances of action.”<sup>666</sup>

[...] that is why, if prudence should be perfect, we need to have both in prudence, namely, the cognition of universals and the cognition of particulars. When both are in prudence, one will be architectonic, this is the master and orderer of the other one, whereas the other is common and ordered. In fact, the one which is

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<sup>666</sup> Müller (2001), p. 283.

about universals is theoretical and architectonical; the one which is about singulars is common and practical.<sup>667</sup>

It is the *ethica docens* which delivers the universal principles which govern the virtues brought about by the *ethica utens*, so cognitions of both the universals of the former and the particulars of the latter must find their place in prudence.

If we go back to the *responsio* of QNE VI, 1, where Buridan lists a series of guides to human action in the context of the discussion about prudential reasoning,<sup>668</sup> we find different aspects of the work of prudence. In fact, it is here that we are most likely to find a schema that somewhat corresponds to that of Ockham's: in that section of Buridan's text we find the idea that some principles are evident to us, while others are learnt (because we are taught or because of our own experience). Thus, the first guide of human action ("the nature of the things from which practical principles originate") as well as the second guide ("the practical principles themselves") correspond to the universal element we are seeking in prudence. These are principles which are either evident or which can be taught. The third ("the reasoning by which practical conclusions are deduced from the principles mentioned") and fourth guides ("practical conclusions discovered and concluded by reasoning of this sort") correspond to prudence as pertains to the conclusion of a practical syllogism, for they are dependent on the particulars brought on by the minor premise. And the fifth guide ("moral virtues that by habituation incline the appetite to carry out that which was postulated by reason, and always to look for judgment of reason in one's movements and actions, so that all our actions are in accordance with nature") pertains to the work of prudence as an ersatz

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<sup>667</sup> Albertus Magnus, *Ethica* 1, IV, tr. 2, c. 23, *apud* Müller (2001), p. 283, n. 33: "... propter quod oportet ambas habere in prudentia, scilicet universalium et singularium *cognitionem* (cognitiones *p*), si perfecta debeat esse prudentia... Cum autem ambae sint in prudentia, una erit architectonica, hoc est princeps et *ordinatrix* (ordinativa *p*) alterius, altera autem ususalis [sic] et ordinata. Quae enim circa universalia est, theorica et architectonica est; quae vero circa singularia, usualis est et practica."

<sup>668</sup> Cf. QNE VI, 1 §§20-24.

moral virtue. Thus, it is not merely as an aspect of the second part of prudence that prudence can be understood as the main guarantor of a moral science, but, more specifically, prudence as that which can provide us with fundamental principles of practical reasoning, as we see in the first and second guides.

It may at first have seemed quite surprising that philosophers were going to such great lengths to keep the status of prudence as an intellectual virtue even before having Book VI to help consolidate that idea, but now we see that much more was at stake. Their goal was not only to safeguard Aristotle's fivefold scheme of virtues, but also to give ethics a scientific status, making the whole enterprise of writing an ethical treatise worthy. And for that we needed something to bridge the gap between theory and practice, and prudence was the best candidate for that, for reasons that Buridan reiterates. Once we see that prudence has such a key role, serving not only as the manager of virtues but also as the ultimate grounding of ethics, we might be led to treating it as the highest virtue among moral and intellectual virtues alike. But as question 22 shows us, that is not truly the case. The next section of this chapter, on wisdom, will address this specific issue, but first I propose a brief assessment of the reception of the scholastic role of prudence in the philosophical modernity.

#### 7.4 The decline of prudence: Middle Ages vs. Modernity

In a 2005 article, Bardout argues that modern philosophers such as Descartes, Malebranche and Kant are faced with the same methodological issues concerning the scientificity of ethics as medievals. However, according to him, modern philosophers, instead of relying on prudence, looked for another strategy to try to provide ethics with a metaphysical foundation. In his study, Bardout follows a Malebranchian path and

describes a “crisis of the very notion of cardinal virtue”<sup>669</sup> particularly focused on how prudence as the pursuit of the good gets reduced to the search for truth.<sup>670</sup> Bardout acknowledges that traditionally, in the late medieval context, prudence is the virtue which, at least in Aquinas’ sense,

by excellence, articulates intellectual virtues to moral virtues. If prudence seems to have an intellectual essence, it is exclusively concerned with human reason when it guides the appetite or the will, insofar as man is taken as an agent which is both rational and voluntary, and not only natural. It constitutes, thus, the point of articulation or, we would say, the dovetail between the two principles at work in a moral act, which are reason, or the faculty of apprehending principles or rules of actions, and will. It [i.e., prudence] is therefore the virtue which perfects the practical intellect.<sup>671</sup>

However, if Bardout is right in asserting that prudence becomes more complex for Malebranche than it had been for Aquinas (and, potentially, for other medieval authors) because it does not only serve the positive deliberative procedures (i.e., deciding *ea que sunt ad finem*, once the ends have already been established) but also has a negative function of epistemological caution (i.e., a suspension of judgment), this could bring Buridan farther from Aquinas and closer to Malebranche. This is because Buridan’s theory of knowledge seems to allow, at least theoretically, for “a voluntary suspension of judgment, or the refusal to assent”<sup>672</sup> in the case of opinative assent to a proposition. Grellard, for instance, claims that, for Buridan, elements such as education, habit and errors of perception all play a role in our belief formation (namely, in the formation of

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<sup>669</sup> Bardout (2005), p. 97.

<sup>670</sup> Bardout (2005), p. 98.

<sup>671</sup> Bardout (2005), p. 99: “...la prudence est pour Thomas d’Aquin la vertu qui, par excellence, articule les vertus intellectuelles aux vertus morales. Si la prudence semble d’essence intellectuelle, elle n’en concerne pas moins exclusivement la raison humaine quand celle-ci oriente l’appétit ou la volonté, en tant que l’homme est saisi comme agent à la fois rationnel et volontaire, et non pas seulement naturel. Elle constitue ainsi le point d’articulation, ou, dirions-nous, la suture entre les deux principes à l’oeuvre dans l’acte moral, que sont la raison ou faculté d’appréhender les principes ou règles de l’action, et la volonté. Elle est donc la vertu qui perfectionne l’intellect pratique...” (my translation).

