

Maribeth Kelly
THEO 721
Dr. Kris Burns
February 10, 2017

STUDIOSNESS: MAN'S GUIDE ON THE PATH TO WISDOM

“All men, by nature, desire to know.” –Aristotle, *Metaphysics*

The desire for knowledge is a natural and essential aspect of the human condition.

Drawing upon an Aristotelian epistemology and anthropology, Saint Thomas Aquinas concludes that while knowledge is natural and good in itself, the *desire* for it requires moderation by a specific virtue: studiousness. Studiousness enables one to love and cherish the objects known as gifts, whereas the contrasting vices of disinterestedness and curiosity either forsake knowledge entirely or incessantly seek to possess it. While the studious soul's desire for knowledge arises from love and appreciation for the object known, the curious soul seeks to possess or control the object, motivated by a detestation or hatred that there is an object unknown to him. This leads to a restlessness in both intellectual and sense knowledge, as curiosity perpetually desires knowledge without ever resting in or loving the object known. In order to cultivate studiousness, one must integrate silence, wonder, docility, and attentiveness into his life, as these dispose the soul to desire knowledge according to reason. As a virtue related to temperance, studiousness moderates man's desire for knowledge while simultaneously allowing it to grow and develop, since knowing natural goods prepares man for his ultimate end, knowing Goodness Himself in the Beatific Vision, and this intimate knowledge leads to a union of abiding love.

With an Aristotelian understanding of epistemology, Saint Thomas Aquinas concludes that there is a natural human desire for knowledge among all men. In relation to studiousness, Aristotle's epistemology reveals two key points: first, that man delights in knowledge, and second, that man has the ability to become all things through knowledge. According to the first

point, Aristotle holds that man delights in intellectual activity. This primarily is seen in speculative knowledge, which is knowledge of some object for its own sake. However, even if man pursues practical knowledge, there remains a kind of appreciation and delight in knowing an object for the sake of some task or doing some good. In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle writes, “All men, by nature, desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves.”¹ This natural delight indicates that knowledge is related to man’s happiness or end. Secondly, Aristotle’s epistemology reveals that man has the potency or openness to become all things precisely because of his intellect. When the knower knows an object, the form of the object comes to exist in the knower according to the mode of the knower.² In this way, the knower has the ability to become all things as he collects a host of phantasms, possessing knowledge of the forms of many objects in his memory. Since man becomes the objects of his knowledge in this way, Aquinas stresses the importance of desiring to know good objects that are conducive to man’s end and to avoid evil objects that may deter him from it. Therefore, Aristotle’s epistemology reveals the natural human desire for knowledge and the need of a virtue to ensure that this natural desire is ordered according to reason.

In addition to Aristotelian epistemology, Aquinas also draws upon an Aristotelian understanding of human nature and the end of man when he discusses the moderation of man’s desire for knowledge through studiousness. His analysis of human nature includes an appreciation of man’s end as well as the fact that he is a rational animal who achieves his end by

¹Aristotle, “Metaphysics,” in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 980a.

²Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1948; reprint, Westminster: Christian Classics, 1981), Prima Pars, Question 12, article 4, corpus. All subsequent references to the *Summa Theologiae* will be from this translation and edition, and will follow the standard notation, e.g. ST I. Q.12, a.4, corpus.

rational activity. First, Aristotle believes that the end of man is contemplation, which consists in a naturally virtuous life as well as knowledge of the highest causes and possession of their goodness by knowing them. Aristotle believes that man desires to know not only *what* things are, but principally *why* things are; in other words, he seeks to know the *causes* of things, and he will not be satisfied until he knows the very essence of the ultimate cause of the universe.³ With the assistance of Revelation, Aquinas “baptizes” Aristotle’s notion of contemplation in light of man’s supernatural end. For Aquinas, this consists in an act of the intellect, i.e., knowing or seeing God in the Beatific Vision, which inherently is connected to loving him through perfect charity. Although his end is achieved through supernatural means, man pursues it on a natural level by his coming to know good things that are conducive to virtuous activity and contemplation. All of creation mirrors the Creator in some way; that is, each creature is good insofar as it participates in God’s being. For this reason, “nothing is purely secular,” and knowledge of any good can be in reference to God.⁴ Since Aquinas holds that man’s end is principally an intellectual activity, knowledge of creatures according to reason, as ensured by the moderation of studiousness, may prepare man for his ultimate end of knowing the Creator. Therefore, in his analysis of studiousness, Aquinas builds upon Aristotle’s understanding of man’s natural and supernatural ends in addition to the pursuit of them through rational activity.

