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1

INTRODUCTION

About ten years ago, the social media company Viki (2007) launched a new interface with a novel purpose. Viki, a name that combines the words *wiki* and *video*, offers international audiences the ability to watch and subtitle global television programming and films in over two hundred languages. In one notable illustration of their aims, according to Tammy Nam in a post to *The Viki Blog*, April 24, 2014, marked the beginning of Viki's Billion Words March: "a year-long campaign to champion access to online TV shows and movies for 360 million people worldwide with deafness and hearing loss." To support this effort, Viki users engage in three main activities: segmenting (dividing videos into sections so textual content can be added), subtitling (primarily for translation), and captioning (service for deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences). Any available television show or film has a volunteer channel team. Each channel team is composed of segmenters, subtitlers, language moderators, and a channel manager. In addition to enabling content access for the deaf community, Viki lists the cross-cultural sharing of video content as another exigency, with Korean-to-English and Japanese-to-English translation (and vice versa) representing some of the most popular captioning practices. Viki has enjoyed a considerable degree of success, as the company's running tally counter on October 21, 2015, listed over 137,626 contributors who have captioned over 1,008,399,825 words.

In *Rhetoric, Technology, and the Virtues*, we seek to answer a basic question about this type of rhetorical situation: how and in what way should digital rhetoricians consider forms of networked collaboration such as Viki's and other digital practices to be ethical goods? For many readers, such a question may seem unnecessary to ask in the context of Viki captioners, as few would consider the captioners' practices as anything but an ethical good and a positive social contribution. But why? What working definition of ethics enables us to identify such a practice as an ethical good? Do we locate ethics within the individual moral motive of the captioners? Is it that a Viki user follows a correct a priori moral principle that is universal and unchanging for all time? Is it the greater

good that makes these practices ethical? Is it care for the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities, the Other?

Furthermore, Viki is a complex ethical situation because not all its users are supporting a single ethical good, such as helping to create access for the deaf or hard-of-hearing community. A quick survey of Viki's community forum conversations reveals a wide range of value-driven rhetorical motives and purposes:

1. global university or high-school students who enjoy practicing translation into a nonnative language;
2. fans who enjoy sharing cultural programs across cultures (indeed, despite their Billion Words March campaign, Viki strongly appeals to television fan culture: "All subtitles are created by fans like you!") ("Join Viki's Subtitling Community" 2016);
3. individuals who simply enjoy being part of this particular community (i.e., they derive value out of the community interactions and not necessarily the specific practices of the community);
4. deaf and able-bodied users seeking to increase accessibility for the deaf community;
5. users incentivized to receive premium content in exchange for their actions, including access to georestricted video content (because Viki employs gamification,¹ some users may be motivated by a spirit of competition);
6. users taking part in numerous discussion forums devoted to a wide range of often heated criticism and debate about the quality of different programs' genres (drama versus comedy), which programs are more important to caption, and certain actors (we particularly recommend "The Pervert's Club" thread for a humorous discussion of male Korean television stars); and
7. users making ethical decisions entirely unrelated to captioning about how to respond to one another during live chats and timed comments in communal viewing sessions of a particular television program.

This list is hardly exhaustive. Any discussion of ethical practices in digital platforms such as Viki also now must consider James J. Brown's claim in his book *Ethical Programs* that not all ethical decisions in a networked space are even made by humans. He provocatively suggests that software carries its own forms of ethical decision making (Brown 2015). Continuing our example of Viki, this decision making would include the particular gamified algorithms that offer positive reinforcement in response to Viki users' activities, as well as the proprietary sharing of

and restrictions to the invisible realms of packet sharing, cookies, and aggregating user data. As a case in point, many users have complained that the Viki app can be installed on some smart televisions and not others (such as Samsung), which represents an ethical decision at the level of protocol, inclusivity, and capitalistic competition.

Viki is hardly unique in this regard. Indeed, most if not all social media and networked interfaces play host to a wide range of ethical motives and practices that may not be attributable to a single or limited set of overarching purposes. Our concern is that the research fields related to rhetoric and composition have yet to develop specific frameworks that can better enable us to describe and evaluate these multiple distinct ethical motives. In *Rhetoric, Technology, and the Virtues*, we suggest that a neglected ethical paradigm, Aristotelian virtue ethics, offers important resources for addressing ethics in a networked age. In general, virtue ethics avoids rational principles, universal maxims, or means-ends thinking. Instead, virtue ethics is grounded in the dispositions individuals develop through their daily living practices—practices in the present that increasingly involve social media and digital technologies. Virtue ethics is historically interested in the cultivation of habitual dispositions, specifically those that guide ethical actions in particular and contingent rhetorical situations. As a result, we believe virtue ethics offers digital rhetoricians across a wide variety of institutional contexts—academic or industry—a set of important critical resources for helping to understand how we can distinguish ethical from unethical actions within networked spaces without having to impose the types of universal standards of morality decades of rhetorical scholarship and critical theory have decried.

