Ks. dr Adam Machowski

Kolegium Jagiellońskie – Toruńska Szkoła Wyższa, Toruń

PEDAGOGICAL PRUDENCE AS A ATTITUDE OF TEACHER AND EDUCATOR. THE REINTERPRETATION OF THE ARISTOTELIAN-THOMIST CONCEPT OF THE PRUDENTIAE POLITICAE IN THE CONTEXT OF PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

Keywords: prudence, pedagogical prudence, political prudence**Abstract**

In this article, I would like to attempt to reinterpret political prudence – a key skill for political action according to classical philosophy (Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas) – as a useful and even necessary skill for educators and teachers. This reinterpretation is made possible primarily by the fact that a significant part of the political works of classical authors is concerned with the upbringing and education of children and adolescents.

**Introduction –
politics as education – from political
prudence to pedagogical prudence**

In this article I would like to attempt to reinterpret political prudence – a key skill for political action according to classical philosophy (Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas) – as a useful and even necessary skill for educators and teachers. This reinterpretation is made pos-

sible primarily by the fact that a significant part of the political works of classical authors is concerned with the issues of upbringing and education of children and adolescents. This was the case with the Platonic State (Plato 2018) and Aristotelian Politics (Aristotle 2008, lib. VIII). Education was simply understood as an important and even the most important part of public activity (Benner 2008, pp. 32–36; Stępkowski and Kamińska 2016, pp. 127–137). Socrates himself em-

phasized this pedagogical task of politics, considering it the essence of public action. “And he seems to me to be the only one of the public men [in gr. πολιτικῶν] who begins in the right way; for the right way is to take care of the young men first, to make them as good as possible, just as a good husbandman will naturally take care of the young plants first and afterwards of the rest” (Plato 2015, 2, cd).

Therefore, if an important part of politics is pedagogical activity, it seems justified to describe the main political virtue – prudence as a skill at least useful, or even necessary for educators. Hence the idea to put this virtue in the context of pedagogy. Prudentia pedagogica – an attempt to define what it is and whether it can be justified by texts devoted to political prudence, which we find in classical thought, in its Aristotelian-Thomist current – is the subject matter of this paper.

It is true that Aristotle himself did not use the term prudentia with direct reference to teachers, but one of his greatest commentators – Thomas Aquinas did at least ones. He did so in the Summa Theologiae, writing about the necessity of continuous learning, also in the case of teachers (this is his answer to the objection quoted below that prudentia praeceptiva refers only to teachers, and therefore they do not need to be instructed themselves – docilitas) – “prudentia ad magistros pertinere” (“Prudence belongs to teachers”): “Praeterea, docilitas ad discipulum pertinet. Sed prudentia, cum sit praeceptiva, magis videtur ad magistros pertinere, qui etiam praeceptores dicuntur. Ergo docilitas non est pars prudentiae” (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II–II, q. 49, a. 3, arg. 3). The above text, which is somehow key for our reflection in English, is “Objection 3: Docility belongs to a student (discipulus). But since prudence gives precepts (est praeceptiva), it seems instead to belong to teachers. Therefore, docility is not a part of prudence”. Later, we will come back to this issue, which Aquinas will resolve by indicating that a prudent teacher will have to seek for the advice of other people (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II–II, q. 49, a. 3, corp. and ad. 3).

But at the beginning of this paper it is necessary to explain the great role of Thomas Aquinas as the one who most fully developed the moral and political doctrine of Aristotle. Therefore, in this article I will refer to his teachings on the virtue of prudence (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II–II, qq. 47–53). What is more, Aquinas himself in his texts would refer repeatedly and directly to the works of Aristotle (he calls him the Philosopher by the capital P – if we find the term Philosophus in the text,

it refers to the Greek sage. Although in Aquinas’ works we can also find other Stagirite commentators – e.g. Macrobius or references to other ancient authors – e.g. Roman – of Tullius Cicero, it is undoubtedly Aristotle and his Politics and Nicomachean Ethics that remained for Thomas Aquinas the most important source of philosophical teachings about morality and prudence.

