
Theses

2012

An investigation into the neural substrates of virtue to determine the key place of virtues in human moral development

Andrew P.L Mullins
University of Notre Dame Australia

Follow this and additional works at: <http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses>



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
Copyright Regulations 1969

WARNING

The material in this communication may be subject to copyright under the Act. Any further copying or communication of this material by you may be the subject of copyright protection under the Act.
Do not remove this notice.

Publication Details

Mullins, A. P. (2012). An investigation into the neural substrates of virtue to determine the key place of virtues in human moral development (Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)). University of Notre Dame Australia. <http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses/78>

This dissertation/thesis is brought to you by ResearchOnline@ND. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses by an authorized administrator of ResearchOnline@ND. For more information, please contact researchonline@nd.edu.au.



Chapter 3

Investigating the characteristics of virtue.

“To be a great and virtuous man appeared the highest honour that can befall a sensitive being; to be base and vicious, as many on record have been, appeared the lowest degradation, a condition more abject than that of the blind mole or harmless worm.”

Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus

Mary Shelley

Introduction

What did Aristotle mean by describing someone as virtuous?

To be virtuous is more than to perform, like a sports car, at one's full design specifications. Human beings are more than performance; they are more than what they can *do*. The perfection of virtue is an intrinsic good suiting our very nature; we are perfected in our nature as composite beings of body and soul. To be in this state of virtue is to flourish according to our nature.

Aristotle held that to be virtuous is to be in a state of natural perfection: virtue is that which “makes its possessor good and his work good likewise”.⁸²⁸ It is an *arête*, an excellence of character. This state is characterized by intellect, will and sensitive appetites - the active powers of the human person - perfected in their biological development, and thus able to perfect intrinsically our operation as rational beings. Perfection of rationality disposes us to, but is not subordinated to, perfection in action.

Some elaboration is helpful here at the commencement of a chapter which focusses on the characteristics of virtue. As the starting point of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explained that all human actions seek goods that we deem will fulfil or perfect us. Therefore the very task of ethics is to distinguish in these goods what is really a good for us from the apparent. He proposed that fundamental

⁸²⁸ *NE*, 1106a15.

desires of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain are the primary motivations in our lives and he insisted that these basic appetites must either allow themselves to be guided by our rational understanding of what is truly good for us, or they can and will exert an undue influence on our choices. Habits of self indulgence come at a price, and timidity in the pursuit of worthy goals will also leave us unfulfilled - rogue desires can deprive us of freedom and happiness.

Aquinas built on foundations laid out primarily by Aristotle. He too understood virtue as a state arising from the possession of habits perfecting the active powers of the sensitive appetites (the concupiscible appetite attuned to pleasure and the irascible to pursuit of arduous goals), of the intellect, and of the will. These perfecting habits enable us to act rationally despite appetites that draw us in contrary directions and despite external pressures seeking to turn us from our elected goals.⁸²⁹ He taught that the most fundamental moral virtues are prudence (perfecting our practical judgements about how to act) justice (the habitual disposition of making choices that accommodate the needs and welfare of others), fortitude (the habit in the irascible appetite) and temperance (in the concupiscible appetite).

Aristotle argued that the highest end of a human agent lies in performing rational activity “well”, activity that “aims at what is truly perfective of the human agent”.⁸³⁰ In other words not only the external end result is good, but the human agent is himself perfected. (1.4.2 and 1.6.3.) I argue in this study that this perfection includes our very neuronal activity, pathways and processes, and that this state of maturity is a natural and fitting state for human beings - when our neuronal development falls short of a consolidation of virtues, our personal fulfilment is compromised.

Organisation of this chapter

⁸²⁹ Virtues are “habits by which a person acts well.” *ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.55, Art.3.

⁸³⁰ Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Virtue: Quaestio disputata de virtutibus in communi and Quaestio disputata de virtutibus cardinalibus*, ed. Ralph McInerney (South Bend Indiana: St Augustine’s Press, 1999), xii.

Chapter 3 should be read in the light of earlier discussions of Aristotle’s notion of the hylomorphic nature of reality, the introduction to the Aristotelian-Thomistic account of virtue with a particular focus on the contribution of virtue to human flourishing, and the arguments for the unity of the person. In **Chapter 1** I noted the need to develop a methodology by which I can identify the core characteristics of the Aristotelian-Thomistic view of moral virtue. This methodology and this identification are the tasks of **Chapters 3** and **4**.

I commence with a case study from real life, a study of an exemplary figure from Japan living in the first half of the twentieth century, Takashi Nagai.

Recalling Elizabeth Anscombe’s advice that, before we lose ourselves in ethical theory, we must account for the richness and complexity of real people who manifest the tension between rationality and emotion, free and impulsive behaviours, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and fulfilled and unfulfilled lives,⁸³¹ it is fitting to begin our discussion in the world of real people and actual behaviours. Real life scenarios are drawn from the life and autobiographical writings of Nagai, medical doctor and nuclear physicist who, in the years after WWII through his writings under the most difficult circumstances, was a great force for spiritual healing in a country gutted by the horrors of war.⁸³²

In **3.1.4** in the light of an understanding the human act and how it is perfected by virtue, I note features of virtuous action that are in evidence in the case studies presented. These observations ground subsequent discussion in **3.2** and **3.3** in the real world. In **3.2** and **3.3** I identify key characteristics of virtue, according to the Aristotelian-Thomistic account. In these two sections the Aristotelian-Thomistic account of virtue is dissected utilising primary texts and commentary, with some

⁸³¹ Anscombe, “Modern Moral Philosophy,” 26-44.

⁸³² Introductory texts for an understanding of Takashi Nagai’s life: Takashi Nagai, *The Bells of Nagasaki*, trans. William Johnson (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984); original title: *Nagasaki no kane* (1949). Paul Glynn, *A Song for Nagasaki* (Hunters Hill, Sydney: Catholic Book Club, 1988).

illustration from the glimpses in **3.1** into Nagai's life and mind, and from his approaches to fostering virtue in the lives of others including his own children.⁸³³

The goal of **3.2** will be a review of the nature of virtue and its ordination to human flourishing. In **3.3** I review the development of virtue. My aim here will not be to enter into nuances of interpretation nor controversies, but rather to provide an efficient review of the principal characteristics of virtue in the Aristotelian-Thomistic account. In the process I hope to capture something of the brilliance of the insights that Aristotle and Thomas have placed before us noting their applicability to real life scenarios in the life of a most admirable man.

Hence my methodology to identify the characteristics of virtue involves an analysis of Aristotelian and Thomistic texts, in the light of the actual behaviour of a virtuous man, and of an understanding of the human act. In **Chapter 4** the initial list of qualities identified in **Chapter 3** will be further refined in the light of the distinct roles of the cardinal virtues.

What are we looking for?

'Cheshire Cat,' she began, rather timidly...' would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?'

'That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,' said the cat.

'I don't much care where...' said Alice.

'Then it doesn't matter which way you go,' said the Cat.