<sup>672</sup> Grellard (2015) p. 134.

false beliefs).<sup>673</sup> Thus, habituation, for the Picardian arts master can and does interfere with our assent to propositions. The difference, nevertheless, is that while Malebranche relegates prudence mainly to this negative role of epistemological precaution<sup>674</sup> in which it could end up reduced to some sort of irrationality or vice due to willful ignorance or overzealousness, eventually always needing to delegate to reason, Buridan accepts that prudence may have these two roles concurrently, namely, that of suspicion or withdrawal<sup>675</sup> and that of taking a stance on what ought to be done. Thus, he does not incur in the danger of having to reduce it to a mere precaution or to passions cunningly disguised as virtues.<sup>676</sup>

Prudence for Buridan is, thus, much more complex than it is for Aquinas (or, at least, than Bardout's understanding of Aquinas' view): it retains its status as an articulation of reason and will, which translates as "practical intellect" or "rational appetite," while Malebranche and modern philosophers in general do not retain this sense. In modernity, prudence loses its role as a deliberative virtue in two senses: it no longer connects general moral rules to particular cases and it no longer chooses the means through which a certain end ought to be achieved. Instead, for Malebranche and for other modern philosophers (such as Rousseau), prudence becomes a strictly internalized, intellectualized type of "conscience," incapable of guiding particular acts and "focusing mainly on the conformity of the act to the universal order or moral law."<sup>677</sup>

But while the true decline of prudence as the foundation for moral science is attested to, in modernity (e.g., in Descartes or Malebranche), through the quest for a metaphysical foundation for ethics, which will eventually contribute to the notion of

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<sup>673</sup> Grellard (2014), p. 108.

<sup>674</sup> Bardout (2005), p. 101.

<sup>675</sup> Bardout (2005), p. 101.

<sup>676</sup> Cf. Bardout (2005), p. 102.

<sup>677</sup> Bardout (2005), p. 104.

pleasure being brought to the fore, the issue of the importance of prudence is not one which only comes about after the Renaissance, and this shall become clear in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 8

### WISDOM

Although, as we have seen, prudence seems to be of paramount importance to Buridan his considerations of Book VI not only, as has been mentioned, due to the volume of the pages dedicated to it but also because of its value as a manager of virtues, we must not forget the argument from *QNE* VI, 22, where Buridan distinguishes prudence as the condition for acting virtuously morally from wisdom, “the highest of virtues, the condition of perfect happiness,”<sup>678</sup> which is the subject of the present analysis.

#### 8.1 *Prudentia* vs. *sapientia*

As a reminder, Buridan ends Book VI of the *QNE* quite clearly: at the end of *quæstio* 22, where he asks whether wisdom (*sapientia*) is a better virtue than prudence (*prudentia*), he closes his argument echoing Aquinas. He says: “We can say that prudence is the rule and measure of all human political goodness, but not of all human goodness without qualification, except in a preparatory manner, like a servant.” (*QNE* VI, 22 §34) He mentions Cicero and Seneca, as he often does, to say that prudence is only about political happiness, which is active, but not about contemplative happiness, which is happiness simpliciter. He explains that wisdom, linked to contemplative life,

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<sup>678</sup> Jecker (2014), p. 172.

is not ordered to any other virtue, not even to prudence, nor to ends determined or established by prudence.

Whereas other virtues are directed toward the action whose end is determined by the natural order (and here Buridan talks about “*naturali ordine*”, echoing Aquinas, once again), wisdom alone is directed toward truth itself, and its only work is human beatitude. It is noble for it is not an operative, but rather a contemplative virtue, and thus, in contemplating divine essence, Buridan says, is it nobler than that virtue (i.e., prudence), which knows and acts in accordance with all other things. On that note, Buridan announces: “*Hec de questione.*”

## 8.2 Wisdom unrivaled?

We can consider each of these two virtues (prudence and wisdom) as the rulers of their own kingdom, just as the different kinds of intellect were set apart, each according to its role (factive, active, contemplative). But this distinction is not peculiar to Buridan. We already see an interesting separation in Roland of Cremona, for whom, according to Korolec,

[s]uperior reason is the reason which is the bearer of *sapientia* (philosophical wisdom and learning), inferior reason is the locus of *prudentia* (practical wisdom or prudence). Inferior reason can turn itself in the direction either of good or of evil: it has freedom in respect of the lower goods that are the subject matter of prudence. Superior reason or intellect has freedom with respect to the higher goods: it cannot choose evil, but it can will one good rather than another.<sup>679</sup>

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<sup>679</sup> Korolec (1982), p. 633.

However many general agreements we may find in the positions of scholastic authors, these must also be tempered with the occasional dissent. And the status of wisdom being better than prudence is one such case. As Walsh notes,<sup>680</sup> Buridan disagrees with Geraldus Odonis' view that prudence is better than wisdom. When Odonis asks whether prudence or wisdom is the better virtue between the two,<sup>681</sup> he relies on the authority of the seventh Book of the *Politics* to argue that prudence is better and he gives four reasons to support his thesis.<sup>682</sup> The first is that the part of the soul perfected by prudence is better than the part of the soul perfected by wisdom. That, in turn, is supported by three arguments: (a) that the best in humans is that which is corrupted by malice or badness or destroyed by beastlikeness; (b) that the main way of thinking (*sententia*) belonging to humans is that which is mostly human, and that is prudential reasoning (and not wisdom), for prudence operates through, among other things, continence, which addresses the principles to be followed for our optimal living, and not simply the parts bound to be perfected by metaphysical reasoning; (c) that the part that leads is better than the part that obeys and, as a matter of fact, it is the practical part that guides or leads the speculative. Odonis' argument here looks a bit counterintuitive, but this is how he puts it: He says that prudence does not perfectly guide wisdom but it guides due to wisdom: prudence guides virtues through wisdom because it guides them so that they speculate due to wisdom. Thus, the part perfected by prudence actually guides the part perfected by wisdom. And, thus, Odonis purports to show that the practical mind guides the speculative mind.