Individual prudence *vis-a-vis* pedagogical prudence

The possibility of pedagogical depiction of political prudence is already indicated by the very method of classification of particular types of prudence by their purpose. And so, Aristotle, followed by Thomas Aquinas, distinguished three types of prudence – personal prudence (prudentia individualis), economic prudence (prudentia economica) and political prudence (prudentia politica) – with pedagogical prudence being of the third kind. After all, the work of a pedagogue concerns not only the individual formation of students or their functioning in the family, but it is work for the entire social or political community. Aquinas states: “As was explained above (S.Th., I–II, q. 54, a. 2), the species of habits are diversified by the diversity of their objects, which has to do with their formal character. And as was explained above (S.Th., I–II, q. 1, intro.). The formal character of everything that is ordered toward an end has to do with the end. And so species of habits have to be diversified by their relation to diverse ends. Now (a) the proper good of a single individual (bonum proprium unius), (b) the good of the family (bonum familiae), and (c) the good of the city and of the kingdom (bonum civitatis et regni) are diverse ends. Hence, it must be the case that prudence differs in species according to the differences among these ends – so that, namely, there is (a) prudence simply speaking, (b) economic prudence, which is ordered toward the common good of a household or family, and (c) political prudence, which is ordered toward the common good of a city or kingdom” (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II–II, q. 47, a. 11, corp.). The most important in this division of the goals of human action is the last one mentioned – the good of the political community and it is this good that should be a special interest to educators and pedagogues.

The goal of a pedagogue or teacher definitely goes beyond the individual’s development or preparation

for family life. It is oriented to the good of the whole community. Therefore, for example, Aristotle pointed out that education directly depends on the political system. In his *Politics* he states: “for education ought to be adapted to the particular form of constitution, since the particular character belonging to each constitution both guards the constitution generally and originally establishes it – for instance the democratic spirit promotes democracy and the oligarchic spirit oligarchy; and the best spirit always causes a better constitution” (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1337 a, 11–18). In this way, educators and teachers have a great impact on shaping social and political reality in a given community and their work is to be included in the construction of a joint political project.

Prudence being focused on the common good is something necessary because individual prudence is insufficient. The care for the private good cannot replace the care for the good of the community. Extremely individualistic thinking would deny not only pedagogical ideals, but also well-understood concern for one's own good. “Again, this way of thinking is incompatible with right reason, which judges that the common good is better than the good of an individual. Therefore, since it belongs to prudence to deliberate, judge, and command in an upright manner concerning those things that lead to the appropriate end, it is clear that prudence has to do not only with the private good of an individual man (*bonum privatum unius hominis*), but also with the common good of the multitude (*bonum commune multitudinis*)” (Thomas Aquinas, *S.Th.*, II–II, q. 47, a. 10, corp.). Properly understood prudence, even of a single person, is therefore oriented towards the good of the entire human community. Even more so when it comes to the public function of a pedagogue or teacher.

But also, for this reason classical authors distinguished a special kind of prudence which was essentially and directly focused on social good. Hence, pedagogical prudence is more valuable than prudence that guides the life of only one man or one's family. Furthermore, in the understanding of Aquinas, based on ancient thought, even proper concern for one's own good or the good of the family primarily requires the care for the good of the whole community: “One who seeks the common good of the multitude also seeks his own good as a consequence – and this for two reasons: First, because his own good cannot exist without the common good either of the family or of the city

or kingdom. This is why Valerius Maximus says of the ancient Romans, ‘They preferred to be paupers in a rich empire than rich men in a poor empire’. Second, because, given that a man is a part of a household and of a city, he must think about what his own good is on the basis of his being prudent with respect to the good of the multitude. For the good disposition of a part has to do with its relation to the whole, since, as Augustine says in *Confessiones* 3, ‘Any part that is not congruent with its whole is unseemly’” (Thomas Aquinas, *S.Th.*, II–II, q. 47, a. 10, ad. 2). The thought of the Roman author, whom Thomas Aquinas refers to, demonstrates the prudence of some ancient Roman leaders who, caring for the poor, built the unity of the civic community. The Latin original text by Valerius reads: “*patriae enim rem unus quisque, non suam augere properabat pauperque in divite quam dives in paupere imperio versari malebat*” (Valerius Maximus, *Fact. Et Dict. Memor.*, Lib. IV, 4, 9). In turn, Augustine, quoted by Aquinas, writes about the need to respect the customs and laws of the community by its members or visitors. These customs cannot be violated, because it is a horror: “so that a thing agreed upon, and confirmed, by custom or law of any city or nation, may not be violated at the lawless pleasure of any, whether native or foreigner. For any part which harmoniseth not with its whole, is offensive” – in English. In Latin it reads: “*Ut pactum inter se civitatis aut gentis consuetudine vel lege firmatum nulla civis aut peregrini libidine violetur. Turpis enim omnis pars universo suo non congruens*” (Augustine, *Confessiones*, lib. III, cap. 8). This interpretation goes hand in hand with the interpretation of prudence as a pedagogical virtue, showing the need to teach a student to live in a social community, also when it comes to his individual life.