Lewis Carroll

Alice in Wonderland

We need to know where we are going, what we are looking for. I have suggested that a great challenge facing the Templeton award winners is the imperative for them first to clarify the meaning and features of virtue. Without a well articulated, authoritative notion of virtue successfully reconciling the respective roles of the rational and non-rational in the development and practice of virtue, those studies must be at serious risk of failing in their endeavours. The task of this chapter is to

⁸³³ A source for information about Nagai's life with his children will be Takashi Nagai, *Leaving my beloved children behind*, trans. M. M. Tatsuoka and T. Takai (Strathfield, NSW: St Paul's Press, 2010); original title: *Kono Ko o Nokoshite*,94.

identify characteristics of moral virtue able to be mapped against neurobiological knowledge of the human brain. A philosophically rigorous, defensible, understanding of virtue ordered to human flourishing, according to the Aristotelian-Thomistic account will be described and presented as an essential prerequisite to an identification of neural part-constituents. In the process I hope to convey something of the magnificence of virtue theory as a superlative account of rational behaviour and human fulfilment.

3.1 Dr Takashi Nagai (1908-1951).⁸³⁴

This first section presents glimpses into the inspiring and extraordinary life of Dr Takashi Nagai in order to demonstrate the remarkable relevance of virtue theory in its ability to account for human behaviour. In so doing, I will seek initial insights into the characteristics of virtue.

We will see, from his life and writings, that the nobility of Nagai's mature, considered actions and the richness of his emotional life typify what most would agree to be a state of virtue. It will be argued that virtue ethics provides a far more convincing model for the subject's actual behaviour than is provided by either deontological or consequentialist explanations. Whether or not the actions of others could be better described by observance of rules or duty, or by a preoccupation to achieve certain outcomes, it will be shown that in Nagai's case virtue theory stands out as a powerful explanation for his rational behaviour, for his ability to live with peace of heart in the midst of great difficulty, and for the richness and balance of his emotional life.

As virtue is known through its acts,⁸³⁵ it is also highly appropriate that we commence with human acts demonstrating virtue. Actual scenarios of noble action are described and analysed. This serves to anchor our discussion of virtue,

⁸³⁴ My sources for this section are Nagai, *Leaving my beloved children behind*; Nagai, *The Bells of Nagasaki*; Glynn, *A Song for Nagasaki*; and Masao Shiotsuki, *Doctor at Nagasaki* (Tokyo: Kosei, 1987), original title: *Hasushigoto wa Anrakusatsu data*.

⁸³⁵ ST, Ia-IIae, Q.56, Art.2.: "Habits are known through their acts."

from the very start, in the real world of sensation, passion, apprehension, deliberation, choice and action. In so doing, I hope to reinforce the conviction in the reader that virtues are not theoretical constructs for understanding behaviour, but manifest, objective, attributes of the person that facilitate behaviours which are good for us as human beings.

These scenarios drawn from the life of Dr Takashi Nagai will be revisited in the course of the current chapter in order to illustrate characteristics of virtue in a systematic overview. In the process I distinguish between the human act itself and that which pertains to particular virtues within the act. This will be of particular assistance, towards the end of **Chapter 5**, where one scenario will be used to illustrate the contribution of neural part-constituents to human behaviour.

Nagai's response to the cataclysmic event of August 9, 1945 led to his subsequent fame. His personal account of the immediate aftermath of the blast in Nagasaki became a best seller in Japan, and the subject of movie and popular song. He wrote some twenty books in the six years after the war.

Importantly for our purposes, Nagai demonstrated that he was a man of deep convictions and intelligence, concern for his fellow man, austerity of life, and courage. Greatly influenced by Pascal's *Pensées*, by his wife and perhaps also by his experiences as a doctor with the Imperial Army during its invasion of China, Nagai had become a Christian before the war. He was a devoted father and compassionate doctor; zealous for the advancement of medicine, he carefully documented the effects and effective treatments of radiation illness. Through all his suffering he manifested no bitterness towards the Americans for the bombing that destroyed half the urban areas of Japan and millions of lives. In post war Japan during the six years he lay dying of leukemia Nagai rose to prominence as a national spiritual leader as much for his extraordinary writings encouraging reconciliation and peace, as for his remarkable humility, inner peace, and absence of bitterness. "In the postwar years Nagai became a symbol of strength and optimism, a central figure in the spiritual and moral reconstruction of Japan. ... His

influence on the collective unconscious of Japan was very great.” He was praised in the contemporary press as the “Gandhi of Japan”.⁸³⁶ He was in the common sense of the word, and in the sense understood by Aristotle and Aquinas, a man of virtue.



Figure 3.1 Dr Takasaki Nagai



Figure 3.2 Nagai with his two children.

3.1.1 Context: August 9, 1945.

On the morning the bomb fell, Nagai was at work in his laboratory in the hospital of Nagasaki choosing X-ray films to teach students the art of diagnosis. Without warning, at 11.02am, there was a flash of blinding light. Nagai’s scientific training gave us this description.

Tremendous energy was released. And this energy, a tempestuous blast of air travelling at a rate of two thousand meters per second, smashed, pulverised, and blew apart anything in its path. The void created at the centre of the explosion sucked up everything on the ground, carrying it high in the sky, and hurled it back violently against the earth. The heat of 9000° Fahrenheit burned the surrounding area. Fragments of incandescent metal rained down in balls of fire

⁸³⁶ William Johnson in preface. Nagai, *The Bells of Nagasaki*, xx and xxii.

immediately setting everything alight. It is estimated that 30,000 people lost their lives.⁸³⁷

Nagai survived because, although only 500m from the epicentre, he worked in one of the few concrete buildings in that area.⁸³⁸

Everywhere there were dead and dying, convulsing, strangely swollen, skin peeling. Soon fires were raging. Weakened by previously contracted leukemia, and despite his own grave injuries, Nagai worked to utter exhaustion caring for the dying and injured through the day of the blast and the days that followed. As the hospital was gone he had to improvise everything. Only after three days did he return to his family home finding the charred bones and melted rosary of his beloved wife, Midori.

Nagai's scientific training and a sensitivity to psychological experience enhanced by his medical training are present throughout in his writing including in the extracts which follow. His capacity to describe with precision internal states and

⁸³⁷ Nagai, *The Bells of Nagasaki*, 28. This is typical of numerous passages in his account where he dispassionately and accurately analyses the event. Nagai's writing is in the spirit urged by another first-hand witness, Masao Shiotsuki: "*The atomic bomb must not be elegised or sentimentalised. It is not romantic fiction. It is not poetry. Its terrible workings and devastation it wrought must be approached and described as scientifically as possible and viewed as a pressing concern for all mankind.*" Shiotsuki, *Doctor at Nagasaki*, 82. This effort to be truthful and objective will be commented upon later. The final toll was of course much higher than 30,000. The memorial in the Peace Park records 73,884 dead and 74,909 injured.

⁸³⁸ Nagai, *The Bells of Nagasaki*, 11. Nagai recalled his own experiences:

I immediately tried to throw myself to the ground, but before I could do so, the glass of the windows smashed in and a frightening blast of wind swept me off my feet into the air – my eyes wide open. Pieces of broken glass came in like leaves blown off a tree in a whirlwind. I felt that the end had come. ... It was as though a huge invisible fist had gone wild and smashed everything in the room. The bed, the chairs, the bookcases, my steel helmet, my shoes, my clothes were thrown into the air, hurled around the room with a wild clattering noise, and all piled on top of me as I lay helpless on the floor. Then the blast of dusty dirty wind rushed in and filled my nostrils so I could scarcely breathe. I kept my eyes open, looking always at the window. And as I looked everything outside grew dark. There as a noise like a stormy sea, and the air everywhere swirled round and round. My clothes, the zinc roof, pieces of wood, and all kinds of other objects were performing a macabre dance in that dark sky. Then it gradually became cold, as at the end of autumn, and a strange and silent emptiness ensued. Clearly this was no ordinary event.

subjective responses, as well as external events, make his writing ideal for the purposes of this study.