The second main argument Odonis uses to support his view is that the non-wise prudent person is better than the imprudent wise person. And this for the simple reason that a good person is better than a bad (or simply not-good) person. And it is impossible to

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<sup>680</sup> Walsh (1976), p. 271

<sup>681</sup> Odonis (1500), p. 136rb: "Ad evidentiam eorum que dicta sunt de utilitate et bonitate prudentie et sapientia, queritur utrum sapientia sit simpliciter melior quam prudentia."

<sup>682</sup> Odonis (1500), pp. 136rb-137va.

be prudent and not good, but it is possible to be theoretically wise and not good (i.e., without moral virtues receiving guidance from prudence). Thus, prudence is better than wisdom.

The third reason is that the virtue whose effect is better is the best virtue, and since prudence has a better effect than wisdom. Odonis says that “*simpliciter ad simpliciter et magis ad magis et maxime ad et maxime*” (a reference to *Topics II*), i.e., if the final effect of something is good, that thing is also good. Thus, because it is better to live well as a whole and not merely to know, to speculate, or to contemplate, prudence, which has as its effects living well as a whole is thus a better virtue than wisdom, whose final effects are limited to the realm of metaphysics.

The fourth reason is that among human insights, those which work and the rule and measure of human goodness are the best ones, and only prudence provides those in that it follows right reason. Thus, prudence is better than wisdom.

These arguments all look very familiar by now. What we recognize in Odonis are many of the objections Buridan raises in *QNE VI, 22*, and although the wording might not correspond *ipsis litteris* here, as it does in many other instances, it is still plain to see to whom the Picardian master is responding directly. This leads us to see that the opinions which Buridan is countering in elaborating his *quæstio* are not mere conjectural objections or bygone views, but opinions which were very much alive and well as he was writing his commentary. How one can sturdily respond to each of these arguments should be clear from what Buridan says and what we have seen in my exposition on *QNE VI, 22* (3.6.2).

In its stark opposition to Odonis's view, Buridan's perspective is aligned with that of most medieval philosophers, who reserved an important place for prudence all while acknowledging that it would not rank as high as wisdom in the complete scheme of the virtues. Guido Terrena, for instance, who wrote a commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics*, argues that

Among moral virtues, prudence (*prudentia*) is the noblest, as the Commentator [i.e., Eustratius] says, and it is [an] ordering [virtue] with respect to other virtues; among the intellectual virtues – even more, among all dispositions – wisdom is the most perfect.<sup>683</sup>

But Terrena continues in a fashion Buridan would not. He says that

Charity, on the other hand, is said to be superior with regards to merit and with regards to perpetuity, because it does not go beyond, like faith and hope; yet, wisdom accompanied by charity is more perfect, just as prudence in relation to the moral virtues. As it is said in the Book of Wisdom [7:28]: “For God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom.”<sup>684</sup>

Buridan, as an arts master, did not write about the theological or supernatural virtues, as we may recall from his limiting the scope of his investigation, in *QNE VI*, 1 to natural virtues only. So, there is no talk of charity (or faith or hope) as virtues in his *Ethics* commentary. And yet, for other philosophers, such as Walter Burley, charity could be a strong contender for the position of the most important virtue, since,

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<sup>683</sup> Gui Terrena. *Questiones super Ethicam Nicomacheam*, lib I, q. 18: “Nam inter omnes uirtutes morales prudentia est nobilior uirtus [om. B], ut dicit Commentator, et aliarum architectonica, ut patet VI huius; inter uirtutes intellectuales sapientia, immo inter omnes habitus sapientia perfectior, ut VI huius dicitur” – in Costa (2012), p. 82. (English translation mine)

<sup>684</sup> “caritas autem dicitur maior quantum ad rationem meriti et quantum ad perpetuitatem, quia non excedit ut fies et spes; tamen sapientia cui connexa est [om. P] caritas est perfectior, sicut prudentia uirtutibus moralibus, de qua dicitur Sapientia: ‘sapientia nemimen inhabitat nisi quem deus diligit’ – apud Costa (2012), p. 82.

according to him “*charitas dicitur supernaturalis... est perfectior omni virtute morali.*”<sup>685</sup>

Burley relies on his discussion of charity, inspired by Aquinas’ thought, to address the question of friendship, and argues that charity is a requirement for friendship. Buridan’s discussion of friendship does not at all rely on this theological virtue. But regardless of how these two philosophers develop their very different accounts of friendship (dependent on or independently of supernatural virtues, as the case may be), Burley advanced a view of the hierarchy of virtues similar to the one Buridan would espouse. Leaving charity aside, Burley’s five arguments for placing wisdom above prudence are based on the superiority of contemplative life over active life.<sup>686</sup> For him, humans can engage in three kinds of acts: those which are strictly related to our bodily nature, those who are strictly related to our divine nature, and those which are a mix of both. The first are acts we share with irrational beings, the second are those which we share with the separated substances, and the third are those which are properly human, harmonizing our sensitive and irrational soul with our intellectual soul. Contemplative life is, thus, better than active life (the life which is properly human), because through it we can participate in divine nature.

Besides, because contemplative life deals with things separated from matter, it is superior to the life which must consider bodily things, as the active life does. Moreover, while the active life must be exercised through or with the aid of external, material goods, contemplative life can be exercised through the intellect alone. It is thus more independent – and thence more perfect – than active life. In addition, since no one attributes actions following moral virtues to God and the intelligences, but rather we attribute to them intellectual, contemplative acts, this means that the contemplative life

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<sup>685</sup> Gualterus Burley, *Expositio*, L. VIII, Tract. I, cap. 1, fol. 126 rb, *apud* Sère (2005), p. 815.