But when it comes to political prudence, the common good is clearly indicated as the goal of our actions. And here you can also successfully apply the texts of classical authors talking about this kind of prudence to the pedagogical thinking. The pedagogue's concern is the common good of the whole society. “This sort of prudence is said to be in accord with the general notion of prudence, viz., Insofar as it is a certain sort of right reason with respect to what is doable, but it is called ‘political prudence’ insofar as it is ordered toward the common good” (Thomas Aquinas, *S.Th.*, II–II, q. 47, a. 11, ad. 1). Today, no doubt, this is the task facing a pedagogue or teacher, which is why political prudence which we encounter in the writings of Aristotle

or Thomas Aquinas we can confidently define as pedagogical prudence. “By prudence in the general sense a man governs himself in relation to his own proper good, whereas by political prudence of the sort we are speaking of here a man governs himself in relation to the common good” (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II–II, q. 47, a. 11, ad. 1). A man who is guided by such prudence directs himself and his actions towards the common good. Pedagogical prudence as a sort of the political prudence also coordinates other people’s purposes to achieve social goals.

Prudence as a virtue of educators and teachers

We have already explained the need for this kind of prudence that would guide the common good and that it should characterize educators, and now we will try to answer the question what exactly it is. When we look at the features that distinguish political prudence from the individual one, we will notice that while individual prudence consists in ordering oneself to do the right thing, political prudence is the ability to properly advise and command others. This is also the case with pedagogical prudence. A teacher is the one who directs and coordinates the efforts of others. As Aquinas writes: “prudence gives precepts (*est praeceptiva*), it seems instead to belong to teachers” (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II–II, q. 49, a. 3, arg. 3).

Aquinas recognizes that ordering, or more strictly speaking, commanding, is one of his main activities as a teacher. While describing this, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas focused on the description of political functions, but we could successfully place the figure of a teacher here as the one who commands. “As was explained above (a. 8), prudence gives precepts. But commanding belongs only to rulers and not to servants or to subjects. Therefore, prudence exists only in rulers and not in subjects” (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II–II, q. 47, a. 12, arg. 3). In this way, teacher’s prudence is clearly distinguished from student’s prudence.

Attributing prudence to teachers does not mean that they should not be shaped by pupils or students reporting to them. Thomas’s response following Aristotle is different and puts forward two arguments for political prudence in ordinary citizens. First, one who participates in executing orders and conducting process needs the virtue of prudence relative to his mental

capacities. “Prudence exists in reason, and it belongs to reason to rule and to govern well. And so to the extent that each individual participates in ruling and governing, it is appropriate for him to have reason and prudence” (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II–II, q. 47, a. 12, corp.). In pedagogy, this would mean that as students and pupils increase their ability to participate in the educational process, they are called to shape the virtues of prudence. The second argument is that it is reasonableness that call people who are subject to orders to be prudent. “However, since each man, insofar as he is rational, has some participation in ruling according to the judgment of his reason, it is appropriate for him to have prudence” (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II–II, q. 47, a. 12, corp.). This reasoning, as it develops, allows you to become more involved in the educational process, but also allows you to learn to control yourself. “Through prudence a man not only commands others but commands himself as well, viz., insofar as reason is said to command the lower powers” (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II–II, q. 47, a. 12, ad. 3). This path to self-control will later enable more and more participation in what belongs to the common good by increasing the share of one’s own mind in making one’s own decisions by controlling emotions, desires or whims.