3.1.2 Acts of virtue.

In the four scenarios which follow I focus on incidents drawn from Nagai's first hand accounts, and from biographical writings based on his own accounts.

Each scenario describes his own actions which specifically, in some way or other, could universally be acknowledged as noble and good. Each provides some psychological insight also. Commentaries below each offer a preliminary analysis.

In the first he describes carrying out a difficult task and a subsequent moment of insight. This experience occurred during his years as an army doctor in China. The second and the third are of intense experiences in the immediate aftermath of the bomb. In each of these, searing memories etch truthful vivid descriptions. The fourth scenario deals with Nagai's maturing attitudes in the last years of his life, and in particular with the composition of a short poem.

These examples also flag the danger of underestimating the complexity of virtuous actions. Bear in mind that any short real life description must necessarily be a gross simplification of actual events. In these four scenarios convey the great complexities possible in a moral act facilitated by virtue, as well as the difficulty in separating what is essential to virtue from what is additional in the act.

a) Scenario 1. Treating a prisoner.

A biographer describes a moment of enlightenment during his years in China.

Nagai remembered his inner turmoil during the 1933-34 fighting in Manchuria. Yet now, though the fighting was far worse he enjoyed peace and freedom in his heart. He certainly

had changed! One night he jotted an entry in his notebook about the exhilaration that flooded him that day when he was washing the gangrenous foot of a Chinese soldier-prisoner before an operation. He suddenly realised he felt the same compassion for a wounded Chinese as for a wounded Japanese, and wrote: "I now know I have come to China not to defeat anybody, not to win a war. I have come to help the wounded, Chinese as much as Japanese, civilians as much as combatants".⁸³⁹

Commentary

Nagai's "peace and freedom in his heart", his fulfilment as he dedicated himself compassionately to the care of the wounded, shines brightly on the pages of his journal. He reveals his consciousness of having grown greatly in interior peace, overcoming "inner turmoil" despite the increasing wartime danger. The moment described captures his flooding "exhilaration" at realising that he cares for soldiers of either side with equal respect and compassion. This moment of insight occurs precisely as he carries out the objectively repulsive task of washing a gangrenous foot, with all the associated stench and aversion to the task.

It will be shown that this growth towards inner fulfilment is an important facet of the virtuous life. Furthermore, the phenomenon of a flash of insight will be significant in later discussion about the virtue of justice.

b) Scenario 2. The Rising Sun.

Survivors worked frantically to assist survivors in the hours following the blast. Yet the task was too great. Nagai writes of his profound helplessness and discouragement. "I stood helplessly in the middle (of the wounded), doing nothing. ... It was an utterly disheartening scene."⁸⁴⁰ Most of his colleagues and

⁸³⁹ Glynn, *A Song for Nagasaki*, 78.

⁸⁴⁰ Nagai, *The Bells of Nagasaki*, 36.

students dead, survivors losing their nerve, ten years of academic work incinerated, Nagai collapsed, greatly weakened by loss of blood. “My knees trembled and I felt my strength ebbing away. ‘It’s the end,’ I murmured and collapsed.”

When he came to, despite his own dire situation, Nagai grasped the need to lift his followers, unite them in purpose, and rally them to the task of helping others. He called for a flag. Nothing was to be found, so he took a hospital sheet:

Taking a handful of blood that was dripping from my chin, I traced a huge circular sun on the sheet, which now became a Japanese flag. Attaching this “Rising Sun” to the bamboo pole, we lifted it up and watched it flutter loudly as the hot wind blew around.

With sleeves rolled up and a white band around his head, young Nagai⁸⁴¹ grasped the pole with both hands and raised the flag high in the air. And then he moved slowly forward carrying the bloody Rising Sun up that hill covered with black smoke. And we all followed in solemn and silent procession. It was five o’clock in the afternoon.⁸⁴²

One witness recalled long afterwards, “Suddenly we had our ‘headquarters’ to rally around, a centre that put order back into the picture.” Another wrote, “It was so simple an act and yet the psychological act was profound.”⁸⁴³ By this action Nagai assembled the remnant of the medical staff to lead and carry survivors away from immediate danger to a hill overlooking the burning university.

Commentary

⁸⁴¹ Another Nagai: a student who had survived the blast.

⁸⁴² Nagai, *The Bells of Nagasaki*, 42-3.

⁸⁴³ Glynn, *A Song for Nagasaki*, 101-102.

Nagai overcomes his own weakness and discouragement in order to fortify his followers, and himself, with the improvised symbol of a Japanese flag.

Note how the qualities that Nagai shows are profoundly integrated in the action he carries out, a point carrying some significance in the discussion below in **3.4**. In this single action Nagai demonstrates prudence, fortitude, remarkable self control, and remarkable selflessness. He presents himself with a motive to overcome his lethargy, forms a practical plan, and launches into action. His fortitude is inseparable from his capacity to see the needs of others and from his own practical insight.

The insight of the witness is significant: “order” was restored by this inspirational action, a mark of rational direction. The mere sight of the flag has a remarkable restorative effect on all. The survivors’ own self-directed and ordered actions follow their sight of the flag. The symbol sparked an effective response of loyalty and responsibility, in which it seems practically no words were necessary. The sight of the flag alone heartened them, somewhat restored peace of heart, and they were again able to move purposefully drawing on their long cultural and family traditions of self control and fortitude.

To further unpack the complexity of this moment: sense input, in this case the sight of a flag charged with emotional resonance, triggers a cascade of practical action, solidarity, self control and fortitude. Emotion laden input has imparted to the consciousness of each member of the group a truth on the basis of which each can act. Thus this scenario also demonstrates the complex relationship between emotion and considered action: at times emotion can *initiate* considered and virtuous action.

c) Scenario 3. The pamphlet.

This scenario presents a contrasting moment in which it was necessary to master emotion rather than capitalize upon it, for virtuous action.

On the day following the blast Nagai describes a moment when the truth dawns upon him that the destruction has been wrought by a nuclear device and consequently Japan must be defeated:

The chief nurse came running up and handed me a sheet of paper. It was one of the leaflets dropped by enemy planes the previous night. As I glanced at it I shouted out spontaneously: "The atomic bomb!"

In the depth of my being I felt a tremendous shock. The atom bomb has been perfected! Japan is defeated!

... Conflicting emotions churned in my mind and heart as I surveyed the appalling atomic wasteland around me. ... A bamboo spear lay on the ground. I kicked it fiercely and it made a dull, hollow sound. Grasping it in my hand, I raised it to the sky, as tears rolled down my cheeks. The bamboo spear against the atomic bomb! What a tragic comedy this war was! This was no longer a war. Would we Japanese be forced to stand on our shores and be annihilated without a word of protest? These are the words written on the leaflet:

To the People of Japan

Read carefully what is written in this leaflet. The United States has succeeded in inventing an explosive more powerful than anything that has existed until now. The atomic bomb now invented has a power equal to the bomb capacity of two thousand huge B-29s. You must reflect seriously on this terrible fact. We swear that what we say here is the solemn truth. ... The President of the United States has already given you an outline of thirteen conditions for an honourable surrender. We advise you to accept these conditions and to being rebuilding a new and better peace-loving Japan. ... If you do not do

this, we are determined to use this bomb and other excellent weapons to bring this war to a swift, irresistible conclusion.

