PROEMIUM TO WISDOM AND REASON

Wisdom in human knowledge is the highest or greatest perfection of reason. It is also acquired by a most difficult use of reason. And in these two ways, wisdom and reason are connected.

Aristotle's *Proemium to Wisdom* and Shakespeare's *Exhortation to Use Reason* (which also contains a definition of reason as reason) illuminate and confirm each other because of the above connection of wisdom and reason. Thomas Aquinas in his *Proemium to the Nicomachean Ethics* has pointed out one important connection between wisdom and reason. We learn, he says, in Aristotle's *Proemium to Wisdom* that it belongs to the wise to order. (*Sapientis est ordinare.*) And the reason for this, as Thomas there explains, is that wisdom is the highest perfection of reason to which is private looking for and knowing order. Shakespeare's definition of reason is completed by reference to its *looking before and after* and order is a before and after. That it belongs most all to the wise to order and direct others is very much in harmony, then, with wisdom being the highest perfection of reason.

In the second book of *Wisdom* or *First Philosophy*, the second book After (*Meta*) the (*ta*) Books in Natural Philosophy (*phusika*), we learn from Aristotle that the consideration of truth belongs most of all to the wise man. This is also in harmony with wisdom being the highest perfection of reason for it is private to reason to seek and know what is true.

And since Aristotle shows in other ways than by wisdom being the highest perfection of reason that the wise most of all order and consider truth, wisdom is also a witness to its being proper or private to reason to know order and consider what is true.

Because of the connection of these four, the love of wisdom and the love of reason and the love of order and the love of truth are inseparable. How could one love wisdom and not love the reason which it perfects? Or how could one love reason and not love it highest perfection? It would be like loving the body and not loving health, or loving health but not loving the body. And one could not love wisdom, which is most of all a knowledge of truth, without loving truth. And one could not love truth without loving reason whereby we are able to know truth. And one could not love reason without loving order which reason strives to know and make.

Order and truth are not the only things that connect wisdom and reason. But a more complete consideration of their connection and mutual illumination comes after a careful study of Aristotle's *Proemium to Wisdom* and Shakespeare's *Exhortation to Use Reason*.

To whom belongs the Exhortation to use Reason? Who should make such an exhortation or urging? Does it belong to the practical philosopher or the looking philosopher or the logician?

There is reason to think that it is appropriate to all three. The practical philosopher is writing for those who want to live in accord with reason. If someone does not want to live in accord with reason, he is not someone to hear lectures in ethics and the rest of practical philosophy. Therefore, it much belongs to the practical philosopher to urge us to use our reason.

But logic is the art whereby reason is directed in its acts. Logic is the art that teaches us how to use our reason. Hence, it would seem to belong to the logician to urge us to use our reason. If we are not intent upon using our reason, why study logic?

But the looking philosopher aims at the perfection of our reason which is acquired by the use of our reason. Hence, it is relevant to him to urge us to use our reason, especially since it requires a long and difficult use of our reason to perfect it.

Although it is not out of place for the practical philosopher or the logician to urge us to use our reason, we have placed the readings pertaining to the exhortation to use reason under wisdom. For wisdom is the highest perfection of reason and it belongs to the wise man to direct all others.

The consideration of reason belongs both to the study of the soul and to wisdom. Since reason is a part or power or ability of a soul, the consideration of reason is found in the third book *About the Soul* (in Latin, the *De anima*). But since reason is an understanding and immaterial power, it is also considered in wisdom which is about immaterial things. Consider this text from Thomas:

> Non ergo propter hoc solum indiget intellectus possibilis humanus phantasmate ut acquirat intelligibiles species, sed etiam ut eas quodam modo in phantasmatibus inspiciat. Et hoc est quod dicitur in tertio *de Anima.* Species igitur in phantasmatibus intellectivum intelligit. Huius autem ratio est, quia operatio proportionatur virtuti et essentiae: intellectivum autem hominis est in sensitivo, sicut dicitur in tertio *de Anima*. Et ideo propria operatio eius est intelligere intelligibilia in phantasmatibus, sicut intellectus substantiae separatae operatio est intelligere res secundum se intellectas; et ideo huius est causa reddenda a metaphysico, ad quem pertinet considerare diversos gradus intellectuum.[1]

But we shall also place under this heading of wisdom and reason the papers concerning the definition of reason. For they are connected with, or a part of, the exhortation to use reason.

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[1] *In librum De Memoria et Reminiscentia Commentarium*, Lectio II, nn. 316-317