BEYOND POSTMODERN ETHICAL CONCERNS

In chapter 2, we introduce virtue ethics in detail through an overview of some of the major ethical frameworks philosophers and rhetoricians have engaged with over the past few decades. Some of these ethical frameworks are familiar to those working in the rhetorical tradition, but other frameworks may be comparatively unfamiliar to established scholars and readers who are new to conversations about ethics. These frameworks include ethical paradigms such as deontology, utilitarianism, and postmodernism. Of these and other ethical paradigms, it is arguably postmodernism that continues to exercise a considerable influence in digital rhetoric scholarship. Thus, in the introduction to this book, we identify some of the common ethical characteristics of this postmodern

ethical thought in order to highlight our thesis that virtue ethics offers a necessary point of support and extension for digital rhetoric.

For readers who are new even to the idea of digital rhetoric, let alone ethics in philosophy and rhetoric, we offer a few definitions up front. If you are reading a book on the subject of digital rhetoric, you are likely already familiar with the idea of rhetoric, as well as its variety of definitions over time, but we give a brief introduction to the term, just in case. Rhetoric as a concept stems back to the writings or records of a variety of ancient Greek thinkers such as Plato and the sophists. Plato's most famous student, Aristotle, gave us the definition of rhetoric most readers who have sat through a college-level writing or rhetoric class at some point have encountered: "an ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion" (Aristotle 2006, I.2.1355a). While the Greeks were thinking primarily about oral forms of persuasion, twentieth- and twenty-first-century rhetoric scholars have sought to apply, extend, or reconfigure ancient rhetoric concepts (e.g., *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*, *techné*, *kairos*, the canons [of memory, arrangement, style, delivery, and invention], *topoi*, *chora*) to encompass digitally mediated communication.² At a very basic level, Douglas A. Eyman's purposefully general definition of digital rhetoric is quite accurate to this reconfiguration: "The term 'digital rhetoric' is perhaps most simply defined as the application of rhetorical theory (as an analytic method or heuristic for production) to digital texts and performances" (Eyman 2015, 44). Indeed, for readers interested in a complete and comprehensive treatment of digital rhetoric research, we highly recommend Eyman's book, *Digital Rhetoric: Theory, Method, Practice* (Eyman 2015). Following from this general definition, digital rhetoricians—our intended audience for this book—include a wide variety of academic and nonacademic audiences: university students and teachers of digital rhetoric and writing, web designers, corporate managers, technical and professional communicators (practitioners and teachers), social media content creators, and others who use or study digital-communication genres, to name a few.

Broadly considered, ethics is a common area of inquiry within digital rhetoric research, stemming from its foundations in a broader field often called *rhetoric and composition* or *rhetorical studies*. Nevertheless, it is possible to spot certain trends and oversights within past and current scholarly conversations. In their introduction to their book *Foregrounding Ethical Awareness in Composition and English Studies*, Sheryl I. Fontaine and Susan M. Hunter argue that well into the mid-1990s, rhetoric and composition scholarship approached ethics through two dominant approaches (Fontaine and Hunter 1998). First, ethics was a

classroom-based practice wherein writing teachers created assignments to make students think about ethics in various rhetorical situations (without teaching specific ethical frameworks). To be clear, this first approach amounts to the avoidance of teaching specific ethical frameworks, such as virtue ethics or utilitarianism, at all. The goal of teaching critical awareness is not to teach students specific theories of ethical reasoning; rather, this approach functions as a generalized appeal for students to think about moral action in their writing absent a particular recommendation about how to act. In the second approach, ethics was simply adherence to established codes, such as laws against jaywalking or speeding (e.g., deontological) (Fontaine and Hunter (1998).