Given this Aristotelian foundation, Aquinas teaches that studiousness does not concern knowledge of truth itself; instead, this virtue moderates the *desire for* knowledge. Here, Aquinas makes an important distinction. While the knowledge of truth is good in itself, the desire for study or pursuing the truth may be right or wrong in particular instances, and thus requires a

³ST I-2. Q.3, a.8, corpus.

⁴Matthew Levering, “Aquinas on Studiousness,” Lecture at Christendom College, Front Royal, VA, 06 February 2017.

virtue to determine the reasonable mean.⁵ Theologian Francis Cunningham comments, “The material of the virtue of studiousness is the knowledge of truth, which is in itself good and needs no virtue to regulate it. But the *desire* for knowledge admits of good or evil—this is the area in which the virtue is required.”⁶ In general, knowledge of truth is admirable and noble; however, depending on the needs, ability, and state in life of the individual, particular desires for knowledge may be unfitting or inappropriate. For example, if one desires to know the art of carpentry, this in itself is a good and noble pursuit. However, if the desire for this knowledge impedes one from his responsibilities and duties, then his desire for it would be intemperate and perhaps even sinful. What must be kept in mind is that all of man’s desires require moderation and order according to reason, even if they concern objects that are good in themselves; this is because good objects are pursued always by individuals, who have various needs, states in life, and circumstances that must be taken into consideration. Studiousness emerges as the virtue that assists the individual in moderating his desires so that they remain in accord with reason.

The first step of studiousness is to determine whether the object of knowledge is worthy of desire for the individual. In general, the knowledge of truth itself is a good and needs no moderation; however, for the individual, certain objects of knowledge may or may not be *worthy of his desire* depending on several subjective factors. This particular application lays the foundation for cultivating one’s desire for knowledge. There are three main kinds of objects: things that ought to be known by all, things that ought to be known by some, and things that ought not to be known. First, there are certain things that ought to be known *by all* such as truths necessary for salvation, God Himself, and things necessary for one’s state in life. These are most

⁵*ST II-2. Q.167, a.1, corpus.* Here, Thomas seems to indicate an important distinction. The object of the intellect is truth *as truth*. The object of studiousness seems to be the truth *as good*, or as desirable. Truth as the object of the intellect has no flaw and needs no regulation; however, man’s desire for it requires moderation.

⁶Francis Cunningham O.P., *The Christian Life* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1959), 737-738.

worthy of man's desire; knowing this, one may guide and foster an appropriate desire for knowledge of these things in accord with reason. In reference to the second category, there are things that ought to be known only by some, such as the many arts and sciences. For instance, only electricians need know how electricity works, and only sailors need know how to operate their ships. Due to his finite intellect, it is impossible for man to have knowledge of all things; the virtue of studiousness enables him to determine which objects complement his vocation and are worthy of pursuit, moderating his desires accordingly. Similarly, there are many good things in the world that simply do not need to be known, as seen in the endless sensationalism of the news cycle. While one does have a duty to know national and local news, the majority of nightly broadcasts include repetitive stories or those that have no bearing on the community, i.e., useless information. While pursuing this kind of knowledge is neutral, it more often than not becomes a source of distraction from objects more worthy of pursuit. As a third category, there are things that ought never be known, such as evil things that are explored with malicious curiosity and gawking of the ugly and depraved. Although evil things may be known under certain circumstances, this kind of study requires prayer and spiritual guidance. In this way, a priest ought to know sins in order to counsel his parishioners in avoiding them. However, knowledge of these evils ought not to be pursued by the general faithful. Once an individual determines an object of knowledge to be good, neutral, or evil depending on his particular circumstances, then the virtue of studiousness is able to regulate his desire for it accordingly.

