Term: Virtual

Quote: (1) A virtual $X$ (where $X$ is a common noun) is something, not an $X$, which has the efficiency ($\textit{virtus}$) of an $X$.

This is the proper meaning of the word; but (2) it has been seriously confounded with ‘potential,’ which is almost its contrary. For the potential $X$ is of the nature of $X$, but is without actual efficiency. A virtual velocity is something $\textit{not}$ a velocity, but a displacement; but equivalent to a velocity in the formula, ‘what is gained in velocity is lost in power.’

So $\textit{virtual representation}$ was the non-representation of the American colonies in the British Parliament, which was supposed to be replaced by something. So Milton asks whether the angels have $\textit{virtual}$ or immediate touch. So, too, the sun was said to be $\textit{virtualiter}$ on earth, that is, in its efficiency.

(3) $\textit{Virtual}$ is sometimes used to mean pertaining to virtue in the sense of an ethical habit.

Virtual [Lat. virtus, strength, from vir, a man]: Ger. virtuell; Fr. (1) virtual; Ital. (1) virtuale. (1) A virtual X (where X is a common noun) is something, not an X, which has the efficiency (virtus) of an X.

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Virtual knowledge: a term of Sextus Empedocles.