I read the leaflet once and was stunned. I read it a second time and felt they were making fools of us. I read it a third time and was enraged at their impudence. But when I read it a fourth time I changed my mind and began to think it was reasonable. After reading it a fifth time I knew that this was not a propaganda stunt but the sober truth.⁸⁴⁴

Commentary

The emotional significance of this moment is in the thunderclap insight that the war is inevitably lost. It is interwoven with a sense of burning shame, associated with defeat, inculcated through Nagai's culture since childhood. Nagai's description of how his passionate reaction subsides on successive readings of the leaflet gives us a remarkable insight into how deliberation can enable mastery of passion. What is initially less obvious is the interior battle that Nagai has to fight in order to respond rationally to the news. Had he torn up the leaflet after the first readings, he would not have come to the same conclusion. Unsaid is any reference to his education and upbringing that empowered him to exhibit the self control required to allow the news to sink in.

Acceptance of the truth about the existence of the bomb, is followed by very swift reasoning and insight that the Japanese defenders would be powerless on beaches against landings supported by atomic weapons. He then deliberates over whether he should accept the demand of the leaflet. Only in his fourth reading he "changes his mind" and finds the words "reasonable". Grasp of one truth leads to deliberation and reasoning that leads to the grasp of another truth. During the period of deliberation he keeps his emotions under control sufficiently to continue his deliberation.

⁸⁴⁴ Nagai, *The Bells of Nagasaki*, 52-3.

Complexity is further added by the fact that, although it is not explicitly a factor in his deliberations, he has an audience. He has already demonstrated that he is finely attuned to his responsibilities to those he leads. It is reasonable to surmise that this sense of responsibility as well as his training in scientific objectivity assisted him in applying sufficient deliberation before committing himself to judgement.

d) Scenario 4. *Nyokodo*.

Nagai lived out his days in a humble hut that he christened *Nyokodo* meaning “Love-your-neighbour-as-yourself-house”.⁸⁴⁵ It was on the site of his former home, close to the epicentre. It was a mark of Nagai’s fame that the Divine Emperor himself visited Nagai in that one room hut where he studied, wrote, meditated, and delighted in the roses he had growing, the stars above him and the mountains visible through his window.

Nagai advised his young visitors:

Go to the mountains and meditate! If you stay in the hurly-burly of this world, you’ll run around in circles without ever finding your way. You’ll become the kind of person who just stamps and screams. But the blue mountains are immovable and the white clouds come and go. I look constantly at these mountains of Mitsuyama and continue my meditation.

A biographer remarks on the transformation of his life during these last six years:

This professor who before 1945 had written nothing but scholarly reports with dry statistics now became a writer, a poet, an artist, a humanist, a mystic. Lying on his sickbed with his writing pad suspended over his head, he writes no less than twenty books before his death in 1951. He also writes poetry. Though Japanese poetry does not translate well into English let me refer to one.

⁸⁴⁵ For discussion of the historical and cultural significance in Japanese tradition of the humble ascetic’s hut as a place of purity of heart and solitude see Glynn, *A Song for Nagasaki*, 125.

The girls of the Junshin School died in the atomic blast chanting psalms under the leadership of one of their Japanese nuns, just as the twenty six martyrs of Nagasaki had died centuries before on crosses chanting psalms under the leadership of Paul Miki. About the schoolgirls Nagai wrote:

*Virgins like lilies white
Disappeared burning red
In the flames of the holocaust
Chanting psalms
To the Lord*

Nagai was also a master of calligraphy. As love for peace became an all consuming passion he would write for his visitors the characters *heiwa wo*, meaning “Grant us peace!”⁸⁴⁶



Figure 3.3 *Nyokodo*. The hut in which Nagai lived during his last years.

⁸⁴⁶ Nagai, *The Bells of Nagasaki*, xvii-xviii.

Commentary

The words of Nagai to his young visitors insist on the importance of meditation in order to put sense into the events of life. He presents reflection as an antidote to childish emotional tantrums, purposeless activity, and the distraction of life. It is clear from his own example that meditation however moves from contemplation to action. His remarkable output, during his years of illness, demonstrates this productivity.

The short poem, especially the use of the word “holocaust” and the comparison of the school girls with the 17th century martyrs of Nagasaki, manifests a conviction that there can be meaning behind tragedy, that there can be reasons that explain or help to explain difficulties, perhaps even that some pains are worth enduring. The simple beauty of the imagery, and the conclusion of the final line, suggest inner tension is resolved and that the poet, and also the girls themselves, are at peace.

In total, the scenario allows us to reflect on the phenomenon of growth in virtue. In his enlightened maturity, Nagai moves from preoccupation with the speculative to the exercise of contemplation which he channels through art and writing into powerful messages for his contemporary world.⁸⁴⁷ Thereby too, he manifests his own peace of heart.⁸⁴⁸

3.1.3 Virtue and the human act.⁸⁴⁹

⁸⁴⁷ Excellence in these activities is a demonstration of virtue according to the Aristotelian understanding. Aristotle describes art as the virtue of making, while effective writing and poetry require application of the practical intellect perfected by prudence. Cf *NE*, 1103a, 32-33.

⁸⁴⁸ Glynn, *A Song for Nagasaki*, 130. In these years his calm and peaceful attitude was constantly in evidence. Above we see this in his calligraphy and his constant concern to send visitors away with this message of peace. Towards the end of his life he wrote for his small son and daughter, “Being pure in spirit and pure in heart might not win you a lot of money but will give you something even more precious, peace of heart.” Biographers describe his affection for his children, typified by such beautiful letters full of encouragement, tenderness and tranquillity.

⁸⁴⁹ Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas*, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1961), 253.

Each of the scenarios above has focused on a rational act, what Aquinas calls a “human act”.⁸⁵⁰ Before I seek to discern what is common to virtue across the various scenarios, it will be helpful to review briefly a Thomistic understanding of the human act. (See also **3.1.4**).

Our goal here, in association with the subsections immediately following, is to identify more precisely the specific characteristics common to the state and practice of virtue, isolating from them the many other features present in any act of virtue which are not necessarily specific to virtue. I will comment also on the observed role of cardinal virtues at work in these scenarios.

Table 3.1 suggests that the human act itself divides into no less than twelve successive moments. At first this representation of the psychological steps I follow prior to acting may appear needlessly complex, yet, this structure is derived from

As this study of a neural substrate contributing to virtue will need to account for the presence of biological aspects and representations, we must distinguish that which is material from that which is properly rational. For the sake of precision, the use of some terminology drawn from the rational psychology of Aquinas (**1.4.2**) is helpful here. In Thomistic psychology there is no psychophysiological mechanism in the very act of knowing; the operation of the agent intellect renders the phantasm intelligible in the possible intellect. Note that although we use the term “agent intellect” there is only one agent, the person. “Agent intellect” refers to one function of the mind which can be identified in order to discuss the structure of thought. The proper object of the agent intellect is to dissociate the universal from the particular. Yet, a human act deals by necessity with both universals and with particulars. Hence, inextricably linked with this intellection and rendering it possible are very material processes. Furthermore, deliberation, in its duration, necessarily involves material cooperation at what we now understand as the neural level. Where the particular is present, the material must also be in evidence; “Human actions always have to do with the particular and the contingent.” (Gilson, 253) Although we say that an act of the will is “indecomposable” (Gilson, 253) we do not deny that concrete imagery in the brain requires some material mediation. Hence we also say that the will involves “some kind of experience of the object to which it is attaching itself”, “*quasi experientiam quondam sumens de re cui inhaeret*” (ST, Ia-IIae, Q.15, Art.1). These words are significant. They indicate that the will, through the sensitive appetite, is affected by the representations, phantasms, of the particular goods. As we have seen briefly in **Chapter 1**, a phantasm is an image of a particular thing: “*similitudo rei particularis*” (ST, Ia, Q.84, Art.7.2). Phantasms are preserved in corporeal organs: “*similitudines individuorum existents in organis corporeis*” (ST, Ia, Q.85, Art.1.3). They are individual species residing in the imagination. Without question, phantasms associated with specific biological representations are integral to the human act, and therefore also to the operation of virtue.