With regard to John Duffy's critically neglected essay "Ethical Dispositions: A Discourse for Rhetoric and Composition,"³ another trend within rhetoric and composition studies' approach to ethics has been a clear shift away from the Enlightenment or Platonic language of universals, metanarratives, and rationality we often see in the language of other ethical systems such as utilitarianism and deontology (as we discuss in chapter 2) (Duffy 2014). As a direct consequence of the rise of cultural studies, poststructuralism, and postmodern theoretical approaches—terms we define momentarily—Duffy (2014) notes, "The term 'ethics' lost ground to the terminology of 'power,' 'politics,' and 'ideology'" (216). To be sure, postmodernism is hardly a coherent or unified body of thought. What Duffy illustrates is simply the more generalized way in which scholars over the past few decades have to a great extent accepted a postmodernist challenge to rationality or universal axioms. Gary A. Olson (1999) acknowledges a similar consequence of this theoretical shift. Summarizing (and not supporting entirely) the perspective of some postmodern theorists, Olson comments, "Ethics is dead. . . . No system or code of moral values can universally regulate human behavior" (71). Still, one can easily infer that many postmodern theorists' primary goal is less to abandon ethical thinking and more to reorient its purpose. A good number of postmodern (and poststructuralist) approaches take the form of examining systems of meaning with the goal of identifying how universal or naturalized truths, goods, or belief systems have only ever supported particular and frequently inegalitarian ideological systems such as patriarchy, capitalism, eurocentrism, racism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia. These approaches are obviously motivated by ethical concerns, even if they are not framed in such language.

As we demonstrate in the chapters that follow, a great deal of ethical scholarship in digital rhetoric has repurposed and refashioned these

approaches. For example, we can draw on any number of postmodern ethical frameworks to offer a justification for an ethical motive for Viki's project, such as the critique of the presumption of able-bodied users among other social media content hosts. Popularized by rhetorical theorists who have drawn upon critical theory and cultural studies methodologies, critique in general refers to the critical demystification or unveiling of a hidden logic disguised by a given prevailing cultural ideology (patriarchy, capitalism, etc.) that enables cultural and rhetorical practices.⁴ As we discuss in chapter 3, social media interfaces such as YouTube unwittingly privilege the norm of able-bodied users as universal viewers or content creators—a form of privileging that can also be found in other broad aspects of US culture and media. A common ethical move grounded in postmodern ethics would seek to reveal this tacit able-bodied ideology at play in this assumption as, for example, not a self-evident truth but as a contingently privileged half of an abled/disabled body binary.⁵ In other words, the goal of a postmodern rhetorician might be to establish the lack of a foundation for presupposing nondisabled bodies as a universal or naturalized state of being (see Dolmage 2014). Postmodern ethics thereby would help digital rhetoricians challenge naturalized metanarratives, which support practices that cater primarily to able-bodied users. Postmodern ethics would then work to reveal this problem as not natural or inherent to the human condition and then advocate with or on behalf of the marginalized community of deaf users for inclusion as part of how social media designers imagine their audiences.

While work on feminism (Ballif 1998; Powell and Takayoshi 2003), digital writing (Pandey 2007), and discourse analysis (Barton 2008), as well as on Emmanuel Levinas (Bernard-Donals and Drake 2008; Davis 2010; Gehrke 2010), Mikhail Bakhtin (Bernard-Donals and Capdevielle 2008; Juzwik 2004), and Jacques Derrida (Brown 2015; Davis 2010), have complicated some of these postmodern positions, Duffy (2014) concludes that many scholars continue to view ethics as “a process of inquiry” (Fontaine and Hunter 1998, 8; see also Porter 1993, 1998) in which ideas about the good and the moral are located not in moral codes or specific values but in “local narratives and shifting identities” (Micciche 2005, 162, in reference to Kirsch 1999). In response to our opening question in this introduction (how do we classify digital rhetoric practices as ethical?), we suspect a good number of academic readers who are versed in these scholarly conversations would be inclined to answer through postmodern frameworks or related sets of theoretical or cultural studies topoi along the lines of the ableist critique we mention in the previous paragraph.

However, as many commentators from a variety of humanities backgrounds have noted, a lingering issue is that postmodern ethics tends to function primarily as an “ethic” (if you will) of critique. Postmodern theorists frequently do not seek to offer an alternative way to retheorize normative or affirmative ethical values because such thinkers invariably criticize such values as products of a contingent ideology framed through rational or foundational thought. By *normative*, we mean a term common to philosophical treatments of ethics that informs us how we *should* act in response to a given set of ethical guidelines. In other words, postmodern ethics’ goal of destabilizing the means to establish ethical values does not in itself offer straightforward ways to theorize affirmative ethical practices beyond the call to include marginalized ideas and to create or recognize the spaces from which nonnormative voices speak.

This point is memorably highlighted by the French sociologist Bruno Latour (2004b), whose work is being drawn upon by a growing number of digital rhetoricians (Brown 2015; Gries 2015; Holmes 2014a; Rivers 2014). In his essay “Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?,” the problem Latour (2004b) highlights is that both global-warming deniers (conspiracy theorists) and postmodern relativists similarly use the contingency of meaning to challenge truth claims. As a result, academics and nonacademics alike have become skeptical of any appeals to “matters of fact”—what the mind can or cannot logically derive from immanent rational processes *and* what invariable truths of nature science can empirically describe. The consequence of this practice of challenging all truth claims is that any appeals to facts become “eaten up by the same debunking apparatus” (Latour 2004b, 231).