<sup>686</sup> Cf. Costa (2013), pp. 331-332.

we share with God and the intelligences is better than the active life we share with other humans. Finally, once we acknowledge, as we did in the first argument, that irrational animals are incapable of leading a contemplative life, and that occasionally irrational animals are also capable of participating in moral action (e.g., as a child is capable of piety), we realize that the kind of life proper to humans is not active, but contemplative life – the kind that is never attributed to irrational animals.

As Costa notes, however, “Burley neglects the extremely animated debate concerning the relationship between active and contemplative life.”<sup>687</sup> And although, like Burley, Buridan decides to place wisdom in a position of privilege with regards to other virtues, he does echo some of the preoccupations that would have been in Odonis’ mind when the Picardian arts master claimed, in Book I, that even though the contemplation of virtue is a noble and most excellent task, acting in accordance with these virtues is even better, since we, as humans, can only make ourselves better insofar as we let ourselves be guided to the *felicitas* which is proper to us.<sup>688</sup> Lest we forget, Buridan discusses the tension between the merely contemplative life and the practical life in *QNE* X, in order to address possible contradictions concerning the two and the goal of the *Ethics*. He uses Seneca as an authority to discuss that of which human happiness consists:

[...] Seneca very often attributes happiness to wisdom and right reason and often also to the moral virtues. For example, in his letter “*Agnosco*” (XXXI 8) he says, “It,” that is, the highest good, and consequently happiness “cannot be, unless there is knowledge of things and the art by which divine and human matters are known.” In the letter that begins “*Epistola tua*” he says that true goods are those which reason gives, solid and eternal, etc. (LXXIV 16). He says the same afterwards, that nothing is stronger than reason (LXXIV 20). And in the following letter: “The best thing in a human being? Reason . . . This, if right and

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<sup>687</sup> Costa (2013), p. 332.

<sup>688</sup> Cf. Buridan *QNE* I, 1: “Oportet igitur ut praeallegata verba Aristotelis sensum habeant respectivum, videlicet quod, si sicut dictum est nobilis et excellens est virtutum speculatio, adhuc multo melior et multo nobilior erit secundum virtutum operatio. Quid enim homini melius esse potest, quam quod ad felicitatem propriam perducatur.” – apud Korolec (1975), p. 57.

perfected, completes human happiness” (LXXVI 9). He therefore concludes afterwards that only perfected reason makes one happy (LXXVI 16). It is clear, then, that in that letter Seneca asserted that happiness consists in reason and wisdom.<sup>689</sup>

Buridan seems to be using Seneca to argue that happiness consists of a combination of contemplation and practical actions, stressing the role of reason and the contemplative life as the condition of possibility for morality and, consequently, for a happy life. In what follows in the text, however, he returns to the importance of prudence and ways in which it may be, in an improper sense, be called “wisdom”:

If we say, therefore, that in that collection of moral virtue and prudence, the most important virtue of the active soul is prudence, it follows, according to the characterization of a collection from its most important member, that every virtue of man insofar as he is active, is prudence. This is what Seneca intended by “reason,” and even by “wisdom,” since he always spoke about practical happiness, in which connection prudence is called “wisdom.” In this way Seneca also calls all the virtues of the soul “reasons,” and courage he says is “science.” Thus in his letter *Si vales* he asks, “What is wisdom?” And he replies that it is “always to wish the same and refuse the same” – and one may say that to wish and to refuse are acts of the will itself. And in the letter *Claranum* he expressly says that all virtues are reasons. And in the letter *Peperceram* he says, “Courage is not unwitting rashness, nor the love of dangers, nor an appetite for what is formidable: it is the science of distinguishing what is evil and what is not.”<sup>690</sup>

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<sup>689</sup> *QNE* X, 4: “Similiter Seneca valde saepe attribuit felicitatem sapientiae et rectae rationi; et saepe etiam virtutibus moralibus: verbi gratia in Epistola Agnosco dicit, quod non potest esse nisi rerum scientia contingat, et ars, per quam divina et humana noscantur, hoc est summum bonum, et per consequens felicitas. Et in Epistola quae incipit Epistola tua dicit, bona illa sunt vera, quae ratio dat solida, etc. Ideo dicit post, quod ratione nihil valentius est. Et in Epistola sequente, in homine optimum quid est? ratio haec recta, quae consummatam felicitatem hominis implevit: ideo concludit post quod sola ratio perfecta beatum facit; et sic manifestum est, quod in illa Epistola Seneca felicitatem consistere posuit in ratione et sapientia” (Latin text from Walsh 1966a, pp. 30-31; Trans. Kilcullen 2001, p. 543)

<sup>690</sup> Buridan, *QNE* X, 4. Trans. Walsh (1966a), p. 32: “Si igitur dicamus, quod in illa congregatione virtutis moralis et prudentiae, quae est virtus animae activae principalissimum est prudentia, sequitur quod secundum talem denominationem congregationis a principaliori, omnis virtus hominis secundum virtutem activam, ut activa est, est prudentia; quam intendebat Seneca per rationem, et etiam per sapientiam, quia semper ipse locutus est de felicitate practica, secundum quam prudentia dicitur sapientia. Sic etiam dicit Seneca omnes virtutes esse rationes, et fortitudinem esse scientiam: unde in Epistola, Si vales, quaerit quid est sapientia? Et respondet, quod semper idem velle atque idem nolle: licet velle et nolle sint actus ipsius voluntatis. Et in Epistola Claranum dicit expresse, quod omnes

While Buridan remarks that there are differences in nomenclature, regardless of what it is called, prudence retains its status as the most important practical (or “active”) virtue. But it is still below virtues that concern god and the intelligences. This is how we build up a theory of morality where “practical wisdom” is ranked high up, just below what concerns separate substances, as per Book I:

