

Ethical Aspects of Internet Use*

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1 Introduction

Internet use is currently very widespread, and its distribution is most likely destined to increase. It affords access, at a very low cost, to unquantifiable data and information used for study, travel, news (newspapers, etc.); museum schedules or modes of transportation; databases with scientific, philosophical, and religious publications; files of libraries from all over the world; graphic documentation; encyclopedias; documents of doctrinal interest; commercial and financial information, etc.; and furthermore it allows users to make purchases, often saving them quite a bit of money. For many types of work, internet use has become indispensable—or at least very convenient—because it saves travel and other expenses and provides knowledge that is otherwise very difficult to obtain. Related to the Internet is electronic mail (e-mail), which allows for rapid communication to any part of the world, and which powers some useful services (for example, services which send, via electronic mail, indexes of new issues of journals in a particular field of science or the humanities to which the person subscribes, often free of charge).¹

The internet is conceived of as a free and open network for which a filtering of content is not performed. Only activities that constitute serious crimes

*Translated by Tom and Kira Howes.

¹ For an overview of the positive and negative aspects of the Internet, the following resource is available: Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *The Church and the Internet*, 2-28-2002.

(terrorism, pedophilia, credit card fraud, etc.) are monitored and persecuted by the police, although the size and complexity of the network can often allow such crimes to escape those controls. The internet offers the opportunity to find positive content, which facilitates the expansion of good doctrine and which allows it to overcome any monopoly of large and negatively oriented publishing groups (television, newspaper chains, etc.). On occasion, the internet may offer content of poor scientific quality (false or unreliable information), or even content which is pornographic (of various grades of harshness), violent, racist, or terroristic; moreover, it can encourage encounters with undesirable people (pedophiles, prostitutes, people who wish to maintain obscene conversations [‘chat’], etc.). While not going to these extremes, the ability to ‘surf’ freely in all parts of the world can excite curiosity and cause a user to waste a lot of time, if he or she lacks expertise and self-discipline.

Neither good nor evil are intrinsic to the internet. It is neither the only medium for doing good nor is it the only medium for doing evil. It does not stand to reason that some dangers are exclusive to the internet because now almost all harmful effects of the internet are also caused through other media. Specifically, experience demonstrates that more harmful effects result from the habit of adolescents to have a television in their bedroom, which can be switched on at any hour of the night or day, or the recent spread in schools of small pornographic clips which are received via mobile phone (these days only the simplest and least expensive mobile phones do not receive images). There are also telephone numbers—which can be accessed from any telephone (mobile or landline)—that are dedicated to erotic conversations, etc.

It should be noted that something which really is specific to the internet is the possibility of extending good to many people without the need to mobilize large financial resources and personnel. Although it is also possible for someone to do good through film, the press, or television, it is much more difficult because this would require that this person have his or her own publishing company at his or her disposal (a television broadcasting station or production company, for example), or have the ability to act freely in an existing publishing company, which is not easy for many reason and, in any case, it requires a lot of professional preparation. Through the internet, and with only modest investments of time and money, many people can be

reached. It is true that one may use the same modest resources to spread evil, but that is nothing new because evil has already spread abundantly through other media. *The real novelty introduced by the internet is that the large-scale spread of good is made possible for people or groups of modest means who, until now, have been unable to positively intervene in the world of public opinion.*²

2 The Virtuous use of the Internet

With its peculiar characteristics, the internet has *pros and cons*. It is fundamentally a vehicle or channel for the transmission of data and content, which in general terms is a good thing (as are the press, the telephone, television, etc.). This represents a step forward from the days when it did not exist. As with many other technological media, it allows for usage for good or evil purposes (consider, for example, advances in biology which cause so many bioethical problems), and for expert as well as amateur use. Except in the case of children, which deserves specific consideration, use of the internet usually *only burns those who want to be burned, or at least, those who like to play with fire*. The problem raised is a problem of moral education and of firm convictions on the part of the user. The internet will be affected by a general problem of our time, which consists in the fact that the progress of human capabilities (to do, to learn, to communicate, etc.) has not always been preceded—or at least it has not always been accompanied by—the ac-