While in the political service of progressive causes at times (see Latour 2004a), Latour observes that the postmodernists who claim the relativism of facts do not acknowledge that the view of matters of fact they are challenging was never realizable in the first place. As Latour (1993) highlights in *We Have Never Been Modern*, this perspective views human culture and nonhuman nature as existing in separate spheres to the point that the philosopher or scientist can represent an objective reality (nonhuman nature) without any contamination from culture. In response to this viewpoint, postmodernists often simply deny that interpretation is neutral or objective, thereby making all human cultural and rhetorical practices attributable to a still separate but contingent sphere of human culture. Latour calls this nature/culture split the “modern Constitution” (Latour 1993).

To be clear, Latour’s point should not be confused with the claim that negative political and economic forces do not exist in the world.

While we offer more treatment of Latour's thought in chapters 6 and 7, a quick gloss on his point here is that our purely social explanations and human-centered critiques of these phenomena only tell part of the story. By contrast, he argues that the sphere of human culture has always been composed through the, at times, unpredictable influence of non-humans. Hence, ethico-political interests for Latour shift from a critique of "matters of fact" toward an analysis of how humans and nonhumans have always comingled in shared "matters of concern": symmetrical actor-networks that compose the space of concrete and material reality. According to Latour, "asymmetrical" accounts of how rhetorical agency functions fail to consider the agency and influence of both human and nonhuman actors. By contrast, "symmetrical" accounts do not privilege one form of agency over the other in producing explanations for how rhetorical activities emerge and circulate in the world. As a basic example, rather than examining how one human motive attempts to influence an audience, Latour's work helps us consider how nonhuman agents, such as the lighting of a room, may exercise some subtle influence on how an audience is persuaded or how a digital rhetorician sets rhetoric into motion. Latour therefore posits that an ethic emerges from the careful tracing of each unique actor-network that composes a matter of concern rather than assuming each actor-network is reducible to a human motive from a predetermined ideological or methodological lens (historical dialectics, Marxism, capitalism, semiotics, knowledge/power, etc.) (Latour 1993).

Latour's thinking has come to function as a rallying cry for a growing number of critical theorists from different disciplinary backgrounds, including rhetoric (Gries 2015; Lynch and Rice 2014; Rickert 2013; Rivers 2015), who seek to rethink ethical concerns in rhetoric from an alternative perspective to postmodern critique. Latour (2004b) argues for a new kind of critic, one whose work can be applied to constructing new paradigms, practices, and communities multiple types of people (not just scholars) can use and be a part of. Latour declares that the role of this new kind of critic

is not the one who debunks, but the one who assembles. The critic is not the one who lifts the rugs from under the feet of the naïve believers, but the one who offers the participants arenas in which to gather. The critic is . . . the one for whom, if something is constructed, then it means it is fragile and thus in great need of care and caution. (Latour 2004b, 246)

Literary theorist Rita Felski's notion of "postcriticism" makes a similar appeal for critical theorists to attend to ethical and political "re-construction" after (Derridean) "de-construction," or reconfiguration after

demythification (Felski 2015, 17). Indeed, there seems to be a growing interest among certain critical theorists not to avoid or move away from critique but to categorize it as but one (ethical) tool among many others in a researcher's analytic and compositional arsenal. Yet, with Duffy's observations about the pervasive influence of postmodernism as a case in point (Duffy 2014), not enough researchers in the humanities or, we argue, rhetoric and composition are beginning to make this turn, especially with regard to ethics in digital contexts.⁶

REHABILITATING VIRTUE ETHICS IN DIGITAL RHETORIC

Running parallel to our interest in virtue ethics, Latour is well aware of the need to articulate some new positive moral values to examine matters of concern, stating, "The practical problem we face, if we try to go that new route, is to associate the word criticism with a whole set of new positive metaphors, gestures, attitudes, knee-jerk reactions, habits of thoughts" and that addressing this ethical system would require "new habit form[ation]" (Latour 2004b, 247). Latour's use of the term "habit" is important for our effort to revitalize a virtue ethics framework because the Greek root of *habit* is *hexis*—a key term for Aristotle. Indeed, Ellen Quandahl (2003) connects virtue ethics to rhetoric in an essay on emotion's role in writing. She states that the virtues are "characteristics of habits (*hexeis*) of feeling and action that develop through activities. Thus the name for moral virtue (*ethike*), is related to *ethos*" (Quandahl 2003, 15). Yet, the translation of *hexis* (singular) into *habit* requires qualification, as contemporary notions of habit lose some of the complexity of the ancient Greek treatment. In Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, *hexis* is a term often translated as bodily comportment, state, or disposition. It is a genus of moral virtue in the sense that the disposition arises from both conscious and nonconscious forms of habituation (*ethos*) achieved through repeated activity (*energeia*) and thus is something that cannot come about by nature but only through repeated practice (Gross and Walzer 2008; Hawhee 2004).