These words cannot be understood absolutely... Hitherto such a speculation would be much nobler and would perfect the internal intellect more than speculation about minerals or plants or animals, and even than speculation about geometry and arithmetic. But if, from that, we say that another one of the sciences is better and more honourable, in the *prohemium* of the *De Anima*, Aristotle says: because after god and the intelligences nothing in the world better is captured by the human soul, either the most excellent or the most wonderful, whose virtues of our soul and universal *habitus* and dispositions and operations in moral science are handled thoroughly. It is necessary so that this science is placed before all other even before the nobility of speculation.<sup>691</sup>

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virtutes sunt rationes. Et in Epistola Peperceram dicit, non est enim fortitudo inconsulta temeritas, nec periculis amor, nec formidabilium appetitio: scientia est distinguendi quod sit malum, et quod non sit.” (Buridan (1637), p. 868)

<sup>691</sup> “Haec autem verba non possunt simpliciter intelligi... adhuc esset talis speculatio multum nobilior et magis intellectum perficiens interius, quam speculatio de mineralibus vel plantis aut animalibus, quam etiam speculatio geometriae vel arithmeticae. Nam si scientiarum altera meliorem dicimus ex eo, quod meliorum quidem et honorabiliorum est, in prohemio De anima dicit Aristoteles: cum post Deum et intelligentias nihil in mundo melius anima rationali reperiatur sive excellentius aut mirabilius, cuius animae nostrae virtutes et universaliter habitus et dispositiones et operationes in morali scientia pertractantur, necesse est, ut ista scientia praeponatur aliis etiam nobilitate speculationis” (*QNE I*) – *apud* Korolec (1975), p. 57 (my translation).

### 8.3 The decline of prudence reconsidered

A recapitulation of the last section of the chapter on *prudentia* is now in order. There, I had described Bardout's argument explaining the decline of prudence after the Middle Ages. Now, considering a slightly broader picture on the hierarchy of virtues, we see that Buridan, unlike Odonis, is in full agreement with the preceding scholastic tradition, such as that of Albert, Aquinas and Burley. The first of these three who, as Stammkötter notes, did not have access to Aristotle's thought on intellectual virtues when he wrote his *De Bono*, and developed a sturdier ethical position when he was writing the *Super Ethica*, where he could finally consider that Aristotle

adheres to the hierarchy of intellectual virtues. At the end of the sixth book he summarizes again: the virtue of *sapientia* is always superior to *prudentia*. *Prudentia* does not use *sapientia* to achieve its goal in the right action - *prudentia* creates the conditions under which *sapientia* can be realized in the first place through the reasonable order of practical life: it does not redirect *sapientia* but redirects the actions to enable *sapientia*.<sup>692</sup>

With these considerations on the clear demarcation of the areas of operation of prudence and wisdom, we see that prudence can then keep its role as a very important virtue in spite of the fact that it gets demoted later in the history of philosophy, for reasons that are beyond those motivating medieval authors. It is only when modern considerations arise that, perhaps more insidiously than Bardout would have us believe, prudence "disappears" from the philosophical landscape and ends up losing its role as the primary virtue (and literally loses its role as *φρόνησις/prudentia*) and finally

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<sup>692</sup> Stammkötter (2001), p. 306: "Dabei hält er an der Hierarchie der intellektuellen Tugenden fest. Am Ende des sechsten Buches hebt er zusammenfassend noch einmal hervor: die Tugend der *sapientia* ist der *prudentia* stets übergeordnet. Die *prudentia* gebraucht nicht die *sapientia*, um ihr Ziel im richtigen Handeln zu erreichen - die *prudentia* schafft durch die vernünftige Ordnung des praktischen Lebens überhaupt erst die Bedingungen, unter denen die *sapientia* realisierbar ist: Sie leitet nicht die *sapientia*, sondern leitet die Handlungen, um die *sapientia* zu ermöglichen." (my translation)

becomes, in our current use in modern languages, associated with an idea of caution, dismissed as a minor virtue.

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSION

The aim of this dissertation was to draw an outline of John Buridan's views about the intellectual virtues and to jump-start discussions of Buridan's commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. To that end, my goal in the previous chapters was twofold: In Part I, which was more expositive, I aimed to make some parts of Buridan's *Ethics* commentary more accessible to readers by providing a working edition of the Latin text accompanied by its English translation, and followed by brief exegetical comments. I proposed what I hope is a first step in many to come in the effort of rendering Buridan's *QNE* more easily available to the contemporary reader, especially one who is not a scholar of Latin medieval philosophy, or one not yet well-versed in the Buridan corpus. As such, this was a propaedeutic project, as well as a contribution to the growing Buridanian scholarship. Part II, being more analytical, intended to provide a more systematic overview of each of the five intellectual virtues Buridan examines by comparing his views in the *QNE* with those we find in other works of his, as well as with the works of authors by whom he was inspired – regardless of whether this inspiration was one of consonance or dissonance.

## 9.1 Outcomes and avenues for future research

In order to achieve the goals described above, I carried out, at least in part, the six usual operations performed by the historian of philosophy as described by Panaccio,<sup>693</sup> namely: reading, compiling information, textual edition, translation, setting up an explicative narrative, and doctrinal reconstruction. The first four operations are most evident in part one of this dissertation. The latter two spill over both parts. After the recondite expositions of part one, part two (chapter 4-9) is where the more fine-spun aspects of my research appear.

In chapter 4, I have shown how Buridan is inserted within a tradition that attributed a certain minor role to craft when compared to the other intellectual virtues. This may look like a trivial point to the medieval debate and an issue of lesser importance in contemporary debate, especially when compared to science; nevertheless, as I have alluded to in that chapter, I think this is a fruitful area for investigation, and one which could be linked to many contemporary debates concerning technology (particularly novel technology) and its uses.