Since it is a moderating virtue, studiousness is a potential part of the cardinal virtue of temperance whose purpose is to achieve self-possession and interior order in the soul.

Principally, temperance regulates man's desires for bodily pleasures such as food, drink, and sexual pleasure. However, there are several virtues related to temperance that moderate man's

desires for other goods, including those of the soul. Aquinas writes, “Now just as in respect of his corporeal nature man naturally desires the pleasures of food and sex, so in respect of his soul, he naturally desires to know something....The moderation of this desire pertains to the virtue of studiousness.”⁷ Since studiousness moderates a desire of the soul, it belongs to the virtue of temperance which aims to bring order, peace, and harmony in the soul by ordering man’s desires according to reason. Pieper writes, “*Studiositas* [is] a mode of realization of the discipline of temperance...[which], understood as selfless self-preservation, is the saving and defending realization of the inner order of man.”⁸ Although there are many virtues related to temperance that achieve this end, studiousness emerges as one of the most prominent since man’s desire for natural knowledge corresponds to his supernatural end, which is knowledge of God. Therefore, studiousness must especially be present within the soul as man’s desires for knowledge in this life reflect his desire for it in the next. In this way, the virtue of temperance and its related virtues, especially studiousness, aim at self-possession and interior order.

Although studiousness moderates man’s desire for knowledge, the moderation which it achieves must allow for growth and development. Since man’s desire for knowledge is natural, the pursuit of knowledge—even of temporal things—is a good activity which ought to develop towards man’s ultimate end of knowing God Himself. Philosopher Christopher Blum writes:

[Studiousness] cannot mean that we are meant to remain in whatever intellectual conditions we find ourselves, for, as Newman once memorably said, ‘it is impossible to stop the growth of the mind.’ Indeed, any desire to study is a desire to improve....Our appetite for knowledge, therefore, must be ruled by a standard that permits and directs its growth,...on the path which leads to wisdom.⁹

⁷ST II-2. Q.166, a.2, corpus.

⁸Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1965), 151;150.

⁹Christopher O. Blum, “A Fruitful Restraint: The Perennial Relevance of the Virtue of Studiousness,” *Nova et Vetera* 11, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 959. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed January 26, 2017).

The goal or purpose of studiousness is not to repress man's natural desire for knowledge; instead, studiousness aims to moderate the desire for knowledge when it is inappropriate or harmful to the achievement of man's end. Ordered growth in knowledge is natural and good for man. Studiousness seeks to keep man on the path to wisdom by moderating the inordinate desires that may lead him astray. In reference to the guidelines that keep man on this path, theologian Jan Aertsen posits an "ethics of knowing, [for] when man pursues knowledge according to reason, he proceeds virtuously, possessing the virtue of *studiositas*. When, on the other hand, he goes beyond the rule of reason, he commits the sin of curiosity."¹⁰ With the moderation of reason, man will pursue knowledge of goodness and truth in such a way that will prepare him for knowledge of Goodness and Truth Himself. This preparation includes guidance on the path of wisdom, which leads to natural contemplation in this life and the Beatific Vision in the next.

There are two main vices that aim to dissuade man on the path of wisdom, both of which fall under the capital sin of acedia or sloth; these are known as disinterestedness and curiosity. The sins of acedia may be divided into two categories: those whereby one flees from what saddens him, and those whereby one seeks compensations.¹¹ The first category may take the form of an apathetic disinterestedness towards cultivating a desire for the good of knowledge, which is the defect of studiousness when considered in this light. Aquinas refers to the second category as "wandering after unlawful things" which is further divided into various kinds. In relation to the wanderings of the imagination, this vice is known as curiosity, which is the excess of studiousness as it seeks to know too much or things that one ought not to know.¹² The

¹⁰Jan Aertsen, "Aquinas and the Human Desire for Knowledge," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 415.