⁸⁵⁰ It is evident too, that while the action of rallying followers by an improvised flag is, in this light, a single act, it could also be regarded as a sequence of completed acts: an urgent request to a follower to find a proper flag, the improvisation of the sheet-flag, the communication of the action to followers, the formation of the column heading up the hill, etc.

observation of reality, accommodating the need for actions to be refined and finally elected on the basis first of initial attraction, initial information, and then of practical deliberation about alternatives and means to be employed. Furthermore this model accommodates the need for perfections of these steps if the act itself is to be well performed. These perfections are the virtues.

Table 3.1	
The Human Act ⁸⁵¹	
Mind	Will
<i>Intention</i> About ends	
1. Judgement that the end exists	2. Wish or want <i>velle, simplex voluntas</i>
3. Judgement that it can be achieved	4. Determination to achieve it <i>volition, volo, voluntas efficax</i>
About means	
5. Deliberation about ways and means <i>consilium</i>	6. Approval <i>consensus</i>
7. Discrimination and selection <i>proairesis</i>	8. Choice <i>electio</i>
<i>Executio</i>	
9. Practical and effective command <i>imperium</i>	10. Application to deed <i>usus activus</i>
11. Performance by appropriate power or powers <i>usus passivus</i>	
12. Fulfilment <i>quies</i>	

Table 3.1 illustrates that the human act is a complex reflexive process involving, as Gilson puts it, the intellect and the will, “acting and reacting upon each other”.⁸⁵² All the steps up to 11 are completed prior to executive action, prior often to anything apparent to the observer. Only the last steps involve manifest execution of the task and consequent fulfilment.^{853 854}

⁸⁵¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae 1a2ae. 18-21*, ed. Thomas Gilby OP (Cambridge: Blackfriars/McGraw Hill, 1965), Volume 18, Appendix 5.

⁸⁵² Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas*, 253.

⁸⁵³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae 1a2ae. 18-21*, ed. Gilby, Appendix 5.

⁸⁵⁴ These steps are not discrete events in a chronological succession. McInerney holds that Aquinas presents the three acts of the will in order of intention as volition, enjoyment, and intention; and in the order of execution, as above, consent, choice and use. (Ralph McInerney, “Ethics” in *Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzman and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge:

Gilson explains that the process of the human act is initiated by “an indecomposable movement of our will”⁸⁵⁵ (step 2 above) in the concrete apprehension of some goal (step 1 above). This indecomposable, and therefore non-material, enlightenment is an “intention” such as, for example, “I want to help this person with the gangrenous foot”, “I want to communicate the importance of peace”. ‘In wishing the end, it necessarily wills the means, therefore the intention of the end and the willing of the means constitute but one single act....To will a remedy in view of health is one act of willing’.⁸⁵⁶ These initial steps pass through refining stages (steps 4 and 5).

The intellect then provides preliminary deliberation defined as counsel (step 5). This “deliberation concludes with a judgement of the practical reason”⁸⁵⁷ presenting several judgements with good under various aspects (step 7). For example Nagai could consider the various merits of calligraphy, poetry or prose to impart a message of peace.

The will is moved to what is good in each of the options (step 6). The will attaches itself to these choices offered by deliberation in the step we call consent (step 7). For example, in the scenarios above consent would be present just prior to the readiness to wash the foot, at the moment the plan is settled that will result in putting pen to paper, etc.

Finally the choice of one means to an end is made (steps 9-11). It depends “in part upon the intellect and in part upon the will”⁸⁵⁸ which Aquinas concludes primarily

Cambridge University Press, 1993), 205-208.) It is of course not reasonable to suggest that an action can actually be subdivided into watertight compartments. Nagai’s creation of a poem would defy this discrete categorisation, and McNerny, to illustrate variations possible in the framework, points out that often in real life consent and choice are in the one step.

⁸⁵⁵ Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas*, 253.

⁸⁵⁶ Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas*, 253.

⁸⁵⁷ Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas*,) 253.

⁸⁵⁸ “*appetitivus intellectus, vel appetitus intellectivus*”. *NE*, II 5 2.

must be an act of the will,⁸⁵⁹ because substantially this election is the movement of the soul towards the good which it chooses.

Note the complex interplay of the intellect and will in the lead up to the actions central to the scenarios above. Intellect, will, sensitive appetite, imagination and memory (for example in memory of the symbol of the flag) each play clear respective roles in the process of the human act. Let us now look specifically at the contributions of emotion and virtue.

Where do emotions fit into the human act? Sense appetite acts upon the will particularly at step 2 and to some extent at steps 4, 6 and 8. Undue sense appetition can negate effective use of the intellect as we see for example in Nagai's original struggles to overcome his passionate reaction to the flyer. In the exercise of a virtuous act, temperance and fortitude 'respond to the direction of reason'.⁸⁶⁰ Appropriate sense appetition in the form of inspiring emotional symbolism, contributes to reason, motivating the followers of Nagai to retake rational control of their behaviours.⁸⁶¹

Where do the virtues fit in to the human act? The active powers of intellect, will, and sensitive appetite are perfected by practical reason in the intellect, justice in the rational appetite, and the virtues of the sensitive appetite. These virtues, and in this study I focus on the cardinal virtues, are dispositions in some way facilitating the governance of reason. Gilson explains that when there is insufficient formation of these appetites they can distort the reasoning process.

The person in whom concupiscence is the master judges his own desires to be good, even when such a judgement contradicts the

⁸⁵⁹ *ST*, Ia, Q.83, Art.8 and Ia-IIae, Q.13, Art.1.

⁸⁶⁰ Aquinas, *Disputed questions on virtue*, xiii.

⁸⁶¹ Understandings of the contribution of reason to rationality are a major area of interest in philosophical psychology.

universal judgement of reason. It is to neutralise such sophistries of passion that man must be strengthened with moral habits.⁸⁶²

McInerny observes that prudence perfects the whole reasoning process: “This analysis of the complete human act into its components is another look at practical discourse as issuing in the command of prudence.”⁸⁶³ This overarching involvement of prudence at the various stages of the human act will have considerable significance in discussion in later sections of this chapter, as will justice which perfects the will with a disposition to act always taking one’s duties to others into account.