The discussion on *intellectus* is a challenging one to which contribute with something original, considering the vast existing scholarship. As I have made clear, much of my analysis in chapter 5 has benefitted from the work undertaken by Economos.<sup>694</sup> But most of this existing research focuses on the intellect as a faculty or on intellectual acts. Even though the many meanings of *intellectus* cannot always be clearly separated (hence my choice not to always translate the term, in order to retain some of its inherent ambiguity), it is still imperative that we distinguish the acts of *intellectus* from the

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<sup>693</sup> Panaccio (2019), p. 72.

<sup>694</sup> More recently still, Diego Espinoza has added to this scholarship with his 2021 master's thesis entitled "John Buridan on *intellectus*." While his thesis deals with *intellectus* as a virtue, *intellectus* and knowledge tend to be analyzed, in Buridanian scholarship, more as a power of the soul than as a virtue.

*habitus*, which is what I have called attention to in chapter 5 – and this not only in the *QNE* but also in other works, such as the *QDA*, so as to avoid the pitfalls of misinterpretation. Most of the scholarship on *intellectus*, however, including Economos (2009) and Espinoza (2021), as well as the many contributions on Buridan’s philosophy of mind from Klima’s (2017) anthology, usually only mention the *QNE* in passing. This is completely understandable and justified both by their authors’ research programmes and by the massive amount of work the consideration of Buridan’s *QNE*, in its current state, would add to the researcher’s agenda. It is in this sense that I hope that the work I have done here, incomplete as it may be, might serve as a stepping stone for further research.

A significant part of this dissertation was dedicated to knowledge, the subject of chapter 6, partly because this is a subject dear to scholars of medieval philosophy and one which has received a lot of attention, and I could not do without relying on the extensive, thorough work put forward in the last few decades. What was crucial for this chapter, just as it was for the preceding one, was to establish a clear line between *scientia* taken as an act and *scientia* taken as a *habitus* (and, thus, a virtue). And it is by focusing on the latter that my account can be set apart from the previous scholarship. The goal of my chapter was to shed some light onto this latter aspect of studies on *scientia*. For that, the discussion of *QNE* VI, 12 (which focuses on those different conceptions of *scientia* and defines *scientia* as a virtue more precisely) was studied alongside *QNE* VI, 6 (which deals with what can be known). This raised some difficulties which were particularly interesting to my analysis, such as the case where the object of knowledge ceases to exist – as would have been the case for 17<sup>th</sup>-century people who had the knowledge that “dodos are flightless birds,” for instance. Here, the most relevant step was to situate my examinations of these issues within the broader context of Buridan’s supposition theory. By proceeding in this manner, drawing on already-established scholarship but with a slight shift in focus, I have shown that

considering “*scientia*” in its equivocality (i.e., in its strictest and less strict senses) is not detrimental to its study; on the contrary, it helps clarify the articulation between ontology and logic, on the one hand, and moral philosophy, on the other. From a broader point of view, this opens the door to the possibility of labeling Buridan’s *Nicomachean Ethics* commentary as a nominalist commentary, but in a much stronger sense than that proposed, for instance, by Walsh and Zupko.<sup>695</sup>

Chapter 7 deals with another issue on which a lot has been written. Buridan’s account of prudence, however, merited a more up-to-date and more systematic analysis, and this is why I have drawn from the previously developed analysis of moral logic but I have also compared Buridan’s interpretation of prudence to that of his Dominican predecessors as well as to those of other *magistri artium* and Ockham’s, and we see how much influence each of them might have had on Buridan. What is particularly worthy of note here is Buridan’s affinity with the arts masters, which is not as played up as his propinquity to Ockham, but just as important if we want to fully understand why Buridan advances the arguments he does. This chapter, along with chapter 8, on wisdom, are articulated with one another very closely. This is no accident: Aristotle follows a similar procedure in *EN VI* (especially in chapters 7, 12, and 13). My account of wisdom, however, is in no way as comprehensive as Aristotle’s, but I do restate the Philosopher’s question of which is the best virtue, and I pit prudence against wisdom according to Buridan and some of his contemporaries and near-contemporaries, as well as with the philosophical tradition that followed. We then see a tendency leading to prudence fading out of the contemporary discussion and being replaced by a preoccupation about wisdom in its multiple iterations (practical and theoretical wisdom, for instance), none of which perfectly map onto this historical notion of *prudentia* or φρόνησις.

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<sup>695</sup> E.g., Walsh (1966b) and Zupko (2018).

On that note, we see that now that Buridan's views of the intellectual virtues have been exposed and discussed, they could benefit from being compared to views held both by his contemporaries and by our contemporaries. In particular, with regard to other medieval authors, a closer comparison to Odonis is in order, so as to delve deeper into the parallels pointed out by Walsh, which I have summarized in chapter 1. This work was not fully undertaken here for reasons similar to the ones I presented in chapter 1 for limiting my focus on a few questions – instead of working on all – of Buridan's *QNE* VI: Odonis' own *Ethics* commentary is another gargantuan work, for which a critical edition and translation into a modern language are still wanting. But comparisons between Buridan's and Odonis' views of intellectual virtues are very likely the most potentially fruitful step to follow from this dissertation.

When it comes to a comparison between Buridan's virtue theory and contemporary virtue theory, both more work and more caution are required, and this is because we first need to assess to what extent medieval and contemporary theories of intellectual virtues are commensurable with, comparable with or aptly translatable into one another.

## 9.2 Circling back to Duhem

Pierre Duhem came up in the chapter 1, when I explained that he was responsible, at least in part, for sparking interest in Buridan's philosophy and thus kicking off a revival of "Buridanism." In reading Duhem's work, we can see how important he was for sparking interest in Buridan's theory without necessarily being "Buridanian," in any relevant sense of that term. This inspires a reflection on the application of philosophical

labels and brings us to an exemplary cautionary tale, where Duhem comes up again, but for very different reasons.