In fact, as we discuss in chapter 2, this connection between virtue ethics and *ethos* as habituation rather than artistic proof represents a strong point of overlap and extension within an area in which digital rhetoricians have already started to work (Fleckenstein 2005; Miller 2001). However, *hexis* is a unique and particular form of habituation. *Hexis* is derived from the Greek verb *echein*, which means "to have or possess," in the sense of an *active having*. A *hexis* is what produces a virtuous action to guide wisdom (*phronesis*), but it is not commensurate with

the completed action. Rather, the *hexeis* (plural) are the cultivated bases for orienting oneself toward virtuous activity in varied circumstances. To paraphrase Socrates's example in Plato's *The Republic*, a good ethical habit is to return an item one has borrowed from a neighbor, but this does not necessarily mean a virtuous person should return a borrowed weapon to a "madman" (Plato 1992, 331b–332a). *Hexis* is the disposition, the orientation or comportment, that guides decision making across multiple and contingent rhetorical situations. For Aristotle, the *hexeis* include intellectual virtues and vices along with ethical ones. Notably, ethical virtue is a "*hexis proaetike* or 'a state disposed to choosing' (1106b36), but art or *techne* is *hexis poiетike* or 'a state disposed to producing' (1140a7–8), and practical wisdom a *hexis praktike* ('a state disposed to acting') (1140b4–5)" (Lockwood 2013, 24). In this regard, virtue ethics' attention to the embodied and the material contexts and habits of dispositional formation also meets up with rhetoricians' contemporary interests in materiality, such as Rickert's notion of "ambient rhetorics" (Rickert 2013), Hawhee's notion of "physiopoiesis" or "arts of becoming" (Hawhee 2004), and many others with whom we engage throughout the book.

As evidence of the applicability of virtue ethics to digital technologies and networks, consider the opinion of one of the few contemporary social media virtue ethicists, Shannon Vallor (2010), who declares,

Virtue ethics is, arguably, the best and perhaps the only solution to this quandary [of ethical decision making in dynamic systems], for while it does reject the use of *a priori* criteria for ethical decisions, that is, criteria that transcend the concrete conditions of human flourishing, it still allows us to speak of sound ethical choices within such contexts, choices that reflect shared normative principles of broader significance and application. (160)

It is important to note that in her description, virtue ethics is positioned as a supplementary framework rather than a complete or total replacement for other ethical systems. In fact, one primary benefit of turning to virtue ethics and the language of ethical dispositions is that we can see how postmodern and cultural studies paradigms often seek to create ethical dispositions even if they do not explicitly use this language. Revisiting Duffy's article once more (Duffy 2014), we can see he offers a useful example from two different schools of composition pedagogy, a body of research that examines effective theories and practices for the teaching of writing. On the one hand, expressivists (Elbow 1998) believe writing is a very personal and apolitical process of self-discovery. On the other hand, critical theory pedagogy views a political

motive—intentional or unintentional—as inherent in all aspects of the writing process. Yet, while expressivist and critical theory pedagogies in rhetoric and composition studies may have dramatically different interpretations of how we approach the political nature of writing in the classroom, Duffy demonstrates that both groups nevertheless presuppose positive (normative) values in cultivating ethical dispositions in their students, such as impartiality in evaluating others’ claims, intellectual courage in stating controversial beliefs, diligence in problem solving, and accountability in representing others’ arguments fairly and accurately (Duffy 2014).

In addition, Duffy describes dispositions of ethical teaching practices both camps support, including cultivating a disposition of respect for student writers and humility in the sense of avoiding the top-down “banking model” of pedagogy (Duffy 2014, 226). (In the “banking model,” criticized famously by critical theorist Paulo Freire (2000), an educator makes a “deposit” of knowledge into an empty student or audience who sits in the classroom and passively receives this deposit.) Beyond Duffy’s observations, we also might think of the various shared ethical commitments in the fields of rhetoric, including the advocacy of inclusivity, respect for difference, and critique of injustice. To sum up, even postmodern arguments to decenter meaning in language and question assumptions must contend with the ways in which the hexeis form ethical dispositions specific to our communicative interactions with one another as well as how the environments and technologies through which we communicate also participate as dynamic players and not passive backdrops.