Of course, this kind of prudence of the student or pupil will still be different from the teacher’s skill. The latter, after all, plans specific tasks, plans the entire educational process, while the pupils carry out individual tasks. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, on the one hand compares political prudence to the work of an architect who designs all reality, and on the other hand, prudence of subjects to the work of contractors, artists or craftsmen who are responsible for specific and assigned tasks: “as *Ethics*, book 6 explains, it is clear that prudence exists in the ruler in the manner of the architectural art, whereas in the subjects prudence exists in the manner of an art or craft that belongs to one who works with his hands” (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II–II, q. 47, a. 12, corp.). The pupil or student by performing their tasks becomes an active part of the entire process planned and directed by the educator. The English translation of the Greek text of *Nicomachean Ethics* loses this architectural connotations of political prudence, while in the Greek original – political prudence is just so-called “architectural prudence” – “ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ φρόνησις” (Aristotle 2008, 1241b), which is primarily justified by designing functions of politics, while individual prudence concerns

only your own actions: “because it is only they who perform actions, like the workmen in an industry”. This, in turn, fits prudence as a pedagogical virtue in the process of scheduling the activities of pupils and students very well.

Even more so, because in the case of political prudence, and therefore in our pedagogical understanding, a great role is played by people’s age which endows them with experience and self-control skills, which teachers and educators should have to a greater extent towards students. “Prudence exists more in older people not only because of a natural disposition, once the movements of the sentient passions have been quieted, but also because of their experience over a long time” (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II–II, q. 47, a. 15, ad. 2).

The very process of shaping prudence requires both long learning and great experience – prudence is, on the one hand, an intellectual virtue that we acquire through science, and on the other, a moral virtue that we shape through experience and exercise. “In Ethics 2 the Philosopher says,” For the most part, intellectual virtue has its generation and increase from teaching, and so it needs experience and time. “But as was established above (a. 1 and S.Th., I–II, q. 57, a. 5), prudence is an intellectual virtue. Therefore, prudence exists in us by teaching and experience and not by nature” (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II–II, q. 47, a. 15, corp.). Therefore, one cannot be born prudent. Neither can one be prudent being relatively young. One needs many years and experience which is exactly what a pedagogue should have, especially as a compared to pupils or students.

That’s why, good memory will be an important component of pedagogical prudence. The sum of remembered experiences will allow a prudent teacher to make the right decisions. Remembering many different situations allows you to respond to new challenges in the educational process. “Now it is through experience that one must come to examine what is true for the most part, and this is why in Ethics, book 2, the Philosopher says that intellectual virtue derives its generation and increase from time and experience. But as is clear from Metaphysics, book 1, experience is composed of many memories (*experimentum est ex pluribus memoriis*). Hence, it follows that having memory of many things is required for prudence. This is why memory is appropriately posited as a part of prudence” (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II–II, q. 49, a. 1, corp.). It is memory that also allows us to respond appropriately to future

challenges and problems that may arise in educational work.

Prudence is an intellectual skill necessary in pedagogical work, primarily because it allows you to plan your own and your students’ future activities. It is prudence thanks to which we accurately predict future possible actions and interactions. A prudent educator is the one who, with the help of past experience and what is happening now, can plan with a high degree of probability what will happen in the future. Planning future actions is one of the characteristics of the virtue of prudence and proves its belonging to the intellectual virtues, as demonstrated by Thomas Aquinas after Isidore. „As Isidore says in Etymologia: ‘The prudent individual is one who sees, as it were, from afar, since he is perspicacious and sees how things that are uncertain will turn out’. But seeing belongs to a cognitive power and not to an appetitive power. Hence, it is clear that prudence belongs directly to a cognitive power. However, prudence does not belong to a sentient power, since the things known through a sentient power are just those that are present (*praesto sunt*) and offered to the senses. By contrast, to have cognition of what is future on the basis of what is present and past – and this is what prudence has to do with – belongs properly to reason” (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II–II, q. 47, a. 1, corp.).