Virtuous acts derive from an appetite inclined easily by reason perfected by prudence. In differing contexts they can be both cause and result of the “training of our emotions to respond to the direction of reason... a most difficult task”.⁸⁶⁴

McInerny clarifies that temperance and fortitude respond to the direction of reason, but are dispositions of the sensitive appetites: “The habit or disposition in the concupiscible appetite to respond to the direction of reason, and thus to pursue pleasures rationally, is called temperance. The habit or disposition to react rationally to threatened harm is called courage.”⁸⁶⁵

3.1.4 Some observations about the characteristics of virtue.

In the light of this understanding of the human act and how it is perfected by virtue I am now in a position, by analysis of the scenarios above, to suggest a number of features of acts of virtue and of the relationship between the virtues. These initial observations based on common features evident in the various scenarios will be complemented by a systematic review of the central characteristics of virtue according to Aristotle and Aquinas in **3.2** and **3.3**.

⁸⁶² I have drawn in this section from the masterful overview of the Thomistic analysis of the human act by Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas*,

⁸⁶³ McInerny, “*Ethics*,” 208.

⁸⁶⁴ Aquinas, *Disputed questions on virtue*, xiii.

⁸⁶⁵ Aquinas, *Disputed questions on virtue*, xiii.

- i. Acts of virtue may be accompanied by a deep sense of peace, fittingness, and joy.

We see this in the exhilaration experienced by Nagai in China, by the calming effect of the focused orderly response to Nagai's example and to the symbol of the flag, in the calming of Nagai's passion as deliberation conquered raging emotion, and most of all, in Nagai's stable resolute peace in the face of his impending death.

- ii. Effective action is evident in each scenario.

Each scenario presented above leads to a "successful" outcome because of Nagai's actions. The success of the outcome is certainly found in the effective cleaning of an enemy's foot, creation of an improvised flag, comprehension of the message of a leaflet, and completion of a work of art. The prudent election of means to perform planned actions is a constant element in these examples.⁸⁶⁶

- iii. Due regard for the needs of others is evident in each scenario.

Preoccupation with the rights and needs of others appears to be an abiding motivation in virtuous action. The interpersonal dimension, arguably perfected by justice, is inseparable in each scenario: Nagai measures and devises his own actions by their impact on others. Hence, the cleaning of the foot is a demonstration of the conviction to serve without discrimination. The creation of the flag has the result of unifying and giving hope to the survivors.⁸⁶⁷

- iv. Virtues appear to operate in an integrated way, in concert, with each other.

In the first scenario Nagai compassionately washes the enemy soldier's gangrenous limb, apparently moved by principles of duty and humanity. His action brings together prudence which reflects the practical execution of the deed, justice which is the virtue by which he is disposed

⁸⁶⁶ Of the examples, the fourth scenario provides the best demonstration of calmly considered actions tailored to the achievement of specific goals for a range of desired outcomes. Nevertheless, each demonstrates the directive role of reason in execution of the task.

⁸⁶⁷ Further examples: the deliberation over the leaflet allows him to demonstrate to another the need for calm rationality in a crisis; and the composition and publication of the poem allows him to inform others with his refined insights.

to fulfil what he sees as his duty towards others, and self control and fortitude in suppression of his revulsion and his readiness to face difficulty.⁸⁶⁸

- v. It would appear that virtue can consist not only in rational management of emotion, but also in refined attention to one's emotional state.

In the third scenario we see emotion and an overactive imagination clouding reason. We see too, Nagai's response of deliberation to manage that emotional inflammation so that he can act rationally and nobly. In contrast we observe in the episode with the flag that an emotion laden symbol can trigger virtuous actions.⁸⁶⁹

- vi. Prudence and justice may involve instantaneous insights.

Although we have seen that, as in the third scenario, prudence may contribute to protracted deliberation and reasoning, at other times there is evidence of instantaneous flashes of conviction, of recognition of truth. For example Nagai himself describes the moment, while bathing a putrid foot, that the dignity of his calling to all without exception dawned upon him. Such instantaneous comprehensions of truth are consistent with the Aristotelian/Thomistic account of rational operations perfected by prudence and justice.⁸⁷⁰

- vii. Acts of virtue appear to arise from and lead to refined sentiments of self sacrifice, beauty and nobility.

Note for example his generous self sacrifice as Nagai feels the conviction of serving the enemy wounded. Later in the conflict he would risk his very life and career, disobeying explicit orders, to save the lives of prisoners. We

⁸⁶⁸ Three further examples. In the second scenario, Nagai's sense of duty and concern for his colleagues lead to an act of great fortitude. His followers are in turn overcome their disorder and lack of self control by the symbolic reminder of needs greater than their own. Again we see all the virtues operating in an integrated manner. In the third, Nagai overcomes a response of great passion through great will power and determination to deliberate before passing judgement. It is evident that prudence and justice cooperate in the effective direction of emotion. Finally, in the fourth, Nagai's habitual self control and fortitude provide a platform for calm reflection. From that calm reflection comes an abundance of acts of service to his fellow man.

⁸⁶⁹ Similarly in the fourth scenario Nagai's simple poem can evoke in us as we read it our own inner acts of compassion, essentially acts of love of fellow man, akin to justice.

⁸⁷⁰ Similarly the mere glimpse of the flag, with its inherent truth of patriotism and solidarity, moved Nagai's companions.

also witness the refined love of country that underpins Nagai's inspirational action with the flag, and his love of humanity that drives him to insist tirelessly on peace after the war.⁸⁷¹

viii. The state of virtue appears to culminate in a higher, more refined capacity to act well.

The last six years of Nagai's life are marked by prodigious industry under the most difficult circumstances, conducted in a spirit of deep humanity and cultural sensitivity, amidst personal austerity, and all the while maintaining mastery over wayward emotions of anger, revenge and bitterness, and manifesting a deep peace of heart to all despite personal and national tragedy. In total these portray a man who is a paragon of established, stable, personal qualities.

ix. A life of virtue may find its culmination in a refined capacity to love others with deeds.

It appears that Nagai, in his maturity, successfully channelled his energies into effective love of others.⁸⁷² Nagai's constant example through his illness, to his children, to visitors and to readers, was of loving concern. Such a disposition requires effective judgement, a highly refined capacity to measure one's actions against the needs of others, and the self control and tenacity necessary for the achievement of the goal. These final years of Nagai's biography suggest the capacity to love others with deeds to be the very crowning of the virtuous life.

3.1.5 The superiority of virtue ethics in accounting for noble human behaviour.

I have presented some detailed glimpses into the life of Takashi Nagai. His own account of actual behaviour appears to be reflective of the Aristotelian-Thomistic

⁸⁷¹ Furthermore, Nagai appears to draw strength from natural beauty: flowers, stars, and mountains. He is drawn to artistic expression to better communicate the refined sentiments that occupy his mind.

⁸⁷² It is reasonable to expect that such a selfless disposition has a prior history. Such selflessness is evident even the four scenarios: profound respect for others evident in his actions during the Chinese war; tireless attention to the victims of the bomb; and solicitude to provide effective leadership by example. These things demonstrate his dedication to others in years preceding his final illness.

understanding of virtue and the human act, from initial deliberation, through choice, to execution. It seems clear that the doctrine of virtue accounts effectively for the interplay of rationality with appetite and emotion, and thus offers an accurate understanding of human action.

In **1.6** it was noted that contemporary accounts of moral philosophy fall broadly into three groups: consequentialist ethical theories, deontological (duty based) theories, and virtue ethics. It is most interesting to compare these theories against Nagai's own moral decision making and his moral worldview.

If we study the four scenarios as test cases, examining them for whether Nagai acts out of an observance of rules or with an eye to bringing about a determined outcome, neither approach fits well with his behaviour without doing violence to the facts.

