Virtues Gone Virtual:
Revisiting The Virtues in A Digital World

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At the risk of sounding cliché or asserting something that is patently obvious to anyone who owns a laptop, smartphone or tablet, we really do live in a new Golden Age of communication. If the inventions of movable type, the telegraph, television and radio brought with them their own Golden Ages of communication, this time of the Internet and of Web 2.0 most certainly has propelled us into yet another gleaming age of technology that has joined us together by making the world smaller. If one still needs to be convinced, consider what has happened in just the last *12 years*: We have seen the explosion of social media including Facebook (that now hosts 1.7 billion unique monthly visitors), Twitter (with 1 billion monthly active users), and YouTube (home to 241 million monthly active users). And, of course, we have witnessed ever increasing global smartphone adoption rates. In 2012 there were an estimated 1.1 billion smartphone users worldwide, accounting for 16 percent of the global population. That number is projected to more than double to 2.5 billion in 2017 to include *more than a third of the world's population*.[1] Thus it seems we are practically immersed in communicative capability that is, in a very real sense, boundless.

To say that all this has been good for humankind would be to make a grand understatement. We can connect with one another like never before. Our lives are brightened by communicating with one another whenever and wherever we want. Ideas are shared. Memories are shared. Feelings are shared. Whether it's

posting photographs of newborn babies on Facebook for families to see and enjoy, or it's learning how to do a brake job on your car while watching YouTube in your garage, I think we would all agree that this new communicative technology is certainly a very good thing.

At the same time, however, all these wonderful capabilities can be put to other uses, uses that are not good. Take, for example, the existence of cyber-bullying; or of creating Facebook pages that express hate and intolerance; or of the relatively less harmful act of trolling, of goading others to respond to violent or hurtful words on websites or through social media with more violent or hurtful words. Amid the glamour and excitement of living in this never-ending stream of new technology comes the realization that for all the good that it is capable of bringing about, so too is all this digital communication capable of tapping humankind's less desirable tendencies.

If this new Golden Age of communication is capable of expressing good, or is equally capable of expressing that which is not good, then what human, choice-bound decision making apparatus navigates these capabilities? The answer, I believe, can be found by revisiting the role of the virtues in determining choice. By taking a look at how the virtues relate to our use of digital technology, we can see their relevance in helping each other to understand better how these technologies may be used well and how they may be used badly.

In what follows I apply an understanding of the virtues articulated first by Aristotle, then greatly expanded on and given increased moral import by St. Thomas Aquinas. After reviewing Aquinas's conception of the virtues, in particular the virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and courage, I examine the unfortunately all-too-common practices of trolling and cyber-bullying and

how it is that these actions demonstrate a distinct lack of virtue. I conclude this paper by reflecting on how expressing a connection between the virtues and our online lives may help us pedagogically as well as help us to lead good lives.

On Aquinas and The Virtues

To harmonize the operations of the mind, virtue regulates the activities of reason and the appetites. Aquinas follows Aristotle in pointing out that "All virtues are either intellectual or moral (*Ethic.* ii, 1). Now all the moral virtues are in the appetite; while the intellectual virtues are in the intellect or reason, as is clear from *Ethic.* vi, 1."[2] Therefore it could be said that "For reason to be correct, the appetite needs to be properly ordered, seeking after proper goals, with contrary or excessive desires properly regulated, fear, anger, and so on under control, and proper regard for other persons' good held in the will. When reason and appetite are mutually regulated in this way, then the agent may be seen as virtuous."[3]

Aquinas describes how the virtues are allied with reason and the appetites, beginning with prudence and its relationship to the practical function of the intellect. Since we are directed to ends through reason, Aquinas writes: "an intellectual virtue is needed in the reason, to perfect the reason, and make it suitably affected towards things ordained to the end; and this virtue is prudence. Consequently prudence is a virtue necessary to lead a good life."[4] Moreover, since the *practical intellect* concerns itself with contingent matters (i.e., particular actions to be undertaken), "an intellectual virtue is assigned to the practical intellect, viz. art, as regards things to be made, and prudence, as regards things to be done."[5]

This should not be taken to mean that prudence is strictly an intellectual virtue. Rather, prudence is directive of the moral virtues, insofar as "Right reason which is in accord with prudence is included in the definition of moral virtue, not as part of its essence, but as something belonging by way of participation to *all the moral virtues*, in so far as they are all under the direction of prudence."[6] Thus, Aquinas asserts, "we have one principal virtue, called 'Prudence.'"[7] Therefore it may be said that without this principal virtue one cannot apprehend any of the other virtues.