According to some scholars,<sup>696</sup> Duhem “could be considered a virtue epistemologist *avant la lettre*.”<sup>697</sup> These accounts consider contemporary virtue epistemology a philosophical movement according to which knowledge, understanding and other successful cognitive “graspings” rely on the intellectual virtues. Focusing on Duhem’s statement that scientists should “possess qualities such as rectitude, probity, impartiality and ‘detachment from all interest and all passions,’”<sup>698</sup> van Dongen and Paul argue<sup>699</sup> that Duhem seems to have been interested in virtues such as those described, for instance, by Zagzebski<sup>700</sup> and Baehr<sup>701</sup>: “honesty, impartiality, and fairness.”<sup>702</sup> But none of this is very controversial, and similar ideas were also espoused by many of Duhem’s contemporaries. So, in order to decide whether or not Duhem stood out from his cohort, so to speak, we need to examine what is meant in this attempted labeling of Duhem as a virtue epistemologist. According to van Dongen and Paul,

Virtue epistemologists and historians of science who have begun applying the category of epistemic virtues generally agree that epistemic virtues are virtues *tout court*. Epistemic virtues [...] require cultivation of the character traits deemed necessary for scientific work.<sup>703</sup>

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<sup>696</sup> Namely, Stump, D. (2007), Ivanova (2010), and Kidd (2011).

<sup>697</sup> van Dongen and Paul, 2017, p. 1.

<sup>698</sup> Duhem, 1991/1915, p. 43.

<sup>699</sup> van Dongen and Herman Paul, 2017, pp. 1-10.

<sup>700</sup> Cf. Zagzebski (1996).

<sup>701</sup> Cf. Baehr (2011).

<sup>702</sup> van Dongen and Paul (2017), p. 1.

<sup>703</sup> van Dongen and Paul (2017), p. 2.

But, for Duhem, this was all under consideration in a context where certain political issues, especially the French-German rivalry of World War I, were tainting philosophers' and scientists' intuitions about what counted as an epistemic virtue: a very French *esprit de finesse* was considered a virtue for Duhem,<sup>704</sup> while the industriousness and meticulousness he associated with the Germans were not.<sup>705</sup> This nationalistic motivation might give us pause: was there a theoretical, more deeply philosophical motivation behind Duhem's interest in enumerating candidates for epistemic virtues or was this merely a political provocation?

I do not have a definitive answer to this question and, as I had mentioned, this is a cautionary tale. Just as it is imprudent to hastily try to label Duhem as a "virtue epistemologist," it is also unwise to heedlessly apply these labels to medieval philosophers, including Buridan, and we should glance at a few reasons for this.

### 9.3 Five intellectual virtues vs. many epistemic virtues

In their entry on virtue epistemology for the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Turri, Alfano and Greco claim that there are two central claims common to all contemporary virtue epistemology (VE) approaches, namely:

First, they view epistemology as a normative discipline. Second, they view intellectual agents and communities as the primary focus of epistemic evaluation, with a focus on the intellectual virtues and vices embodied in and expressed by these agents and communities.<sup>706</sup>

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<sup>704</sup> Duhem (1915/1991), p. 52.

<sup>705</sup> Duhem (1915/1991), pp. 116-118.

<sup>706</sup> Turri, Alfano and Greco (2017), §1.

This attempt at finding a common ground between different versions of virtue epistemology paints it with very broad strokes, of course, but is enough for us to at least get a sense as to the extent to which we can translate the medieval debate to contemporary terms. The view that epistemology is a normative discipline is compatible with Buridan's approach. It is, in fact, generally compatible with Aristotelian approaches, or "idealized epistemology," as Pasnau puts it.<sup>707</sup> In this sense, Buridan seems aligned with the most radically normative view of contemporary VE, according to which "epistemological terms (or concepts) [...] cannot be adequately defined or fully explained in purely non-normative vocabulary."<sup>708</sup>

In addition to this, we have the second criterion for characterizing VE, focusing on the agent or community of cognition and their virtues and vices. Surely, Buridan does not provide a philosophical account focused on community, or anything resembling a "social epistemology," but when he describes intellectual acts and dispositions, he describes them in relation to one agent's intellectual powers, so, again, we seem very close to VE.

Without delving too deeply into the question as to the causes for disagreement among different versions of VE, I would like to focus on one of the main ones, which is about what sorts of virtues count as intellectual virtues. Again, as the broadest, most-encompassing definition would have it, for contemporary VE, "intellectual virtues are characteristics that promote intellectual flourishing, or which make for an excellent cognizer."<sup>709</sup> This seems to be in tune with Buridan's Aristotelian claim that "virtue

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<sup>707</sup> Pasnau (2013).

<sup>708</sup> Turri, Alfano and Greco (2017), §1.

<sup>709</sup> Turri, Alfano and Greco (2017), §3.

perfects the one who has it and makes their work good.” (*QNE VI*, 8 §8) The points of dissent, however, soon become apparent.

There are two major camps in VE, namely reliabilism and responsibilism. Virtue reliabilists want to include some faculties (intuition, memory, perception) among the intellectual virtues.<sup>710</sup> This would be in direct conflict with the Aristotelian definition of virtue, to which Buridan subscribes, as dispositions, and not faculties nor affections, of the soul. Virtue responsibilists, on the other hand, want to include what they call character traits or “trait virtues” (such as conscientiousness or open-mindedness) among the intellectual virtues. Again, this poses a problem, for it obliterates the distinction established by Buridan in *QNE VI*, 1: virtues of character, according to the Picardian arts master, belong to the appetite, and their main result is not the improvement of our intellect or of our intellectual activities.

A trait common to contemporary VE approaches, thus, is that they would like to expand the list of intellectual virtues, either by the addition of “faculty virtues” or virtues of character. Part of the reason for this is that, while still trying to account for intellectual achievements such as knowledge, understanding and wisdom, VE has radically different definitions of these virtues or “achievements.” I am using the term achievement here in reference to Greco’s work.<sup>711</sup> Greco understands “achievement” as possibly being equivalent to powers,<sup>712</sup> which, as we have seen, the Aristotelian account of virtue rejects. On the medieval account, “S believes the truth because S believes from intellectual ability” cannot be reduced to “S believes the truth because S believes from intellectual power,” because believing is itself the result of a cognitive

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<sup>710</sup> Turri, Alfano and Greco (2017), §1.