OVERVIEW OF RHETORIC, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE VIRTUES

Despite the flexibility and power of virtue ethics, it is not a common approach to digital rhetoric, even among digital rhetoricians who have argued for the enduring relevance of classical thought for a digital age. Beyond Quandahl (2003) and Duffy (2014, 2017), virtue ethics enjoys little popularity in digital rhetoric, rhetoric and composition, technical communication,⁷ or communication fields writ large (unless we include the ethics of care as connected to virtue ethics, a connection some outside the field of rhetoric have made and that we reinforce in chapter 4). Indeed, searching through the past decades of research in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, *College Composition and Communication*, *Technical Communication Quarterly*, and other major periodicals aligned with rhetorical studies encounters few references to the virtues or hexis

as virtuous bodily comportment. Indeed, even researchers who have gone back to reclaim early Greek thinkers for digital technologies, such as Michelle Ballif (1998) (the sophists) and Kathleen Welch (1999) (Isocrates), have dismissed the importance of Aristotle's virtue ethics for digital rhetoric (and rhetorical thinking more broadly). In a related criticism, and with unintentional irony, Patricia Bizzell (1992) writes, "We postmodern skeptical academics are *habitually* fearful that any talk of teaching virtue will tend to introduce exclusions, as socially privileged groups in our diverse nation arrogate to themselves the right to define what virtue is taught" (6; our emphasis). Yet, as a close reading of Aristotle confirms, virtue ethics does not commit us to the type of false universal axioms Bizzell (1992) and a great number of postmodernist thinkers rightly seek to avoid. Instead, what emerges in virtue ethics is a critically neglected means of differentiating ethical from unethical forms of digital rhetoric practices that are grounded in dispositions and repeated activities. It is important to note that virtue ethics is able to make such differentiations without relying on notions of the rational subject criticized by decades of postmodern and poststructuralist thought.

In the chapters that follow, we revisit the enduring relevance of the Aristotelian framework that undergirds contemporary virtue ethics, providing clear points of overlap with and departure from existing research on digital rhetoric and ethics as well as rhetoric and technology in general. *Rhetoric, Technology, and the Virtues* offers a key contribution by extending Aristotle's framework through two groups of thinkers: (1) contemporary virtue ethicists (e.g., Anscombe 1958; Hughes 2011; MacIntyre 2007; Nussbaum 2015; Vallor 2010; 2011; Williams 1985) and (2) political theorists who do not self-identify as virtue ethicists but whose work either stems from dispositional ethics or elaborates on contemporary virtue ethics frameworks. While there are several good reasons for drawing on political theorists outside digital rhetoric scholarship and rhetorical studies, our primary reason for this methodology lies in the following distinction: unlike many political theories, which tend to focus on restructuring governments, institutions, and systems, the theorists we draw upon view politics as a set of ongoing practices and specific actions (a focus on doing, one might say) individuals and communities can engage with in a variety of contexts. It is this emphasis on doing that we believe creates a number of important overlaps with the goals of digital rhetoricians who are similarly invested in rhetoric as both a practice of education and an active political practice.

After chapter 2, our theoretical overview of virtue ethics, each remaining chapter employs at least one such political theorist to update one of

Aristotle's hexeis for digital rhetoric, including Jacques Rancière (1992; 1995; 1999) (on justice), Adriana Cavarero (2011) (on care/reciprocity), Martha Nussbaum (2015) (on generosity), Jane Bennett (2010) (on patience), and Bruno Latour (2004b) (on fairness). Each chapter also illustrates its specific hexis through a related case study of relevant contemporary rhetoric and writing practices in digital networks.

Chapter 2 offers a more detailed explanation of classical and contemporary virtue ethics thought in contrast to, but alongside, other prevailing ethical systems employed by digital rhetoricians, particularly postmodernism, utilitarianism, and deontology. Our purpose in charting these conversations is to emphasize the various motives that led to virtue ethics falling out of favor with contemporary rhetoricians, despite the existence of numerous twentieth-century advocates such as Elisabeth Anscombe, Hannah Arendt, Bernard Williams, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Paul Ricoeur. After establishing this context, we put forth several exigencies for employing a virtue ethics framework in digital rhetoric, including responses to rhetoricians (Ballif 1998; Welch 1999) who have questioned the usefulness of Aristotle's thinking for digital rhetoric. In closing this chapter, we highlight how the language of virtue ethics is already present in a variety of contemporary rhetorical paradigms, including Rickert's ambient rhetoric (Rickert 2013).