There was obviously no rule book for Nagai to follow to act well. For example, he explains that his treatment of the enemy soldier was prior to a realisation that he was observing any rule for his own behaviour. Similarly, the spontaneous action of improvising a flag could not be scripted; the unprompted conception of the action defies any explanation based on "duty" as an overriding motivation. Nor may Nagai's deliberation over the leaflet be interpreted as acting out of duty or observance of rules. It is clear that the various actions described arose from qualities in his character based on previously established behaviours, and from well formed convictions upon which he could draw.⁸⁷³

It is also clear that Nagai regarded his actions as intrinsically important, rather than as a simple means to an end. The creation of the flag was noble in itself, and integral to any positive outcome; it was not instrumentalised for some other consequence. His deliberation over the leaflet was prior to any goal setting. The

⁸⁷³ There are of course literally infinite possibilities for individual moral acts: they may or may not be complex; they may be virtually instantaneous, or of considerable duration, and it is apparent that a virtue based ethical system allows flexibility in its response to moral dilemmas, to act well regardless of context.

prodigious output of Nagai's final years cannot be explained alone by a utilitarian framework; just as his literary and artistic endeavours and his advice for visitors transcend results. His very serenity is evidence that they are fulfilling in themselves. His dedication for the wounded without discrimination, his concern for those he was leading, and his love for his children and fellow countrymen, were all actions intrinsically important to Nagai, neither reducible to a sense of duty, nor to the expectation of a positive outcome. The love for others shown in these actions goes far beyond the strict reciprocity of some narrow conception of justice, highlighting the deficiencies of duty and consequence based measures in accounting for truly noble behaviour.

The concordance we have been seeing between these real scenarios and virtue theory demonstrate that an understanding of virtue is not an arbitrary or out-of-date framework which struggles to describe complex behaviours arising from either rational deliberation or emotional reaction. In fact, it would appear, *prima facie*, that it is virtuous character, not rule articulation nor outcome calculation, that is the well spring of spontaneous noble behaviours.

This ability for virtue ethics to account for noble behaviour and for the characteristics of noble personality in the real world is striking:

- i. Nagai himself has adopted the view that moral behaviour is a consequence of character, the essence of a virtue ethics based approach. He advises the young men who come to see him that they should meditate, to change themselves, lest they become "the type of person" who stamps and screams. It is clear that moral behaviour, in Nagai's conception, is a consequence of character. Also, it is impressive to note that, even some 15 years before in China, his biographer noted his delight in realising the "change" in his personality, taking delight equally in treating allies and enemies. Nagai's own words reflect this discovery.
- ii. Nagai's very qualities of character stand out as the most psychologically attuned explanation for Nagai's freely chosen behaviours, within a broader

understanding of human nature. This approach adequately accommodates rationality, free choice, motivation, and human fulfilment.

- iii. Finally, Nagai's character based worldview of ethical behaviour was formulated not because of training in western classical philosophy but intuitively in a culture so different to that of the West. Nagai was a man of his times and nation, patriotic with what we might call a stoicism or even fatalism in handling difficulty typical of the nurture of a Japanese upbringing, and he still regarded moral decision making as an extension of character. This suggests that a virtue based view of human personality satisfies something deeply attuned to our nature; this is absent or less evident in a consequentialist or duty-observant paradigm for assessment of behaviour.

On any reasonable measure, Nagai is indisputably a noble and admirable human being: this study demonstrates that virtue ethics is well able to account for the moral growth, for the the decision-making and actions, for the stable qualities of character, and for personal fulfilment in maturity, of such a person. The study suggests that consequentialist and deontological approaches may be less effective in accounting for behaviour, character and fulfilment in such people.

In the balance of the current chapter the matter of these scenarios will also be used in illustration of characteristics of virtue. In **Chapter 5** I will return to one of these scenarios to illustrate the neural bases of virtue *in actu*, and in **Chapter 6** I will revisit the comparative evaluation of ethical paradigms.

3.2 The state of virtue.

In **3.2** and **3.3** I apply texts from Aristotle and Aquinas concerning the nature of virtue to these reflections about Takashi Nagai. First some contextual insights:

We know more about the man Alexander the Great than about his tutor Aristotle, but of course Aristotle's fame does not hinge on the achievements of a

hyperactive pupil. As the *Britannica* puts it, Aristotle “perhaps more than any other thinker has characterised the orientation and content of all that is termed Western Civilisation”. His *Nicomachean Ethics* is one of the great texts of civilization. In it Aristotle gave us the first systematic vision of virtues as the basis for perfection of the human character, a view that has prevailed in all but the most recent decades of western civilisation, a view too that many have argued is universal to human experience.⁸⁷⁴

Some say the book was composed for Nicomachus, Aristotle’s son, others that the son was the editor; but how attractive it is to think that the great Philosopher may have written this beautiful account of human fulfilment for his own son. The argument of the work hinges on crucial linkages: between habit and virtue – “Moral virtue comes about as a result of habit”⁸⁷⁵ - Aristotle goes to lengths to explain that virtues are deeply rooted habits of action, not just “values”, or nice sentiments; and between virtue and happiness – “Happiness is the reward of virtue”.⁸⁷⁶ Aristotle realised too that fostering virtue requires personal effort, and if they are to be formed in a young person, parental expertise and example are important. He emphasised the importance of building these good habits in the early years of a child’s life.⁸⁷⁷

There are many beautiful passages in this work: close analyses of the various moral virtues, an insistence on intellectual virtues, a whole section dedicated to explaining the link between true friendship and happiness. And in culmination, the meaning of happiness, *eudaimonia*, itself is studied. The ten books of the work commenced with an inquiry into the meaning of happiness and they conclude by drawing the distinction between pleasure and happiness. Joseph Pieper saw this

⁸⁷⁴ See discussion in section immediately above with reference to Nagai. Martin Seligman and Christopher Peterson, *Character Strengths and Virtues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); and C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (1943); <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/augustine/arch/lewis/abolition1.htm#1> (accessed 6 November, 2012).

⁸⁷⁵ *NE*, 1103a.

⁸⁷⁶ *NE*, 1099b16.

⁸⁷⁷ *NE*, 1103b.

discovery and articulation of virtues as a turning point in civilised consciousness.⁸⁷⁸

The *Nicomachean Ethics* is more than just another book on a dusty classics shelf! Surely we disregard such a heritage at our own peril.

In forming my views for the sections that follow, in addition to the primary texts of Aristotle and Thomas, I have drawn from a range of commentators, including Sherman, Irwin, Broadie, Hutchinson, Pieper, Porter and McInerney. My intention has been to steer clear of controversial matters providing a systematic, succinct review. I rely on key source passages in order to identify essential characteristics that will be a focus for the task of **Chapter 5**.

Essential characteristics for the state of virtue are identified below in **3.2**, and features associated with the development of virtue in **3.3**. Then, in the light of a discussion of the cardinal virtues in **Chapter 4**, my aim will be to distill from this list the characteristics of virtue that we may reasonably understand to have a biophysical basis.

3.2.1 Virtues dispose the appetites, the source of all human acts, to rationality.⁸⁷⁹

In **Scenario 3** we witnessed Nagai's emotional response to the leaflet calling for Japanese surrender. He described his repeated efforts to consider the American demand and he described his unwillingness to accept what he was reading. Finally only on the fourth and fifth readings did he accept the truth of what he was

⁸⁷⁸ J. Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966). "This particular intellectual framework, the formula which is called the "doctrine of virtue," was one of the great discoveries in the history of man's self-understanding, and has continued to be part and parcel of the European mind. It has become a basic component of the European consciousness, and the result of centuries of persistent intellectual endeavour by all the creative elements of the emerging West, both the Greeks (Plato, Aristotle) and the Romans (Cicero, Seneca), both Judaism (Philo), and Christianity (Clement of Alexandria, Augustine)."