¹¹Jean-Charles Nault O.S.B., *The Noonday Devil: Acedia, the Unnamed Evil of Our Times*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015), 81.

¹²*ST* II-2. Q.35, a.4, ad.3.

insatiability of curiosity indicates that the curious man is unable to find contentment and peace, as he always is searching for more knowledge and stimulation, even if it is trivial and meaningless. Both vices deter man from the path of wisdom, as apathy towards knowledge makes one forget his natural duties and obligations to know certain goods, while curiosity leads one to pursue knowledge that is excessive and inappropriate for him given the circumstances.

Although apathy or sloth is a capital vice, it may be considered as a defect of studiousness when it takes the form of disinterestedness towards knowledge and truth. The man guilty of this vice lacks a proper love and desire for union with the truth. There are three main areas in which all men have an obligation to pursue knowledge. First, one ought to cultivate his spiritual life and thus pursue knowledge of truths that are necessary for salvation. These fundamentally include the Trinity and the Incarnation, although one ought to pursue truths of the faith in order to deepen his spiritual life as far as he is able.¹³ Secondly, one ought to pursue knowledge of God Himself in addition to the truths necessary for salvation. Even though man cannot fully know God until the Beatific Vision, he nevertheless ought to pursue knowledge of Him as far as his finite reason will allow. If done in accordance with reason, this pursuit of knowledge is most noble. Finally, on a more practical level, one is required to know things related to his state in life, duties, and responsibilities.¹⁴ For example, a doctor is obliged to study new advances in medicine so that he may serve his patients to the greatest of his ability. Similarly, a student whose vocation is to pursue academic and rigorous study of a particular subject ought to place his studies above extracurricular activities. Just as a lawyer must stay up-to-date on the most recent legislation, so a police man ought not to neglect his routine training of weapons or safety procedures, since both of these professions have duties attached to those

¹³ST I. Q.1, a.1., corpus.

¹⁴Cunningham, 738.

whom they serve. Likewise, a priest must not abandon or disregard his theological studies since his pastoral care demands that he know about the truths of the faith and advise the faithful accordingly. In these ways, certain states in life or professions may require that one pursue certain kinds of knowledge. What keeps man from pursuing knowledge in all three of these areas is a disposition permeated by apathy. Although studiousness aims at moderation, Aquinas teaches that it “indirectly” strengthens “seeking knowledge of things...[by] removing obstacles” that would inhibit this pursuit.¹⁵ While the disinterested soul may require a strengthening kind of virtue for complete healing, such as perseverance under the cardinal virtue of fortitude, such strengthening occurs indirectly in the studious soul due to the nature of studiousness.

In contrast to the defective vice of apathetic disinterestedness is the excessive vice of curiosity. Since studiousness addresses the desire for knowledge rather than knowledge itself, weighty consideration must be given to the intention or desire of the knower when reflecting upon the vice of curiosity. Saint Augustine illustrates the contrast between the dispositions of the studious soul and the curious soul. He writes:

Every love that belongs to a studious soul which wants to know what it does not know is not a love of what it does not know but rather of what it does know. It is because of what it does know that it wants to know what it does not know. But someone so curious as to be carried away by nothing other than a love of knowing the unknown...should be distinguished from the studious and called curious.¹⁶

Both the studious and the curious face the unknown. The difference lies in the reality that studious souls seek “to come to love what they know more fully by seeking knowledge toward which its love points them,” whereas curious souls proceed “by anxious hatred of what they

¹⁵ST II-2. Q.166, a.2, ad.3.