In chapter 3, our first case study, we consider the hexis of justice through a discussion of closed captioning in social media videos. We foreground the political philosophy of Jacques Rancière (1992; 1995; 1999), whose work, as Ethan Stoneman (2011) highlights, is in tacit dialogue with rhetoric's prevailing interests in aesthetics and politics (e.g., Vitanza 1997; Vivian 2000). We argue that Rancière's unique definition of politics, which exists in dissensual activities that make visible hierarchies—or "partitions of the sensible"—offers a way to rethink justice as a habit, or hexis, of verifying another individual's political equality. At length, we compare Rancière's political thought with digital rhetoricians' interests in video production, (Arroyo 2013; Blakesley 2007; Halbritter 2012), activism (Gurak 1997; Sheridan, Ridolfo, and Michel 2012), and technical communication with rhetoric researchers' (Agboka 2013, 2014; Frey et al. 1996) attempts to theorize social justice through frameworks that rely on passive equality (such as liberalism). The latter are included in no small part because technical communication and rhetoric scholars such as Sean Zdenek (2011; 2015) are some of the few in rhetorical studies who have engaged rhetorics of closed captioning. How digital rhetoricians can enact active forms of social justice with and on behalf of the deaf community and other affected communities

with regard to closed captioning technologies is a concern for technical communicators. Thus, we argue that a Rancièrian hexis of active equality as justice helps digital rhetoricians in industry and educational contexts that use YouTube screencasts (e.g., instructions, how-to videos, promotional video games, advertisements) make visible this partition of the sensible by actively producing accurate closed captions—not as an add-ons in postproduction processes but as a significant element of video production. For Ranciè, such a hexis also suggests that this ethical practice of the verification of political equality is never finished. Thus, once captions have been produced, we engage the prevailing presence of racist partitions of the sensible within closed captions in the television shows *Breaking Bad* and *The Wire*. This example confirms that digital rhetoricians can benefit from viewing justice as the cultivation of an ongoing hexis of active equality for multiple communities whose equality goes unrecognized.

We document in chapter 4 how, among digital rhetoricians, an ethic of remix (Palmeri 2012) and cultural appropriation has become part of the logic of the digital, notably encapsulated by Alex Reid (2007) (“ripping,” “mixing,” “burning”), Jeff Rice’s (2007) idea of a “rhetoric of cool,” and more broadly, through digital rhetoricians’ use of Gregory Ulmer’s (1994) electracy theory (Arroyo 2013; Holmveik 2012). We argue that the logic of remix—not unlike closed captioning—can benefit from the cultivation of a specific hexis of care. We develop this claim by drawing upon a feminist ethics of care, in particular the recent work of the Italian political philosopher Adriana Cavarero. By designating vulnerability as an ontological category, Cavarero highlights that a significant part of what constitutes being human is that, throughout life, “the singular body is irremediably open” to two responses: “wounding and caring” (Cavarero 2011, 20). Not only are no two persons’ lifetimes of vulnerable exposures to others identical, but the degree to which a person is vulnerable to others also changes depending upon life circumstances. In other words, though we are always vulnerable, context governs the degree to which we can be wounded and the degree to which we require care. Thus, as an ethical disposition, a hexis of care would include the constant and practiced awareness and consideration that no relation to others is neutral because all are vulnerable to one degree or another, even in digital spaces, and one’s decision making to remix or sample must always take into account this relational vulnerability. When a digital rhetorician samples from a community or culture or individual, she is not merely “taking whatever she can find and using it” to compose freely, as Rice (2003) puts it; rather, she is also taking part in acts of

caring and wounding for any individual or community connected to the content and forms from which she samples.

In chapter 5, we take up the hexis of generosity in Aristotle's work, updated through the philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2015), to examine "slacktivism" as a potential ethical practice. While debates over slacktivism are almost exclusively couched in what we identify as a utilitarian ethics (means-ends effectiveness), we suggest slacktivism can also signal the development of a disposition of generosity—a disposition that can find its expression in repeated cases of charitable and civic activism, online and offline. We look at the social media slacktivism in phenomena such as KONY 2012, the Ice Bucket Challenge, and *Humans of New York* as cases that, on the surface, may seem to be ineffective or effective forms of slacktivism in terms of the overall ends they achieve. KONY 2012 and the Ice Bucket Challenge, for example, do not appear to have used different rhetorical methods, but one seems to have achieved better ends than the other when discussed in terms of utility. We counter that supplementing such evaluations of slacktivism with the language of virtue ethics enables us to more deeply consider how each site produces the conditions for developing dispositions of generosity, thus reframing how we look at successful cases of slacktivism, rather than simply looking at the ends the slacktivism achieves.