² “The media offer important benefits and advantages from a religious perspective: ‘They carry news and information about religious events, ideas, and personalities; they serve as vehicles for evangelization and catechesis. Day in and day out, they provide inspiration, encouragement, and opportunities for worship to persons confined to their homes or to institutions.’ But over and above these, there also are benefits more or less peculiar to the Internet. It offers people direct and immediate access to important religious and spiritual resources—great libraries and museums and places of worship, the teaching documents of the Magisterium, the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church and the religious wisdom of the ages. It has a remarkable capacity to overcome distance and isolation, bringing people into contact with like-minded persons of good will who join in virtual communities of faith to encourage and support one another. The Church can perform an important service to Catholics and non-Catholics alike by the selection and transmission of useful data in this medium.” (*The Church and the Internet*, 2-28-2002, no. 5). See also *Ethics in Internet*, no. 1.

quisition and dissemination of the knowledge and wisdom needed to govern properly so that these higher capacities will result in the good of individuals and societies, and not in their impoverishment or corruption. In this respect, perhaps it is regrettable that—being that the internet is a relatively new tool—various formative agents (family, school, catechesis, etc.) are not always properly prepared to give an accurate and incisive education regarding its use, when the reality is that developing and transmitting a culture of virtuous use of the internet and of other modern means of communication is an important part of the moral and Christian formation in today's world.

Based on these considerations, it is clear that *the problem of internet ethics is the problem of virtuous use of the internet or, in other words, of the training and virtue necessary for righteous use*, both on the part of those who enter content into the network and on the part of the passive user. The training and virtue necessary to operate the internet—so that it really is a tool for good for those who use it—cannot be replaced by any technical media, nor by any form of restriction. All manufacturers of filters or of technical systems of prevention insist on this point, either because those systems are not perfect, or because those who wish to outwit those systems, if they are experts, ultimately find a way to do so. Similar to what happens with other media, it is very difficult to stop an adult who wishes to do wrong, and when the impediment becomes greater, so does the price that is ultimately paid in terms of a lack of freedom and trust (often with counterproductive effects), or interference with work. A study of the ethical aspects of the internet must consider, first of all, the general criteria for its virtuous use. Here we shall distinguish between different contexts (work, school, family, recreation, etc.) and between various types of people. In general terms, one could speak of temperance, common sense, prudence, and attention to the whole person and all of his or her capabilities and dimensions. Except in some types of professional work, the internet (and, more generally, the computer) is another tool, one of the diverse tools used for calculating and accounting. Any excessive concentration on it is harmful on both the human and ethical levels. Internet use should not isolate the user from others (friends and social relations), nor should it stop him or her from participating in outdoor activities, reading books and magazines (about his or her specialty or about culture in general), consulting other sources, using other games, playing with

children, writing, watching good film and theater, attending concerts, etc.

To use the internet virtuously is to always use it for some particular good. One searches for something specific, through knowing where to look or using a reputable search engine, or wishes to buy something quite precise, etc. It is unreasonable for a person to connect to the internet without knowing what he or she wants to do, just because he or she has free time, wants to see what the new features are, or because he or she is tired and intends to rest by ‘surfing’ through one site or another. A well-formed person should be uncompromising on this point, as an automobile is used to go to a determined destination, not to wander around the city aimlessly, wasting time and gasoline. If someone has free time it is preferable to have a good book at hand. Regarding children who want to play video games, it must be taken into consideration what the games are, where the children are, etc.; in this scenario it is a given that something determinate should be done, and it is to be taken into account that children still need to be with friends, to participate in outdoor activities, to exercise, to cultivate the habit of reading, etc. The attitude of connecting without a specific and just purpose, only for the sake of browsing, already has negative ethical elements, and can easily give rise to more grave evils.