¹⁶Augustine, “Holy Trinity,” quoted in *Intellectual Appetite: A Theological Grammar*, by Paul J. Griffiths (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 19.

know not.”¹⁷ In other words, the studious man loves a good object and desires to know it further, whereas the curious man is motivated by a hatred of the unknown, regardless of the goodness of the object. The curious soul does not aim to delight in the object known; instead, it desires to revel in the artificial joy that the object is no longer unknown to himself. The devastating effect of this hatred is that the curious man constantly searches for knowledge without ever truly knowing the value and depth of being. His appetite is for ownership, whereas the studious “do not seek to sequester, own, possess or dominate what they hope to know; they want, instead, to participate lovingly in it, to respond to it knowingly as gift rather than as potential possession.”¹⁸ This contrast between participation and possession is crucial for understanding the virtue of studiousness. For the studious soul, objects are loved and cherished rather than controlled. The curious are lost in an empty and lonely world of objects, whereas the studious rejoice in a beautiful world of gifts which ought never—or can never—be possessed.¹⁹ This contrast beautifully illustrates the process of natural knowledge towards man’s supernatural end. Based on Augustine’s principle that knowledge is pursued based upon something previously known and loved, one may conclude that natural knowledge and the expansion of it may, in fact, prepare one for knowledge of greater things, as well as a deeper love for them. Here, Augustine illustrates the relationship between knowing and loving. For instance, when the intellect sees a good, the will cannot help but cherish and love it. In this way, studiousness attaches a spirit of *stewardship* to knowledge, as opposed to one of ownership, which in turn teaches one to love naturally good

¹⁷Paul J. Griffiths, *Intellectual Appetite: A Theological Grammar* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 20.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 22.

things when they are known.²⁰ Then, when man reaches the Beatific Vision, he will necessarily love the object of his knowledge in knowing Him. Thus, studiousness emerges as an extremely significant virtue, as the motivations surrounding one's pursuit of knowledge reveal where his true love lies.

The vice of curiosity demonstrates a detestation for the unknowable, and this may be present in both intellectual and sense knowledge. In intellectual knowledge, Aquinas maintains that knowledge of truth is a good in itself; it can only be evil *accidentally* on the part of the knower if he desires to know out of pride or for some evil purpose.²¹ Aquinas provides four main examples to illustrate the ways in which the desire for knowledge may be perverted. First, if one withdraws from study that his state in life demands of him, then he is at fault. The example Aquinas gives is that of a priest who neglects his theological studies for the amusement of plays and songs. While plays and songs are goods in themselves, they nevertheless may be sinful if the enjoyment of them demands the loss of a higher, more important good given the state of the person. Secondly, one must not seek knowledge from unworthy sources, such as witches or demons, since these are unfit to teach on matters of truth. Thirdly, if one becomes so absorbed with the study of creatures that he forgets to study them according to their true end (i.e., in relation to God), then he does not truly know them as they are. Fourthly, one ought not to seek knowledge that is above his capacity to know, either due to his individual capacity for knowledge or the limits of reason in general. In regards to the individual, each person has a unique aptitude for knowledge that coincides with his vocation. For instance, among the saints there are great scholars and doctors of the Church as well as simple men and women who, despite their lack of knowledge in the arts and science, nevertheless held more wisdom than

²⁰Levering.

²¹*ST* II-2. Q.167, a.1, corpus.

many of their contemporaries. Studiosness expands beyond the life of the scholar or college student, as it moderates each person's desire for knowledge according to reason and his individual state in life. Essentially, each person has unique gifts, talents, and intellectual abilities in study, all of which correspond to his flourishing according to divine providence. In regards to the limits of reason in general, this includes even the mysteries of the faith, such as the Trinity, to which one ought to assent by faith with the realization and acceptance of the limits of reason. If one tries to explain such a mystery *beyond* reason's ability, he will inevitably become frustrated and perhaps doubt the truth of the mystery. Goethe wisely teaches, "We would have a better knowledge of things if we did not try to know them so thoroughly."²² Blum summarizes Aquinas' four points as follows: "The studious man desires to learn about those things his state in life obliges him to know, from the right teachers, referring his knowledge of created things to God as their principle and end, and finally, wants most to study subjects he is actually able to understand."²³ If man adheres to these four directions, then his pursuit of intellectual knowledge will remain untainted by the vice of curiosity. However, if he is blinded by his detestation of unknowable things, then he falls into the vice of curiosity and enters a state of unrest and agitation, always seeking to satisfy his desire for knowledge yet never knowing the true value and goodness of a being.