In chapter 6, we concede that a limitation of Aristotle's virtue ethics (along with Rancière's, Cavarero's, and other thinkers' we previously consider) is anthropocentrism (the view that human beings are the center of the universe). Anthropocentrism is a clear problem in an era in which digital rhetoricians are increasingly forced to contend with the environmental impact of the production and use of digital technologies (Weisser and Dobrin 2002). This chapter asks, how might digital rhetoricians develop an ethic of patience (*proaires*), or slowness to anger, for taking ethical actions on behalf of the environment? In dialogue with contemporary rhetorical interests in new materialism (Gries 2015; Rickert 2013; Rivers 2014), Jane Bennett's political philosophy of new materialism (the vibrancy and aleatory agency of matter), for example, extends Rancière's politics of dissensus to partitions of the sensible created by human/nonhuman (or nature/culture) divisions. Bennett advocates for what we see as a hexis of patience in terms of forming rhetorical responses to environmental damage to avoid outrage and scapegoating as primary reactions to environmental disasters. For our case study, we examine how outrage functions in social media related to environmental issues, focused specifically on the #DroughtShaming movement in 2014 that employed social media to shame wealthy Los

Angeles homeowners who refused to curb their water usage in response to the ongoing California drought. While outrage in this case was useful in stimulating national awareness (and, by some accounts, even local legislative action), a hexis of patience recommends that we do not allow these forms of viral shaming to abstract users' own participation from within complex environmental systems. Cultivating this ethical disposition makes sure humans do not mistake their outrage at the participation of certain human actors as constituting the entirety of the appropriate ethical response, thereby missing how their own hexeis are always already shaped by these diverse assemblages.

Finally, chapter 7 concludes the book by looking ahead to some of the ways in which digital rhetoricians can use virtue ethics to engage with emergent forms of digital technologies. We look at examples such as GPS and behavioral tracking, algorithmic regulation, and even the ethics of hospitality in software development, as Brown has documented in *Ethical Programs* (Brown 2015). We also call on rhetoricians to see the virtues as overlapping. Teachers of rhetoric in particular should not teach our framework as a rigid heuristic. By contrast, it is much more productive for students to go through the process of tracing users' behaviors in digital networks and trying to have a dialogue about what types of virtues are necessary and important to cultivate (and how we might help cultivate them). Following from this claim, we close by tracing what we believe is one of the most important hexeis for the present moment: Latour's (2004b) hexis of fairness. Fairness signals above any other disposition the need to look squarely at concrete ethical behaviors in formation in localized networks while resisting the desire to attribute their motivation solely to some hidden totalizing political system.

At the outset, we want to clarify the audience for this book. Our goal in writing this book was to offer a text that could be taught in advanced undergraduate and graduate classrooms. Indeed, creating such a text was no easy task. We found ourselves balancing wanting to produce the type of critical rigor that would appeal to professional researchers while nevertheless remaining able to narrate some of these ideas to an audience who may never have heard of virtue ethics or other ethical frameworks beyond clichés in pop culture or proverbial phrases such as *patience is a virtue*. We do believe the current book performs this balancing act, and we hope it gives enough of a primer for rhetoric's interests in virtue ethics for other scholars to take up the mantle in either direction: performing more theoretical research into the relationship between virtue ethics and rhetoric or using these frameworks to teach rhetorical ethics in the university classroom.

Finally, although we try to stress this point throughout the manuscript, we want to be very clear in emphatically stating that *we do not believe virtue ethics is the only ethical framework that should be employed in digital rhetorics*. Different ethical frameworks can help us achieve different ethical ends. While many criticize utilitarianism's ability to justify charity over social justice, the philosopher Peter Singer, for example, argues that utilitarianism can in fact be used to ethically promote charitable acts people would otherwise not perform. Our belief is not that virtue ethics is superior to every other ethical form. Nevertheless, we do believe virtue ethics offers some advantages, particularly for examining digital rhetoric in an age in which new technologies enable us to perform acts past civilizations could not imagine. Ironically, it is a 2000+-year-old ethical theory that we demonstrate offers several ways to theorize and articulate ethics within these networked spaces. In an era of #fakenews and #altfacts, who would not agree that the hexis of honesty, for example, could use revisiting and updating? The language of virtue ethics and dispositions shows us ethics is not only about correct principles and how we rationalize those principles but also about how our various digital assemblages and technologies actually take part in producing habitually ethical beings.

In sum, our aims in *Rhetoric, Technology, and the Virtues* are quite simple: we want to reclaim a role for dispositional (virtue) ethics in an attempt to overcome certain limitations of postmodern relativism and rational universality alike by grounding digital rhetoric ethics in users' habits and practices.