<sup>711</sup> Along with Greco’s lines in *Achieving knowledge* (2010), I think that intellectual virtues represent some sort of cognitive achievement, as opposed to a kind of success derived from luck. (Greco, p. 4) Greco claims and goes on to argue that “knowledge is a kind of success from ability,” (Greco, p. 3) and so is understanding.

<sup>712</sup> Greco (2010), p. 10.

power, and the power itself cannot guarantee truth without there being an acquired disposition on the part of the knower. So, to some extent, the medieval account could be construed, just like Greco's, a form of agent reliabilism. But Greco's terminology is radically different from the standard Aristotelian and medieval terminology. He takes "knowledge" in the contemporary, post-Gettier sense, including the notable distinction between knowing that and knowing how, and he aims to investigate "knowledge itself, our concept of knowledge, [...and] the term "knowledge" and its cognates."<sup>713</sup> What first sets this enterprise apart from medieval accounts is the post-Gettier attempt to define knowledge, and then to set it apart from understanding and wisdom. First and foremost, because medieval philosophers, for the most part, relied on Aristotelian definitions of those three virtues, and only went on to articulate how they came about, as dispositions, from their respective acts and intellectual operations. Contemporary VE, on the other hand, is asking questions about whether understanding is a species of knowledge,<sup>714</sup> or whether it is more valuable than knowledge<sup>715</sup> – which probably would have had someone like Buridan completely dumbfounded.

This leads us to a question about the goal of a "virtue-based" philosophy or epistemology. Buridan's task, as it is inserted in a broader ethical project,<sup>716</sup> could be understood – as Buridan himself announced in the prologue of his *QNE* – as an attempt to intellectually "grasp" the good and true and thus to do good and become good. Investigating what virtue is and how it operates is a project which is carried out both for the sake of the speculation and for the sake of achieving happiness and beatitude.

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<sup>713</sup> Although some of this may be far from the medievalist understanding of knowledge, what it has in common with it (and with the ancient understanding as well, for that matter), is the fact that knowledge is considered a superior state to mere opinion: "There is supposed to be something good or praiseworthy about the person who knows, as opposed to the person who has only opinion."<sup>713</sup> But there is nothing novel about this and this is not enough to approximate the two theories.

<sup>714</sup> E.g., Grimm (2006).

<sup>715</sup> E.g., Kvanvig (2009).

<sup>716</sup> Or an even larger, widely political project, with ethics being just one of its three foundations (politics and economics being the other two).

It is a very agent-centred approach. Contemporary VE, on the other hand, even though it presents itself as a much more agent-centred enterprise than other contemporary epistemologies, is very performance-oriented.<sup>717</sup> This is a difference in focal point, and an important one at that. Ultimately, contemporary VE represents a reinterpretation of the *Theaetetus* problem concerning the nature of knowledge,<sup>718</sup> as well as a revival of the question about how knowledge differs from opinion or true belief by chance, the so-called “problem of the *Meno*,” i.e., the problem of the value of knowledge. These radically different goals lead to different philosophical projects.

Throughout this dissertation, I have used the terms “intellectual virtue” and “epistemic virtue” interchangeably. However, in light of the contemporary debate, we might ask ourselves whether the two expressions can indeed be considered to be equivalent to one another. While it is true that, in general, they refer to the same or at least similar kinds of dispositions, it is possible that the differences in scope between the medieval and contemporary debate exert an influence on how those expressions are used in a more technical sense. Although one could argue that one of the expressions is tracking the medieval discussion more closely (with “intellectual virtue” tracking the Latin “*intellectus*”), while the contemporary term simply refers to the Greek ἐπιστήμη, this does not mean that contemporary theory is in any way closer to this Aristotelian source. After all, in *EN* II and throughout *EN* VI, Aristotle actually refers to the virtues of the intellect as ἀρεταί διανοητικάί, i.e., mental virtues, or virtues of the mind. But note that the focus of contemporary VE is on the act or the result of the operations of the mind, while my focus throughout this study, and one which I was very careful about attending to, following Buridan, was the dispositional aspect, more closely related to where these virtues got habituated and the powers they were perfecting. Although this shift in terminological use might be due to various reasons and does not necessarily track a

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<sup>717</sup> Cf. Sosa (2011), esp. ch. 4.

<sup>718</sup> Cf. Sosa (2011), ch. 1.

shift in intention or method, I think it warrants consideration. In the medieval debate we have examined, the intellectual virtues aid the intellect (or the “mind”) in its inclination to the truth and they are virtues of the intellect because they act on and perfect the intellect (*QNE* VI, 1), with each of the virtues acting on one intellect (factive, active, speculative). The contemporary debate on virtue theory, however, seems less focused on the “seat” of the virtues (since they are no longer operating according to a paradigm that separates appetite and intellect, for instance) and the faculty they are intended to perfect, but the focus is, instead, on the cognitive acts and how these can be warranted and justified through, for example, a disposition of the agent of cognition. The focus, nevertheless, is not on the perfection of the faculty of intellect, but on the process of knowledge itself, hence these virtues being *epistemic* virtues.

Although medieval theories of cognition and VE can both be construed as virtue theories, even upon a slightly closer inspection, it is hard to see a clear correspondence between the two. Even if the terms they employ coincide, they are not used in the same manner. To be sure, this does not mean that it would be impossible to draw parallels between medieval and contemporary accounts of intellectual/epistemic virtues and that the two are absolutely incommensurable. But we can tell their goals are quite different and understanding one through the other requires additional reconstructive steps, to properly transpose terms and concepts without entailing inane conclusions. However, to borrow from Michael Ende’s cunning way of introducing adventures yet to come in his *Die unendliche Geschichte*, “[...] *das ist eine andere Geschichte und soll ein andermal erzählt werden.*”

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