Importantly, Aquinas believes that reason directs the activities of both the sensitive appetites and the intellective appetites. He makes the distinction this way:

> Moral virtue perfects the appetitive part of the soul by directing it to good as defined by reason. Now good as defined by reason is that which is moderated or directed by reason. Consequently there are moral virtues about all matters that are subject to reason's direction and moderation. Now reason directs, not only the passions of the sensitive appetite, but also the operations of the intellective appetite, i.e. the will, which is not the subject of a passion, as stated above (Q. 22, A. 3). Therefore not all the moral virtues are about passions, but some are about passions, some about operations.[8]

The two main virtues having their seat in the sense appetite (i.e., passions) are temperance and courage, both of which are moral virtues. To perfect the sense appetite, temperance effectively shapes the passions of desire in such a way that an agent desires what is truly in accordance with her overall good. Of course, this shaping ostensibly involves maintaining one's affective response to pleasure. But as it shapes our desires, our responses to pleasure, it influences our perceptions of our own happiness, or how it is we constitute our happiness. Moreover, while virtues are stable dispositions (i.e., dispositions of habit), the intemperate person— by turning away from what reason has already prescribed as the good— demonstrates an instability of character. As such, one with an intemperate

disposition requires the virtue of constancy in order to follow what correct reason has identified as the true good.

As the other moral virtue that perfects the sense appetite, courage or fortitude shapes the passions so as to resist what is painful or difficult. But whereas temperance manages the effects of pleasure, courage is necessary to manage the effects of the irascible appetite, which has to do with goods that are difficult to achieve and with pains that are hard to avoid. Thus one who lacks the virtue of fortitude cannot find the means to act in adverse situations because his reason cannot effectively manage his response to fear, be it related to things hard to achieve (e.g., as in a fear of failure) or pains hard to avoid. In this way, his perception of fear colors his deliberations and subsequent judgments. However, if fear avails itself of the insight of reason it can be made "rational by participation." By participating in rationality, the desire is made to conform to what is reasonable.

Finally, with regard to justice, Aquinas thinks that "a prudent decision and action must be governed by justice (with due regard for relationships with others)."[9] Insofar as justice is the special moral virtue seated in the will, it is directed to those actions that involve a relationship to another person, while the other moral virtues perfect the agent only in those things that pertain to herself. Since the will is necessarily oriented toward the good—what has been prescribed to it by reason—it carries forth a due consideration of others into human affairs; that is, justice brings right reason into the institution of human affairs. This directing of right reason into human affairs predisposes the will to the good of justice by effectively ordering the will toward fairness.

The Acts of Trolling and Cyber-Bullying

As we survey this new Golden Age of communication we see two situations where practice of the virtues seems completely absent: in the practice of online "trolling" (and the similar practice of "flaming") and in incidents of cyber-bullying. While each behavior is different, both fail reason by violating the tenets of justice and in doing so violating also prudence through intemperate behavior. For those who are not familiar with it, trolling "is the practice of behaving in a deceptive, destructive, or disruptive manner in a social setting on the Internet with no apparent instrumental purpose."[10] Thus trolls operate "as agents of chaos on the Internet, exploiting 'hot-button issues' to make users appear overly emotional or foolish in some manner."[11] Most often, trolls leave wholly inappropriate or openly antagonistic comments in comment sections on websites or in online forums. In contrast, flaming has been described as "displaying hostility by insulting, swearing or using otherwise offensive language."[12] Put simply, flaming is the online equivalent of flying off the handle (typically using obscenities), whereas trolling is encouraging another to fly off the handle.