In the face of the content that induces, or can induce, one to commit sins against faith, charity, justice, or chastity, the same behavior must be exhibited as that which is observed when that content appears in other media (books, news, conversations, etc.). Moral principles concerning occasions of sin must be applied. *There exists a serious moral duty to avoid near occasions, free and grave, and one should also utilize the necessary means to make necessary occasions remote.* The remoteness or proximity, as well as the gravity, of the occasions can be taken in an absolute or relative sense. That is to say, a situation may constitute a proximate and grave occasion for most people, or it may very well be a proximate and grave occasion only for a particular person (or people), whereas for others it is not at all.

In my opinion, without wanting to minimize the complexity of the moral problem, it would be reductive to consider the internet in general to be an occasion for sin. In pastoral experience, one may hear about the internet primarily in this context. However, reflection on data concerning the same experience offers no license to draw a generally negative conclusion. Many

who use the internet, even on a daily basis, do not exhibit these problems, and there are many others who do good through the network. The majority of those who do exhibit moral problems are people who, in the absence of the internet, would probably develop the same problems by means of other vehicles. There are also cases in which people of generally righteous attitudes have committed certain moral errors; the sole reason being that they happened upon a morally negative web page, but such cases are certainly rare. Especially for avoiding these cases, and also for children, some technical means of protection can be very useful, as we will discuss below.

3 Filters and Other Technical Protections

Given that the internet is a vehicle for both positive and negative content, there have emerged technical devices to prevent the passing of negative content, comparable to how contaminated water passes through a filter that captures noxious elements. These devices carry out an *immediate prevention* that presupposes the *remote prevention* of the cultural and ethical order, which creates in the person *the decision to strive toward the virtuous use of the internet*. Without this cultural and ethical component, the filters would not be effective.³

The first systems of immediate prevention operated based on a list of negative websites to which access was not allowed. This system required continuous updating, and demanded that somebody be devoted to continuously explore the network to include recently created negative websites in the list of ‘prohibited’ websites. It was not very practical.

With the increase of the potential of personal computers comes the possibility of downloading on them a program capable of instantly analyzing the contents of the page that will be accessed, and to impede access if those contents are negative. The following filters are currently the most popular:

³ The technical data used in this study is taken from M. Crudele, ‘*Internet e Minori, Internet e Valori. Quali strategie per la sicurezza della rete?*’, lecture delivered December 13th, 2004 in a convention organized by the Ministry of Communications of the Republic of Italy. Other studies from this author can be found at: www.ilFiltro.it.

Optenet, CyberPatrol, CyberSitter, Net Nanny, Surfwatch, X-Stop, Rated-PG.⁴ One of the limits of these filters is that they analyze the contents in some languages, but not in others (for example, the most common filters in Italy do not analyze websites written in Russian). Their effectiveness is high, but it is not 100%. They can block articles about moral technology or books of the Bible, because they contain one or more suspicious words ('prostitute', etc.), and let through other pages which may have problems, although they quite reliably block websites with strongly erotic content.

Another method of protection is to catalogue pages by using an ICRA system. The owner of the website defines the website according to a scale of criteria that he or she is provided with. The user installs on the computer the ICRAplus filter free of charge, and the user himself or herself defines the level of desired acceptance in each category (violence, crude language, nudity, etc.). In order to modify the criteria of acceptance a user must have a *password*. Unfortunately, few websites use auto-cataloging systems, so this method of protection is not very effective yet.

A third method of protection is to use the internet through a provider that already applies a dependable and highly focused filtration system. This is the case, for example, with 'Davide.it'. It is a free and effective system, very appropriate for families, although it is not quite perfect: sometimes it blocks good content, or fails to block inappropriate content. Experts of sound judgment consider it advisable for households with children. The real limitation of this approach is that children today know a great deal about computers, and they can open a free account with another provider without their parents finding out. The prohibition of establishing other connections that may be downloaded in Windows XP can be easily circumvented.