In addition to intellectual knowledge, sense knowledge may fall victim to the vice of curiosity as seen in what Thomas refers to as "concupiscence of the eyes." Knowledge of sensible things is a good in itself, since man is a body-soul composite and must seek to know sensible things that are necessary for his well-being. However, his desire for sense knowledge

²²Goethe, "Spruche in Prosa," quoted in *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, by Josef Pieper (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1965), 199.

²³Blum, 958.

may be harmful in two ways: as the source of distraction or as a near occasion of sin.²⁴ First, if one pursues sense knowledge as a source of distraction rather than a necessary part of his existence, then he falls into the vice curiosity. Perhaps the more devastating presence of this vice in the modern world is the addiction of modern man to constant distractions. Aquinas refers to constant stimulation of the senses as “concupiscence of the eyes,” since it aims at perpetual distractions to befuddle the mind, divert substantial thought, and disturb the peace and tranquility of the soul. This is primarily seen in several modern technologies. Today, man can never find silent stillness, as he constantly has headphones on, the television playing in the background, exposure to the endless sensationalism of the news cycle, or a cell phone in his pocket. This constant stimulation sends man on a constant spiral of restlessness without giving the opportunity for contemplation on knowledge on the higher things. Pieper writes:

It [Concupiscence of the eyes] reaches the extremes of its destructive and eradicating power when it builds itself a world according to its own image and likeness: when it surrounds itself with the restlessness of a perpetual moving picture of meaningless shows, and with the literally deafening noise of impressions and sensations breathlessly rushing past the windows of the sense...[It] makes man incapable not only of coming to himself but also of reaching reality and truth.²⁵

As Aristotle pointed out in the *Metaphysics*, man desires to know things for their own sake and he takes great delight in knowing them. “Concupiscence of the eyes” eradicates this delight. Instead of finding peace with the reality that he will not know everything in this life, the curious man drives himself with constant distractions and sensible stimulations, *perpetually desiring novelty for its own sake*. Pieper writes, “‘concupiscence of the eyes’ does not aim to perceive reality, but to enjoy ‘seeing.’”²⁶ The moment he knows an object, it ceases to be a novelty and

²⁴*ST* II-II. Q.167, a.2, corpus.

²⁵Pieper, 201-202.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 200.

he falls into boredom. He can never reach complete knowledge of sensible things when he has an inability to rest, appreciate, and participate in their goodness. The curious man reduces these good objects to meaningless possessions which he can control; he loses sight of the value of beings that are meaningful and conducive to his end of knowing God. In this way, constantly searching for sense knowledge as the source of distraction is direct assault on the contemplation and knowledge which man naturally desires.

The second way that sense knowledge may be harmful is if it becomes a near occasion of sin. For example, if seeing chocolate cake leads one to gluttony, or if seeing a woman incites one to lust, then he ought to avoid knowledge of these things. While man ought to be able to see goods, such as a chocolate cake or a person of the opposite gender, without falling into sin, it is part of fallen human nature that man can no longer intuitively see things according to their value and worth. Even though one ought to see these goods as they truly are in the reality, he must nevertheless be prudent and know his weaknesses. If knowledge of some object, even if it is a good in itself, might lead him to sin, then he ought to avoid it until he has cultivated the necessary virtues to treat it according to reason. Cunningham provides a helpful summary for assisting one in determining whether or not he ought to pursue knowledge in a certain area, writing, “Whenever there is a reasonable cause for the pursuit of any study, and the knowledge itself is not spiritually harmful in itself or as a deterrent from obligatory study, and there is no extrinsic factor which is evil (such as motives of pride or an occasion of sin)—then the study is itself morally right.”²⁷ If one follows these guidelines, his desire for knowledge is most worthy. If, however, curiosity of sense knowledge takes the form of distractions or near occasions of sin, the desire for knowledge disregards the object known and focuses solely on the action of knowing itself.