Looking at particular cases reveals how harmful such behavior can be. One trolling case involved a man who posted anonymous comments on a memorial web page for a 15-year-old English girl who committed suicide (after being cyber-bullied), calling her a "slut." The same man posted a message on Mother's Day on an online memorial page to a 14-year-old girl who died after suffering a seizure, saying "Help me mummy, it's hot in hell."[13] Much less appalling was the case involving UK-based comedian Stewart Lee, who collected comments made about him on YouTube and other websites. One comment by someone named "Idrie" on YouTube said, "I hope Stewart Lee dies." "He's got one of those faces I

just want to burn," wrote another commenter named "Coxy" on the website dontstartmeoff.com.[14]

Trolling need not result in such outrageous comments or threats. Writing for the website Salon, Lisa Selin Davis describes the more typical work of trolls based on firsthand experience: "[They] write inflammatory or derisive things in public forums, hoping to provoke an emotional response," she says. "These commenters called me, and one another, everything from stupid to racist, or sometimes stupid racists. And that was just when I posted the menu of a new café."[15] Another example is a reply on Yahoo! Answers to a mundane question posted by someone looking for car stereo advice. "I want to hook my phone directly to car speakers," the poster wrote. "Is there a device that will plug into the headphone jack then into the speakers?" The answer: "By doing your mom."[16]

Because it consists of invective aimed directly at a particular individual by particular antagonists, cyber-bullying is most offensive and, perhaps, the most harmful. Unlike trolling and flaming, cyber-bullying uses "the Internet, a phone, or other electronic communications to bully, tease, or threaten."[17] While that description seems almost benign, it has the potential to cause great harm: One study claims that 12 percent of teen suicides are bullying-related (including cyber-bullying).[18]

Comedian Lindy West was subjected to cyber-bullying after a television appearance in which she criticized comedians for making rape jokes. As she reported on the website Jezebel, she was deluged by one stunningly inappropriate comment after another. Among them were "No need for you to worry about rape uggo [sic];" and "I love how the Bitch complaining about rape

7

is the exact kind of Bitch that would never be raped. 'Why is my vagina being used as a crutch?' Bitch have you looked in the mirror? Your vagina isn't being used for shit;" and "Let's cut the bullshit […] that broad doesn't have to worry about rape."[19]

What West encountered was most certainly vile. But it pales in comparison to other cases. Take, for example, the much-publicized case involving 13 year-old Megan Meier, who hung herself after being bullied online by an adult posing as a 16 year-old boy named "Josh." As chronicled in an article published in *The Yorker*, after establishing a presence on the now-defunct website MySpace, Megan kindled an online relationship with "Josh Evans."[20] Over time, the relationship bloomed into teenage romance. He would ask her, "'How was your day?'" In response to a photograph of Megan wearing a tiara, he posted, "'You're my beautiful princess.'" Megan was smitten, writing: "'JOSH=ABSOLUTELY AMAZING!!!!! JOSH=100% AMAZING!!! Yeah, that's right.'" Then things turned ugly. Josh accused her—among other things—of being mean to her friends. His final message to her before she committed suicide read "'You're a shitty person, and the world would be a better place without you in it.'" Only after Megan's death did her parents learn that "Josh" was a hoax, a cyber-character created by a neighbor named Lori Drew, whose daughter had quarreled with Megan.[21]

Bringing The Virtues Into Our Digital Lives
Clearly, the behaviors of trolling and cyber-bullying would be characterized by Aquinas as defective: defective insofar as they run contrary to the good of reason, defective insofar as the passions colored the agents' perceptions of the good, and defective because such actions brought disharmony to the regulation of reason

and the appetites. Using the virtues to deconstruct these actions not only reveals how bad they are; it gives us a new way to contextualize them and to help one another to see the value in how revisiting the virtues can enable us to not just live, but to live well.

With both trolling and cyber-bullying, we must first differentiate between those who do these acts for the first time versus those who engage in these acts repeatedly. This is an important differentiation to make, because it identifies the source of the behavior as being driven either by the passions (as in the case of someone who is given by Aquinas the rather unfortunate name of "incontinent") or by habit (as in the case of what Aquinas describes as the "intemperate man"). He makes this distinction in the following way:

> Now in the intemperate man, the will is inclined to sin in virtue of its own choice, which proceeds from a habit acquired through custom: whereas in the incontinent man, the will is inclined to sin through a passion. And since passion soon passes, whereas a habit is "a disposition difficult to remove," the result is that the incontinent man repents at once, as soon as the passion has passed; but not so the intemperate man; in fact he rejoices in having sinned, because the sinful act has become connatural to him by reason of his habit.[22]