A final system, designed for the protection of minors, consists in installing ICRAplus and programming it to only allow access to pages that are expressly indicated. The underlying philosophy is the same as that of forming a library in the home. As parents borrow only those books that they wish to have for themselves or for their children to read, and not all of the books currently on the market, parents determine which websites that they feel their children need for their studies, information, recreation, play, etc. I think

⁴ Good information on currently available filters can be found at: www.ilFiltro.it.

that the application of this system for use by adults is more debatable. In any case, this system requires good education, which enables it to be seen as a welcome assistance and good motivation for making virtuous use of the internet. Otherwise, it is not educational and is even counterproductive. If a young person who lives in a home where this protection is used, eagerly rushes elsewhere to do everything that he or she could not do at home, then his or her education has failed completely. Sooner or later this person becomes independent, has his or her own home, does what he or she wants to do, perhaps going further into evil than others who have lived freely and have learned to manage their freedom. In pedagogy there is a long history of experience in this matter: for instance, with those people who do not pray or who do not go to Mass because they were forced to pray or go to Mass, etc. at the school they attended when they were little. This is a classic case, on which there are many studies that compel serious reflection about how and the extent to which restrictions should be implemented—restrictions which should, in any case, be adapted to the age and stage of development of the youth involved.

4 Internet Use by Children and Adolescents in the Familial Environment

Children and adolescents use the computer and the internet quite a bit in their own house. Because of the lack of human and ethical maturity proper to their age, they are particularly vulnerable to receiving negative influences of various kinds. A recent study of the *International Crime Analysis Association*, entitled ‘*Child Internet Risk Perception*’, revealed that 77% of minors between 8 and 13 years of age use the internet. Only 26% of parents closely monitored their childrens’ internet usage. 52% of the children interviewed have encountered pornographic content, and 24% of them reacted with curiosity. 13% of the children interviewed had had contact with pedophiles through the internet, and of these, 70% did not say anything to their parents.

Various organizations of experts have been concerned with this problem. An interesting documentary from the United States Conference of Catholic

Bishops is entitled *Your Family and Cyberspace*, dated June 22nd, 2005. The aforementioned document, *The Church and the Internet*, says: “For the sake of their children, as well as for their own sakes, parents must ‘learn and practice the skills of discerning viewers and listeners and readers, acting as models of prudent use of media in the home’. As far as the Internet is concerned, children and young people often are more familiar with it than their parents are, but parents still are seriously obliged to guide and supervise their children in its use. If this means learning more about the Internet than they have up to now, that will be all too good. *Parental supervision should include making sure that filtering technology is used in computers available to children when that is financially and technically feasible, in order to protect them as much as possible from pornography, sexual predators, and other threats. Unsupervised exposure to the Internet should not be allowed. Parents and children should dialogue together about what is seen and experienced in cyberspace; sharing with other families who have the same values and concerns will also be helpful. The fundamental parental duty here is to help children become discriminating, responsible Internet users and not addicts of the Internet, neglecting contact with their peers and with nature itself.*”⁵

Parents also have to educate their children on these points, dedicating time and making an effort, if it is necessary, to know the internet because their children use it. When dealing with minors, it is morally necessary to protect them by means of one of the dependable systems that was previously discussed. At the same time, it is highly desirable that the computer with an internet connection is in an area of high traffic in the home, or one that is frequented by other members of the household: the living room, the kitchen if possible, etc. Parents must also explain to their children that they are not to give out their personal information (for example, filling out questionnaires), are not to talk to strangers, they ought to speak with their parents about anything online that seems strange to them, and they have to be cautious with the disks and other media they receive from their friends at school, etc.⁶ If appropriate explanations are given, the children will see these precautions as an aid to help them make good use of the internet, *as they want to do*,

⁵ Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *The Church and The Internet*, (2002), no. 11 (emphasis ours).