This planning of future activities, on the one hand, is supposed to concern the nearest future – what is to be done (that’s why in the Latin text we have used the future form – *recta ratio agibilium*). Prudence is not some far-reaching vision of the future, but it is planning specific actions in what will soon be necessary. Therefore, Aristotle considered prudence as driving force of the workings of practical reason, which reflects on appropriate means leading to the already set goal. It is clear that these measures must be considered already within our reach. “In Ethics, book 6, the Philosopher says that prudence is right reason with respect to things that can be done [*recta ratio agibilium*]. But this pertains only to practical reason. Therefore, prudence exists only in practical reason. In Ethics, book 6, the Philosopher says, ‘It belongs to the prudent individual to be able to deliberate well’. And deliberation concerns things that we must do in relation to some end. But reason with respect to what is to be done for the sake of an end is practical reason. Hence, it is clear that prudence consists only in practical reason” (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II–II, q. 47, a. 2, s. c. and corp.). Therefore, it will not be prudent pedagogy to create idealistic visions about

the distant future, but rather realistic planning of the successive activities, which also corresponds well with the nature of the work of a pedagogue or teacher.

Certainly, it is not prudence in human affairs to seek some secret, mystical knowledge about the future. Thomas Aquinas strongly rejects the temptations of spiritual “prophecies” when normal human reasoning and planning is sufficient. In addition, properly understood prophecy has a different, supernatural purpose as opposed to strictly earthly actions, which have the most natural goals, and such activities include the work of a pedagogue: “*Societas hominum secundum quod ordinatur ad finem vitae aeternae, non potest conservari nisi per iustitiam fidei, cuius principium est prophetia; unde dicitur Proverb. XXVII, 18: cum defecerit prophetia, dissipabitur populus. Sed cum hic finis sit supernaturalis, et iustitia ad hunc finem ordinata, et prophetia, quae est eius principium, erit supernaturalis. Iustitia vero per quam gubernatur societas humana in ordine ad bonum civile, sufficienter potest haberi per principia iuris naturalis homini indita; et sic non oportet prophetiam esse naturalem*” (Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 12, a. 3, ad 11). In his other work, Aquinas also emphasized the need to reach for human means in achieving only earthly goals: “*bonum politicae virtutis est commensuratum naturae humanae. Et ideo absque auxilio gratiae gratum facientis potest voluntas humana in illud tendere, licet non absque auxilio Dei. Sed bonum gratiae est supernaturale. Unde in illud non potest tendere homo per virtutem suae naturae*” (Thomas Aquinas, *S.Th.*, II–II, q. 136, a. 3, ad 2).

At this point, prudence and wisdom must be clearly distinguished. While wisdom reflects on the main and greatest goal of human life, prudence seeks rather means to reach that goal. “As was explained above (q. 45, a. 1), wisdom considers the highest cause absolutely speaking. Hence, in any given genus, considering the highest good belongs to wisdom with respect to that genus. Now in the genus of human acts the highest cause is the end that is common to the whole of human life. And this is the end that prudence looks to; for in *Ethics*, book 6, the Philosopher claims that just as one who reasons well with respect to some particular end – say, victory – is said to be prudent with respect to a certain genus – in this case, matters of war – and not prudent absolutely speaking, so one who reasons well with respect to living a whole life well is said to be prudent absolutely speaking. Hence, it is clear that prudence is wisdom in human affairs, but not wisdom ab-

solutely speaking, since it does not have to do with the highest cause absolutely speaking. For it has to do with the human good, and man is not the best of the things that exist. And this is why the passage explicitly says that prudence is “wisdom for a man” –and not wisdom absolutely speaking” (Thomas Aquinas, *S.Th.*, II–II, q. 47, a. 2, ad. 1). This approach to the role of prudence in the educational process also clearly shows the boundaries that a good educator or teacher should not cross. This limit of the pedagogical work does not imply the main goal of human life, which the teacher is not entitled to establish. Moreover, he is to serve this purpose in some way, and this is the proper task of the virtue of prudence in the educational process. Hence, while wisdom sets the distant goal of human life as a whole, prudence in dealing with what should be done here and now is a reflection on the means to that end. “The prudent individual considers things that are a long way off insofar as they are ordered toward helping or hindering what is to be done at the present moment. Hence, it is clear that the things considered by prudence are ordered toward other things as their end. But it is reason’s deliberating (*consilium in ratione*) and the appetite’s choosing (*electio in appetitu*) that have to do with the means to an end. And of these two things, it is the act of deliberating that more properly belongs to prudence; for in *Ethics* 6 the Philosopher says that the prudent individual “deliberates well” (*est bene consiliativus*). However, since an act of choosing presupposes an act of deliberating – for, as *Ethics* 3 says, an act of choosing is a desire for what has been deliberated about beforehand (*appetitus praeconsiliati*) – it follows that choosing can be attributed to prudence as its consequence, viz., insofar as prudence directs an act of choosing through its act of deliberating” (Thomas Aquinas, *S.Th.*, II–II, q. 47, a. 1, ad. 2). In the above quotation from the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas refers to the advisory nature of the virtue of prudence, noticed clearly by Aristotle. At the same time, this consultative nature does not only apply to the prudent person himself, but is also associated with giving good advice to others so that they know what to do now. The teacher tells the student how to act here and now, how to solve current problems, or those that may arise in the near future.