²⁷Cunningham, 739.

In order to cultivate the virtue of studiousness in the modern world, one must first develop an environment and lifestyle that includes silence. This stands in direct contrast to the perpetual distractions of curiosity, since silence means much more than the absence of sound. Romano Guardini writes, “Silence does not mean only that no word is spoken and no sound uttered....Rather, silence is that which takes place when man, after speaking, returns to himself and grows still....It is a knowing, a feeling, a living stillness, a vibrating within oneself.”²⁸ Curiosity is marked by a restlessness, aiming to gain possession of objects out of a detestation for the unknown. Studiousness, however, bears the characteristics of delight and rest by participating in goods that are worthy of such contemplation, and this rest and peace is only possible through silence. Pieper writes, “The perception of the reality of God and His creation, and the possibility of shaping [oneself] and the world according to this truth reveals itself only in silence.”²⁹ Curiosity, which seeks constant distractions and noise, remains incapable of such a tranquil state. This is a great tragedy, since “only in silence is true knowledge attained.”³⁰ Theologian Servais Pinckaers writes, “It is at the heart of silence to which we go that we perceive directly our power to think and to act....That is why those who are in pursuit of wisdom take pleasure in silence.”³¹ It is only in silence that one understands the real questions of life that are unanswerable by human words. It is only in silence that the mysteries of love, suffering, and the human condition are realized and appreciated. Guardini charges the modern world: “Let us

²⁸Romano Guardini, *Learning the Virtues that Lead You to God* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1998), 176.

²⁹Pieper, 202.

³⁰Guardini, 178.

³¹Servais Pinckaers O.P., *Passions and Virtue*, trans. Benedict M. Guevin O.S.B. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 67.

strive to become silent so that we may learn to be human,”³² for it is only through silence that one comes to know the voice of God, Who is the final end of man’s rational pursuits.

In addition to silence, studiousness also requires a spirit of wonder, docility, and attentiveness. There are three stages to wonder: first, one sees something beautiful which invokes awe in him, second, he realizes that he does not know the object and fears that he may not be able to know it, and third, he turns to the wise man in order to discover knowledge. This final element of wonder requires a spirit of docility and humility to turn to the wise in the pursuit of knowledge. The docile man demonstrates a humble willingness to learn from those who are wiser than himself. By submitting to the order of learning and the wisdom of one’s superiors, one is able to “make good intellectual ground before passing on to a higher one.”³³ It is far easier for an ignorant docile man to learn than an arrogant man who believes that he already has the answers to all of life’s questions. Aquinas explains, “Man has a natural aptitude for docility...He must carefully, frequently, and reverently apply his mind to the teachings of the learned, neither neglecting them through laziness nor despising them through pride.”³⁴ The role of docility in studiousness illustrates the beautiful interconnectivity among the virtues, since docility is an integral part of prudence yet an important aspect of studiousness which falls under temperance. Similarly, studiousness requires attentiveness or solicitude. This too is related to prudence, yet solicitude in relation to studiousness is necessary in order for one to determine what one ought to desire in knowledge or avoid as mere curiosity. Philosopher Christopher Blum connects attentiveness and studiousness, since this kind of “discipline of the interior senses [is necessary] for the task of knowing....The excellence that attentiveness promises is an ability

³²Guardini, 182.

³³Blum, 960.

³⁴*ST* II.2. Q.49, a.3, ad.2.

to say something determinate about the natures of things,³⁵ which are the objects of knowledge. The reliance of studiousness upon wonder, docility, and attentiveness reveals not only the unity among the virtues, but also the key to implementing studiousness in the modern world.