⁶ A more detailed consideration of proper parental behavior can be seen in the document *Your Family and Cyberspace*.

and furthermore they will understand such criteria as that of not ‘surfing’ the internet aimlessly just to pass the time.

When these children are older, it is still morally necessary to use a filter on the home computer. Thus they can avoid unwittingly entering websites with very negative content that may introduce them on a gradual path toward addiction. *Encountering, for example, strongly erotic content is a grave and near occasion for anyone, and parents have the moral duty of keeping those dangers from their children.* This is indeed the demeanor which good parents have toward their children: they do not take them to certain areas, and there are also specific establishments to which they do not bring them, etc. If that is not seen as an attempt against freedom, then neither should the precautions which were spoken of be seen as lack of respect for the children’s freedom.

In families with multiple children, it may happen that the parents become aware that one of the children tends to make bad use of the Internet. It is difficult to give general rules about what should be done. However, in general terms it is not educational that ‘the righteous pay for the sinners’, nor is it educational to submit the children who behave properly to more restrictions than is morally necessary. Needing to be faced, strongly if necessary, is the concrete and real problem of the child who misbehaves, avoiding creating within the family a general climate of distrust or lack of freedom. Generally, it does not seem right to force *all* the children to dispense altogether with the internet. At least, it would be a failure in the educational task of teaching the virtuous use of computer resources which, whether or not it is desirable, are part of today’s world, and that the children tend to have use of in school, at the university, in their future workplaces, and later in their homes when they are married, where in turn they will have to raise the children that God gives them. That the internet did not exist before and nobody died is, in my opinion, a poor argument. There was also a time without automobiles, airplanes, or telephones, etc., and it is not suggested that we dispense with those technologies. We must learn to use them virtuously.

Insofar as the children are getting older, we begin to deal with issues proper to adults, which we shall examine further.

5 Internet Use by Adults

Internet use on the part of adults can be studied from two standpoints: that of the user and that of authorities who are responsible for certain environments in which the user moves about (a business, student dormitory, colleges and universities, etc.).

From the standpoint of the user we first consider the case of the person of a morally virtuous attitude who uses the internet for work or study, and who therefore neither searches for objectionable content nor passes the time 'surfing' aimlessly. If work in the system (business, college or university, etc.) is protected by a proxy or filter (Optenet, for example), the use of the internet should not cause him or her any moral problems.

If in turn, he or she works without any such protection (without a proxy or filter), he or she will sometimes encounter very negative content (pornography). It is inevitable because those who promote websites with objectionable content use many systems so that people end up entering the website without even trying. According to the information that has been provided to me by experts, they utilize a variety of procedures. One of these is to record errors that occur when typing the name of a very popular website (for example, a periodical, a search engine, etc.), in a way that typing the wrong direction brings the user directly to a pornographic website. Other ways include advertisements on other websites that lead to immoral content. They also introduce into the deepest parts of the computer's operating system hidden programs (*adware*, *spyware*), which continuously replicate, and which carry negative content. They have, moreover, other procedures which would be complicated and unnecessary to explain here.

Considering what generally happens, and taking into account natural human weakness, which is also present in people of strong morals, if strongly pornographic content occasionally appears on their screen, sometimes they will fall, and if this is not effectively remedied, it is easy to repeat the fall and even to develop an addiction. Therefore, there exist serious motives to assert *in general terms*—without presupposing the moral attitude of the user—that people who work with the internet on a regular basis without any protection,

especially if they work long hours, will encounter instances of near occasions of grave sin, which they have a grave moral obligation to avoid.⁷ *We can therefore conclude that, for those who work in these conditions, there exists a moral duty to use a filter* (such as Optenet, CyberPatrol, etc.).