On the other hand, prudence of the pedagogue makes it necessary to consider the entirety of human life as a certain goal to be achieved. You cannot treat only partial abilities and competencies as the main goal of a planned upbringing or educational process. This

distinguishes prudence from such traits as cunningness and ingenuity. A prudent man looks at the whole of human life and the same should apply to the view of the teacher or teacher at the students.

A prudent teacher will always lead his pupils towards good, but will also help them avoid evil. Aquinas also described this educational function of prudence. Prescriptions of prudence are not only intended to show the way to good, but also help protect the youth from evil. "The act of commanding extends both to goods that ought to be pursued and to evils that ought to be avoided" (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II-II, q. 47, a. 8, ad. 1). The role of the educator is therefore to suggest to students how to avoid evil.

Planning future activities in the educational process concerns not only the activities of the teacher but also of the students. Therefore, there is always some risk involved. There is no 100% certainty regarding, for example, things that have already happened or are happening right now. All the more, we need the virtue of prudence and one of its main ingredients – to anticipate things that might happen. "Tully and Macrobius, who, as is clear from what has been said (q. 48, a. 1), posit foresight as a part of prudence. As was explained above (q. 47, aa. 1 and 6 and 13), prudence has properly to do with the means to an end, and what belongs properly to its function is that the means should be appropriately ordered toward the end. And even though it is true that certain necessary things that are subject to God's providence exist for the sake of an end, only contingent actions that can be done by man for the sake of an end are subject to human prudence. Now past things pass into a certain sort of necessity insofar as they are past, since what has been done is such that it is impossible for it not to have been done. Similarly, present things, insofar as they are present, also have a certain sort of necessity; for instance, while Socrates is sitting, it is necessary that he be sitting. Hence, it follows that what pertains to prudence are future contingents, insofar as they can be ordered by a man toward the end of human life. Now both of these points are implied by the name 'foresight' or 'providence' (providentia). For 'foresight' (providentia) implies a certain sort of relation to something distant which things that occur in the present have to be ordered toward" (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II-II, q. 49, a. 6, s. c. and corp.). Prudence gives you the ability to make the right decisions about future events. We already know what to do to make progress in the pedagogical process.

What introduces an element of uncertainty in planning educational work is not only a matter of time – the fact that we are talking about the future – but perhaps above all the factor of human freedom must be taken into account. We can witness a plethora of possible actions and reactions of pupils. Man can have very different goals and can achieve them in very different ways. As Aquinas writes in his *Summa Theologiae*: "the means to the end in human affairs are not determinate, but are instead diversified by the diversity of persons and human affairs" (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II-II, q. 47, a. 15, corp.). It is prudence that gives the opportunity to predict the most likely behaviors, but also warns against overconfidence. It teaches you to be open to what could surprise us completely. This fact, the multitude of possible human reactions and actions, according to Thomas Aquinas, distinguishes man from other animals that follow instinct always in the same way or only similarly. "In non-rational animals there are determinate ways of reaching an end; hence, we see that all animals of the same species operate in a similar way. But this cannot be the case with man because of his reason, which, since it has cognition of universals, extends to infinitely many singulars" (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II-II, q. 47, a. 15, ad. 3).