When effected by passion, the reason of the incontinent troller or cyber-bully is made to conform to the good prescribed to it by the passion. In order to exert their influence on reason, passions affect the manner in which reason perceives the good such that what the agent knows to be bad is perceived to be good. Aquinas points this out by claiming that "The fact that something appears good in particular to the reason, whereas it is not good, is due to a passion: and yet this particular judgment is contrary to the universal knowledge of the reason."[23]

Therefore, if one is moved by anger or frustration, or some other emotion, and if these emotions are successful in shaping reason, one will sin. And this sin

is sinful not only because of the ultimate effects of the act, but also for the manner in which reason was prevented from apprehending the good to which it is naturally ordered, as in the case of the incontinent troller or cyber-bully.

As Aquinas explains it, the reason of the intemperate agent is driven to sin by way of habit. Ostensibly, this begins when the agent first sees these acts being done and learns that it is possible to do them in the first place. After learning how to do them, along with the circumstances in which they are done, the agent performs one of the acts. Thus far, we could say that the agent remains incontinent. However, if the agent repeats the act, following Aquinas's terminology, this would establish for the agent a *custom*: a choice made following a newly formed habit. As a result, the intemperate troller or cyber-bully has established for herself a disposition toward sin that has been shaped by habit.

Thus far we have identified a way to describe the acts of trolling or cyber-bullying based on whether the agent who has engaged in them has done them once and has presumably renounced them, or whether they have engaged in these acts numerous times. But what can we say about them with specific reference to the virtues? For that, we must once again begin with the influence of the passions upon reason. Following Aristotle, Aquinas asserts that all passions, as emotions "[involve], in every case, some kind of change in the body, such as an increased heart rate, trembling of the hands, flushing of the face, hormonal and biochemical changes."[24] Interestingly, our use of digital technology often precipitates some "change in the body." Research has shown that self-disclosure—the activity behind such things as Facebook status updates and tweets—arouses our central reward center dispensing dopamine, the neurotransmitter whose effects are amplified by stimulants such as cocaine and

methamphetamine. Consequently researchers suggest that some people turn to social media the way over eaters turn to food or the promiscuous turn to sex.[25]

Thus it would seem that as individuals are presented with opportunities to troll or to bully others online, they may—if this research is correct—be stimulated by emotionally driven biochemical changes in their brains that, in turn, influence their ability to reason. Once compromised in this way, the agent's reason is incapable of making a rational choice, because the appetites have not been "properly ordered, seeking after proper goals, with contrary or excessive desires properly regulated, fear, anger, and so on under control, and proper regard for other persons' good held in the will."[26] This is crucial, for when reason and appetite are mutually regulated in this way, then—and only then—we may say that the agent is acting in accord with virtue.

When this happens, the first casualty is prudence. Given the purpose of trolling and cyber-bullying, to degrade or threaten others, it would follow that any choice to engage in such activities would necessarily be imprudent insofar as "a prudent decision and action must be governed by justice (with due regard for relationships with others)."[27] Thus such a choice would clearly lack virtue not only because it fails to maintain a due regard for others, but also because it reflects a misdirection of reason, the preventing of reason from attaining the good that is its end. Aquinas would certainly look at this as a stunning failure, not only of the practical intellect which judges that which is to be done, but a failure also of counsel, the related deliberative activity whose goodness is not a distinct virtue *per se*, but is subordinate and secondary to prudent choice.[28] And the role of taking good counsel in precipitating prudent choice should not be underestimated, for "though *consilium* [i.e., counsel] is not required for many

11

actions, it is in precisely those difficult and uncertain situations requiring deliberation when it is essential for the prudent agent to be a good reasoner so that he may then rightly apply (in the act of judgment) universal principles to particular situations which are various and uncertain."[29]

The second casualties are the virtues of courage, and more particularly temperance. As I indicated above, Aquinas thinks that reason must manage the passions in such a way so as to make them "rational by participation" and this includes "the concupiscible faculty, subject of 'Temperance,' and the irascible faculty, subject of 'Fortitude.'" Thus activities of faculties other than reason are nonetheless under the authority of reason and are thus made rational by yielding to reason's influence.