As says St. Alphonsus in the text cited in the note above, it cannot be excluded that very virtuous people who work without a filter may not run these risks, either because they pay close attention or because they rarely use the internet, and the experience of several months or years could confirm that indeed they are not at risk. In that case, it is not clear if there exists a moral obligation to use a filter. However, using one is a highly recommended measure of prudence which helps the user to avoid unnecessary stress. A person of principle should not undervalue such measures of prudence, given that nobody can be sure not to give into temptations that arise unexpectedly.

Let us now consider another possible situation. If a person who needs to work with the internet, and does not use a filter, and for that reason were to have repeatedly committed grave sins, the repentance of those sins and the consequent intention of amendment would entail putting into practice concrete means so that, at very least, the proximate occasion may become remote. One of these means is the use of an adequate filter. Another could be to work in a place where people frequently pass by or to minimize one's internet usage.⁸

An analogous moral situation could also occur in people who work with a filter, but who have a weak moral attitude or who, once in a while, leave

⁷ “Occasio proxima *per se* est illa, in qua homines communiter ut plurimum peccant: proxima autem *per accidens*, sive respectiva est illa, quae, licet per se respectu aliorum non sit apta de sua natura communiter inducere homines ad peccatum, tamen respectu alicujus est proxima; vel quia hic in illa occasione, etsi non fere semper, nec frequentius, frequenter tamen cecidit; vel quia, spectata ejus praeterita fragilitate, prudenter timetur ipsius lapsus [...] Ad occasionem proximam constituendam sufficit, ut homo frequenter in ea labatur. Notandum vero, quod aliquando occasio, quae respectu aliorum communiter est proxima, respectu hominis valde pii et cauti poterit esse remota” (Saint Alphonsus Liguori, *Theologia Moralis*, ed. D. Le Noir, Vivès, Paris 1875, lib. V. Tract. IV, c. 1, n. 452).

⁸ Although here we do not deal with the problem from the point of view of the confessor, it is worth saying that he who administers the sacrament of penance will have to apply, with caution and distinguishing between sins of frailty and those of malice, the teaching of moral theology about the confession of ‘occasional relapses’.

the door open for a clear complicity, which leads them to fall into gravely negative behaviors. From the standpoint of Catholic morality these people have the primary duty of avoiding all serious damage to their Christian lives, and putting into practice the necessary means for avoiding sin. Depending on the case, they will have to dispense with the internet, at least for a few months, if it seems that the difficulty is due to a particular moment in their life and it is presumed that it will be temporary; or will have to recur to a filter such as ICRAplus which permits the access only to the webpages which they think with certainty are necessary for their work.⁹ In extreme cases, a change of job may be warranted. If the difficulty is not due solely to the use of the internet, but also to television, journals, etc., this constitutes a larger problem, and the remedies which are to be implemented are also larger.

Finally, it should be noted that chronic situations of difficulty usually have several causes: the internet is used without a filter, in one's own room, at night, and without a specific purpose. Those users may be people who are single or who are isolated (although they live in a residence with many other people), and who use the internet to pass the time, sometimes with the, at least implicit, attitude of seeking sensual pleasures.

6 Internet Use in Businesses, Residences, Educational Institutions, etc.

In businesses, offices, etc. there exists a duty of justice to use the scheduled time in the labor contract for the work of that particular business or office. The use of electronic mail or the internet for other purposes may be equated to the use of the telephone or to reading periodicals or other books which are not related to the user's occupation.

Flexibility is permissible: for example, it would not seem objectionable if an employee made a brief telephone call to their home. However, in the measure in which those responsible see that clear abuses are being committed, they have the right to limit the use of the internet, for example by installing a filter

⁹ In this case, the password necessary for changing the regulation of the filter would have to be known by a different person.

that only allows access to websites which relate to the work of the business or office, or by stopping access to the websites which are the subject of abuse (music, photos, clips, films, etc.). Those responsible for the business should prudently assess the possibility that these measures may be counterproductive in terms of trust and of the spirit of collaboration from employees, but there is no doubt that computers and network connections are tools that the company provides for the completion of work that the employees are morally obligated to complete under their employment contract. The fact that the company refuses to provide means of distraction or of avoidance of work is not an undue restriction of the freedom of the employees. Naturally, it should proceed with flexibility and a sense of humanity.