Therefore, some caution is needed in pedagogical work, which classical authors describe as part of prudence. The abovementioned unpredictability of human behavior and the possibility of error in human cognition – mistaking good for evil, truth for falsehood – make it necessary to include caution in the characteristics of a prudent teacher. Especially that in the case of educational work we still deal with an unformed young person, and due to various types of imperfections we have to take into account the misunderstanding of the world by pupils. Thomas Aquinas writes about the need for caution in the case of the virtue of prudence: "Prudence has to do with contingent actions (contingentia operabilia), in the case of which, just as what is true can be mixed in with what is false, so what is bad can be mixed in with what is good. This is because of the multiple forms of such actions (propter multiformitatem huiusmodi operabilium), in which good things are often impeded by bad things and in which bad things have the appearance of being good. And so caution is necessary for prudence in order that what is good might be taken in such a way that what is bad is avoided" (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II-II, q. 49, a. 8, corp.). A prudent man can, therefore,

properly discern the situation and carefully choose the right course of action.

All the above postulates the great work of the educator, mainly on himself. A prudent teacher is also aware of the need for continuous self-formation. Prudence, after all, includes civility – docility, which is easy to learn by yourself and learn from others. This is Aquinas' answer to the question that appeared at the beginning of this article. No one can say that they do not need someone else's advice, especially on an issue as important as the upbringing and education of young people. A good educator is aware of this and willingly reaches for the advice of others and cares for his own formation. "As has been explained (q. 47, a. 12), through prudence one issues precepts not only to others, but even to his very self. Hence, as was explained above (q. 47, a. 12), this likewise plays a role in the case of the subjects, and so docility belongs to their prudence. However, even the rulers themselves must be docile with respect to some things; for as has been explained, in the matters that fall under prudence, no one is sufficient unto himself with respect to all of them" (Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., II-II, q. 49, a. 3, ad. 3). So, education is an integral part of prudence and a good educator cannot ignore this important aspect of shaping the skill of prudence.

Conclusions

It turns out that classical philosophy, unfortunately forgotten in recent centuries, can contribute a lot when it comes to the moral formation of educators and teachers. Skills, such as prudence, can be valuable help and guidance for people who want to lead others along the path of life. Their in-depth analysis, made many centuries earlier by Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, allows not only to apply it in the spheres of human activity assigned by them (as in the case of prudence, which was attributed to politics), but also to make a new interpretation of classical virtues and indicate new spheres of action of prudence. That this interpretation is legitimate in the case of prudence is already indicated by the ancient and medieval texts themselves. Furthermore, the classical authors regarded a broadly understood pedagogical impact as part of political action, which I tried to show at the beginning of my paper. But also, the comments of these authors, at least in my opinion, can be used in a strictly understood educational process – in the planning and implementing pedagogical proj-

ects, and above all in the self-formation of educators and teachers.

This text is just an introduction to restoring the thoughts of classical authors to modern theory and practice of teaching. The thing calls for further studies, so that the discoveries of old masters are reconstructed and used in the education of today's youth. The key to this will be, as I tried to show in the above text, the prudence of teachers and educators. Without this cardinal virtue, it is difficult to imagine fruitful educational work. It also needs a thorough theoretical study, which will enable virtue of prudence to be practically applicable, which is an essential feature thereof. Prudence is always inclined towards real action as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas already clearly demonstrated.

Bibliography

- Aristotle (2007), *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Warszawa 2007.
 Aristotle (2008), *Politics*, Warszawa 2008.
 Augustine (2008), *Confessions*, Kraków 2008.
 Benner D. (2008), *Przekaz moralności przez doświadczenie negatywne i etyka eksperymentalna jako adekwatne formy współczesnego wychowania moralnego*, tłum. D. Stępkowski, w: tenże, *Edukacja jako kształcenie i kształtowanie. Moralność – kultura – demokracja – religia*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, Warszawa 2008, s. 32–36.
 Plato (2015), *Eutyfron*, Warszawa 2015.
 Plato (2018), *Państwo*, Gliwice 2018.
 Stępkowski D. i Kamińska W. (2016), *Wychowanie moralne czy nauczanie moralno-etyczne? Rozważanie o zadaniach oświaty publicznej*, w: *Forum Pedagogiczne* 2016/2, cz. 1, s. 127–137.
 Thomas Aquinas, (*De veritate*), *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, w: *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita*, t. 22, Rzym 1975–1970–1972–1973–1976.
 Thomas Aquinas, (S.Th., II-II) *Secunda secundae Summae theologiae*, w: *Opera omnia iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P.M. edita*, t. 8–10, Rzym 1895–1897–1899.
 Valerius Maximus, (*Fact. et Dict. Memor.*) *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri novem*, Hildesheim 1976.