Recall that to perfect the sense appetite, temperance effectively shapes the passions of desire in such a way that an agent desires what is truly in accordance with his overall good. As it shapes one's desires, one's responses to pleasure, it turns one away from what reason has already prescribed as the good. Thus it would follow that the troller or cyber-bully, when committing their acts of trolling or bullying, is being intemperate insofar as her reason (in a sense) knows that doing so is wrong. But in her turning away from what she knows to be good her reason is responding to a passion-influenced conception of the good: That committing these acts is in fact wrong, but they are now understood to be good insofar as her emotions, be they stimulated by biochemistry or by other psychological motivations, are in fact shaping her reason in such a way as to now judge these acts to be good.

Addressing the manner in which courage may be similarly compromised presents us with a paradox. If Aquinas thinks that fortitude is quite simply the

ability to maintain a course of action (or perhaps to maintain prudent judgment) when one is faced with something that is difficult or unpleasant, then how exactly might the troller or cyber-bully fail to act with courage? One might think that it would take courage to resist the desire to cause harm to others by trolling or bullying. But on closer inspection it would seem that such an application of the virtue of courage would be inconsistent with Aquinas's thinking on the matter.

As the other moral virtue that perfects the sense appetite, fortitude shapes the passions so as to resist what is painful or difficult. But whereas temperance manages the effects of pleasure, courage is necessary to manage the effects of the irascible appetite, which has to do with goods that are difficult to achieve and with pains that are hard to avoid. Thus one who lacks the virtue of fortitude cannot find the means to act in adverse situations because his reason cannot effectively manage his response to *fear*, be it related to things hard to achieve (e.g., as in a fear of failure) or pains hard to avoid. In this way, his perception of fear colors his deliberations and subsequent judgments. On the other hand, if fear avails itself to the insight of reason it can be made rational by participation and as a result made reasonable.

Thus it would seem that it would be inaccurate to assert that an agent who engages in trolling or cyber-bullying fails to apprehend the virtue of courage because she is failing to resist her desire to case harm, an act that would presumably be undesirable (if not difficult in its own right). Rather, it is important to see an agent's desire to troll or bully as being made (by the passions) pleasurable to the agent. In this way, if the agent chooses to give in to this pleasure, she would more accurately be failing to apprehend temperance

because she has judged the acts that her reason inherently knows to be bad as to now be good.

A Way Forward

Aquinas writes that "it belongs to moral virtue to safeguard the good of reason against those things which may hinder it."[30] It is my hope that this examination of how virtue relates to our digital lives gives us a new lens in which to contextualize behavior in this new Golden Age of communication. Bringing virtue into the discussion gives us a different look at uses, and more specifically misuses, of digital communication technology, a look that may help us all to understand better how we interact with it, and what effects our interactions have on others.

Perhaps the most important role for such an analysis would be in the classroom and in the church, giving students and followers alike a way to reconsider how they and others use these increasingly ubiquitous technologies. Classifying particular online behaviors as being imprudent, unreasonable, unjust, or intemperate may provide users not only with a new vocabulary, a new way to discuss and evaluate uses of these technologies, but would provide also teachers and religious leaders with a way to discuss our digital lives that is reflective of Christian theology and Christian moral teaching.

Beyond the value of broaching how we live our digital lives in terms of virtue or in terms of virtue ethics, is the value of doing so in way that is consistent with moral living as members of society. As Aquinas writes:

> Inasmuch as man is given understanding and reason, by which he can both discern and investigate the truth; as he is also given sensory powers, both internal and external, whereby he is helped to seek the truth; as he is also given the use of speech, by the functioning of which he is enabled to convey to another person the truth that he

conceives in his mind—thus constituted, men may help themselves in the process of knowing the truth, just as they may in regard to the other needs of life for man is 'a naturally social animal.'[31]

It has been observed that "The forms of community in which we participate and are educated will have serious consequences for the extent of our practical reasoning's excellence."[32] Conceiving of our online lives as being in service to virtue, and therefore in service to others, certainly seems a good place to start.