A more delicate problem arises in residences or schools where students reside, for example, in the residences of seminarians and priests. On the one hand, it is logical that a structure of this type offer to residents a set of living conditions and services. Among them, there exists an atmosphere of freedom and trust, a place of work, respect for just autonomy and privacy, and a connection to the internet for study. On the other hand, it is also just to demand respect of certain norms of behavior, including *external* moral behavior.

If the internet connection is in its own room, it is easy for the residents to pass time ‘surfing’ the internet, or ‘chatting’ with friends, etc. Experience teaches us that, even when concerning people with a certain moral formation, immoral use of the internet will happen, with notable damage to those concerned. Sometimes those responsible for these structures do not put any remedy into place, they may do so because: they claim that private moral behavior is each person’s responsibility because they are adults; or out of fear of developing a reputation for being prudish and for not respecting the freedom of others, after all, God who loves humans more than anyone does not prevent the misuse of freedom; or claiming that they wish to avoid the creation of an atmosphere of distrust, which can be counterproductive; or that the residents may ultimately do as they please in other places or when they leave the school, etc.

It cannot be denied that in each of these reasons there is some truth. Additionally, it is extremely easy and economical, in the present day, for residents

to connect to the network via mobile telephone or with prepaid cards. Therefore, the importance of the formation and moral attitudes of the user always become clearer. However, what is at issue here is not the use that adults can make of their freedom, but the type of service that a residence or an educational institution offers. As it is desirable to provide healthy choices of food or an adequate workplace, it is reasonable to also wish to observe certain standards of quality in the internet service that is offered. That is why good conscience demands that those responsible for institutions of this type place between the input line and the residents' connections a central unit with a proxy (which also protect against viruses and hackers) and a filter, or at least with a filter. This presumes neither a judgment on the intentions of the users, nor limitation on their freedom, but a conception of the services which an institution should put into place. A tool is provided for work, information, rest, etc. and not as a portal to immorality. This falls outside of the goals of the educational institution. A resident could reasonably complain if a comfortable workplace was not provided, but not because he or she was not provided a means of immoral distraction.

Depending on the circumstances (the type of residents, etc.) one may consider possibly using other measures, for example, providing for a properly installed computer room—a room which alone has connections to the internet. For certain tasks which require the simultaneous use of many books and other reference material, this solution has significant drawbacks. In my view, unnecessary restrictions should be avoided. The use of a proxy and filter is usually a sufficient guarantee, but sometimes it may not be. This is a matter on which we must reach a reasonable judgment, taking into account all circumstances (the type of institution, etc.), as well as the costs of certain measures in terms of the atmosphere of trust and of freedom. With regard to adults, moral formation and personal virtue are irreplaceable. The desired purpose of these measures is to give reasonable assistance to individuals and avoid facilitations that end up being a form of cooperation with evil that is incompatible with the purposes of an educational institution. If it is discovered that one or more people make use of the network in order to carry out scandalous behavior (they induce others to evil, store and distribute obscene images, etc.), then they must be strictly dealt with, while still avoiding the implementation of restrictions which are unnecessary for the majority. Such

unnecessary measures give rise to counterproductive effects among adults. The ideal to which we should aim is that those who pass through such a residency are convinced of and educated on the virtuous use of the internet, rather than just passively accept some restrictions from which they will be liberated as soon as they possibly can be.

From what has been said throughout this study it can be concluded that the formation in the virtues necessary for the righteous use of the internet is now an integral part of the moral and Christian formation that all must receive. In that positive context an adequate place is found for the teachings concerning the technical means of internet protection and of the other measures of prudence recommended in diverse situations.