As a final reflection, it is extremely significant that Aquinas likens knowledge to the power of sight, as this analogy not only contrasts studiousness and the concupiscence of the eyes, but also illustrates the final end of man: Beatific Vision. Aristotle places the sense of sight above the other four external senses, since sight “makes us know and brings to light many differences between things [in reality].”³⁶ As sight perceives reality in a higher way than the other sense powers, it is often likened to knowledge itself, for knowledge is seeing the essence of a thing. By nature, man desires to know the natures of things, yet “the fulfillment of this desire can consist only in the contemplation of God’s essence, the vision of God...Man’s beatitude consists in a life in which he will see God face to face.”³⁷ Aquinas holds that happiness consists in an operation of the intellect *and* in the vision of God; this alone is *one act* by which man achieves happiness.³⁸ With this understanding, the pursuit of natural knowledge emerges as a method by which man knows or sees the essences of things, becomes like them by possessing their form in the intellect, and grows to love them for their goodness. This love then encourages him to pursue a deeper knowledge of these goods, and studiousness emerges as the virtue that keeps his motivation pure on the path of wisdom. Such an accurate and essential vision of the created world undoubtedly prepares him for the vision of its Creator. When he reaches this glorified

³⁵Blum, 963-964.

³⁶Aristotle, 980a.

³⁷Aertsen, 419.

³⁸ST I-2. Q.3, a.8, corpus.

state, he will not only know the ultimate cause of the universe, but also be like Him by knowing His essence through grace, and this likeness inevitably leads to a bond of loving, abiding union.

The virtue of studiousness moderates one's desire for knowledge, ensuring that one pursues knowledge of good things that are conducive to his beatitude. Aristotelian epistemology reveals that man delights in knowledge for its own sake and that he has a unique ability to become all things by way of knowing them. Since man's supernatural end is knowledge of God, man prepares himself for this end by rational acts of natural knowledge. When man knows good things in this life, he is moved to love them as goods. By knowing and loving natural goods, man prepares his intellect and will for knowing and loving God who, with grace, is attainable in Heaven. In direct contrast to studiousness are the vices of apathetic disinterestedness and curiosity. While apathy disregards man's obligations to know certain things, curiosity seeks to know things incessantly out of a detestation for the unknown, rather than a love or desire for union with the unknown. This fascination with novelty leads to restlessness and agitation in both intellectual and sense knowledge; however, with the virtue of studiousness, one is able to know good objects with a spirit of stewardship as opposed to one of ownership. Since all creatures participate in God, natural knowledge of them may be conducive to man's beatitude and prepare him for the greatest object of his knowledge, God Himself, when this knowledge is pursued according to reason. In this way, studiousness remains an essential virtue for keeping one on the path to wisdom, happiness, the vision of God, and intimate loving union with Him.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aertsen, Jan. "Aquinas and the Human Desire for Knowledge." *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 411-430.
- Aquinas, Saint Thomas. *Summa Theologiae*. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1948; reprint, Westminster: Christian Classics, 1981.
- Aristotle. "Metaphysics." In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon, 689-926. New York: The Modern Library, 2001.
- Blum, Christopher O. "A Fruitful Restraint: The Perennial Relevance of the Virtue of Studiousness." *Nova et Vetera* 11, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 953-968. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed January 26, 2017).
- Cunningham O.P., Francis. *The Christian Life*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1959.
- Griffiths, Paul J. *Intellectual Appetite: A Theological Grammar*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009.
- Guardini, Romano. *Learning the Virtues that Lead You to God*. Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1998.
- Levering, Matthew. "Aquinas on Studiousness." Lecture at Christendom College, Front Royal, VA. 06 February 2017.
- Nault O.S.B., Jean-Charles. *The Noonday Devil: Acedia, the Unnamed Evil of Our Times*. Translated by Michael J. Miller. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015.
- Pieper, Josef. *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1965.
- Pinckaers O.P., Servais. *Passions and Virtue*. Translated by Benedict M. Guevin O.S.B. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015.