Notes

1. "Smartphone Users Worldwide Will Total 1.75 billion in 2014." eMarketer. Web, 16 January 2014. Accessed 19 May 2014. http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Smartphone-Users-Worldwide-Will-Total-175-Billion-2014/1010536.
2. *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 56 a. 5.
3. Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 247.
4. *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 57 a. 5.
5. *Ibid*., q. 57 a. 5 ad. 3.
6. *Ibid*. I-II, q. 58 a. 2 ad. 4; emphasis added.
7. *Ibid*., q. 61 a. 5.
8. *Ibid*., q. 59 a. 4.
9. Westberg, *op cit*., 223.
10. Erin Buckels, Paul Trapnell, and Delroy Paulhus. "Trolls Just Want to Have Fun." *Personality and Individual Differences* (2014), 1.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Peter Moor, Ard Heuvelman, and Ria Verleur. "Flaming on YouTube." *Computers in Human Behavior* 26 (2010), 1536.
13. "Reading Man Jailed for Dead Girl 'Trolling' Insults." BBC. 13 September 2011. Web. Accessed 30 April 2014. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-14894576.
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15. Lisa Selin Davis. "Internet Trolls Can't Help Themselves." Salon. 1 August 2012. Web. Accessed 26 April 2014. http://www.salon.com/2012/08/01/online_comments_are_toxic_salpart/.
16. See https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20130609181242A-APX273.
17. Shari Kessel Schneider, Lydia O'Donnell, Ann Stueve, and Robert Coulter. "Cyberbullying, School Bullying, and Psychological Distress: A Regional Census of High School Students." *American Journal of Public Health* 102 (1), 2012: 172.

18. Debra Karch, J. Logan, Dawn McDaniel, Kaye Floyd, and Kevin Vagi. "Precipitating Circumstances of Suicide Among Youth Aged 10-17 Years by Sex: Data From the National Violent Death Reporting System, 16 States, 2005-2008." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 53 (2013): S51-3.

19. Lindy West. "If Comedy Has No Lady Problem, Why Am I Getting So Many Rape Threats?" Jezebel. 4 June 2013, Web. http://jezebel.com/if-comedy-has-no-lady-problem-why-am-i-getting-so-many-511214385. Accessed 2 May 2014.

20. Lauren Collins. "Friend Game: Behind the Online Hoax That Led to a Girl's Suicide." *The New Yorker*, 21 January 2008: 34.

21. One could go on examining the many cases, but all are frighteningly similar. See e.g., "Six Unforgettable Cyberbullying Cases." NoBullying.com. Web. Accessed 2 May 2014. http://nobullying.com/six-unforgettable-cyber-bullying-cases/; and Ryan Broderick. "Teenage "Teen Suicides In The Last Year Were Linked to Cyber-Bullying On Social Network Ask.fm." BuzzFeed, 11 September 2013. Web. Accessed 2 May 2014. http://www.buzzfeed.com/ryanhatesthis/a-ninth-teenager-since-last-september-has-committed-suicide. For a more in-depth look at the influence of cyber-bullying see Rebecca Dredge, John Gleeson, and Xochitl de la Piedad Garcia. "Cyberbullying in Social Networking Sites: An Adolescent Victim's Perspective." *Computers in Human Behavior* 36 (2014), 13-20. See also the Cyberbullying Research Center at http://cyberbullying.us.

22. *Ibid.*, q. 156 a. 3.

23. *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 77, a. 2, ad. 2.

24. Paul Gondreau, "The Passions and the Moral Life: Appreciating the Originality of Aquinas," *The Thomist* 71 (2007): 423.

25. Diana Tamir and Jason Mitchell. "Disclosing Information About the Self is Intrinsically Rewarding." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* 109 (21), 2012: 8041. Similarly, other research suggests that getting Facebook "likes" gives users the same neurological response. See Meshi, Dar, Carmen Morawetz and Hauke Heekeren. "Nucleus Accumbens Response to Gains in Reputation for the Self Relative to Gains for Others Predicts Social Media Use." *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 7, 2013.

26. Westberg, *op cit.*, 247.

27. *Ibid.*, 223.

28. See *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 51 a. 2 ad. 2. To clarify, Aquinas asserts that "the preferential choice of that which is unto the end [. . .] belongs to prudence" (*Ibid.* I-II, q. 56 a. 4 ad. 4). In other words, one can chose to apprehend the good and this choice is emblematic of prudent choice.

29. Westberg, *op cit.*, 193.

30. *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 149 a. 2.

31. *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, 147, 2.

32. Pamela Hall, *Narrative and the Natural Law: An Interpretation of Thomistic Ethics* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 35.

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