⁸⁷⁹ Emotions are neither good nor bad in themselves but we must manage them. Aquinas wrote: "Passion, to Aristotle, is something to which we must choose to react." (ST, Ia-IIae, Q.59, Art.2)

reading. This effort to confront something deeply unpalatable bespeaks qualities of character, and a habitual restraint that withholds final judgement and continues deliberation without committing to an unbridled emotional response until a matter has been thoroughly considered. It illustrates well the capacity for trained passion to accept the guidance of reason, albeit with initial reluctance. In a similar way Nagai controlled his revulsion towards the gangrenous state of the enemy soldier's foot, and overcame his severe weakness to inspire his fellow workers by means of the improvised flag.

In these examples we are witnessing the habitual dispositions first of all in Nagai's sensitive appetites to respond to his direction, and also in his rational appetite, his capacity for make well deliberated choices responsive to the rights of others.

For clarification, let us return briefly to the model of the human act and to the notion of motivation. Whenever we act, we act for some purpose, we move toward something that we find appealing for some reason. Aristotle and Aquinas suggest that our appetites, both sensible and rational, themselves need to have been trained if a person is to possess such restraint and self control as we see in Nagai.

At the foundation of all good human activity is self management of the passions by temperance and fortitude. For this reason too, the will, or rational appetite, also "needs to be disposed to its operations by means of habits".⁸⁸⁰ Aristotle had taught that it was by these habits, by the moral virtues, that "We are directed well or ill in reference to the passions."⁸⁸¹ Justice is a disposition of the rational appetite, the will, whereas fortitude and temperance are of the sensitive appetite. As we have seen in the overview of the human act, virtuous acts are commanded

⁸⁸⁰ *ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.49, Art.4.1.

⁸⁸¹ *NE*, ii 4

by the rational appetite disposed by justice in concert with the intellect disposed by prudence.⁸⁸²

Habitual dispositions of these powers of the sensitive and rational appetites are the key to living well, to living according to reasoned choices.⁸⁸³ “Knowing what is right does not make a wise man.”⁸⁸⁴ But, “Habits are necessary in order to act well.”⁸⁸⁵ Further Aquinas explains, “Human virtue is an operative habit, a good habit, productive of good works”.⁸⁸⁶ Aquinas explains that the particular type of habit that is virtue is “a principle of the movement of the appetite, being a kind of habit.”⁸⁸⁷ This differentiates it from a passion which is “a movement of the sensitive appetite”. In other words, virtues in the sensitive appetites are dispositions in our passionate reactions.

In the two subsections which follow I examine the nature of the dispositions first of the sensitive appetites, and then of the rational appetite.

3.2.1.1 The virtues of the sensitive appetite refine our habitual dispositions to pain and pleasure.

In his final years, having suffered the loss of his wife, friends and colleagues, having seen the accomplishments of years of research vaporise before his eyes, as his life ebbs away through the inroads of leukemia, and in the midst of national humiliation and tragedy, Nagai demonstrates the most remarkable capacity to transcend his circumstances. We have read how, in the fourth scenario, he maintains his equanimity and a prodigious output of work in the service of his

⁸⁸² Aristotle described virtue as the “habit of choosing the rational mean as a prudent man would discern it.” *NE*, 1106b36.

⁸⁸³ Nagai’s self mastery includes not only articulated convictions of respect for fellow man, and his medical expertise, but also his mastery of his disgust at the unpleasantness of his task: actions in the sensitive as well as the intellectual domain.

⁸⁸⁴ *NE*, 7.10.

⁸⁸⁵ *ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.51, Art.1.3.

⁸⁸⁶ *ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.55, Art.3.

⁸⁸⁷ *ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.59, Art.1.

countrymen in a great work of national healing and reconciliation. He exemplifies the refined emotional life that Aristotle suggests is central to human wellbeing.

Virtue consists in rejoicing and hating and loving aright, there is clearly nothing we are so much concerned to acquire and to cultivate as the power of forming right judgements, and of taking delight in good dispositions and noble actions.⁸⁸⁸

What exactly is this “hating and loving aright”? Aristotle insists that human motivation reduces to seeking pleasure and avoiding pain: “What affirmation and negation are in thinking, pursuit and avoidance are in desire.”⁸⁸⁹ He reflects on the danger of poor choices when “we choose the pleasant as a good, and avoid pain as an evil.”⁸⁹⁰

That man has control over pleasure and pain differentiates him from the animals.⁸⁹¹ Aristotle argues that the capacity to control appetite is the mark of rationality. We see this in Nagai’s self discipline, both in the face of a natural distaste for washing a putrid wound, and in maintaining equanimity in the face of his illness and separation from his children.

Pleasure and pain are universal in human experience... but it is how we react to them, and how we direct them that leads to peace or frustration.^{892 893}

...every passion and every action is accompanied by pleasure and pain....it is by reason of pleasures and pains that men

⁸⁸⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1340a18.

⁸⁸⁹ *NE*, 1139a18-26.

⁸⁹⁰ *NE*, 1113b1.

⁸⁹¹ *NE*, 1111b13-16. “Choice is not common to irrational creatures, but appetite and anger are. The incontinent man acts with appetite but not with choice; while the continent man on the contrary acts with choice but not with appetite.... appetite relates to the pleasant and the painful, choice to neither the pleasant nor the painful.”

⁸⁹² *NE*, 1105a12. “The whole concern both of virtue and of political science is with pleasure and pains; for the man who uses these well will be good, he who uses them badly bad.”

⁸⁹³ *NE*, 1104b11. “...moral excellence is concerned with pleasures and pains; it is on account of the pleasure that we do bad things, and on account of the pain that we abstain from noble ones.”

become bad by pursuing (the wrong pleasures) or avoiding (worthy pains)...⁸⁹⁴

It is in how we manage these experiences that virtue resides, “Virtues and vices are dispositions to find certain things pleasant and certain other things unpleasant. ... virtue is good taste in practical matters.”⁸⁹⁵ And ultimately, therefore, this is the making of character, “Character is good or bad by pursuing and avoiding certain pleasures and pains”.⁸⁹⁶

3.2.1.2 Virtue is a habit of choosing.

Time and again, Aristotle insists that virtue is a habit of choosing, “a prohairesis state”.⁸⁹⁷ He says, “The virtues are choices or they involve choice”⁸⁹⁸ and, that “virtue is a habit of choosing the rational mean as a prudent man would discern it.”⁸⁹⁹ It is choice in accordance with right reason, *orthos logos*.^{900 901} Aquinas echoes this: “The principal act of virtue is choice.”⁹⁰²

Choice is principally an act of the rational appetite, the will.

Choice is substantially not an act of reason but of the will: for choice is accomplished in a certain movement of the soul toward the good which is chosen. Consequently it is evidently an act of the appetitive power.⁹⁰³

⁸⁹⁴ *NE*, 1104b13.

⁸⁹⁵ D. S. Hutchinson, *The Virtues of Aristotle* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), 5.

⁸⁹⁶ Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1221b32-34.

⁸⁹⁷ See perceptive summary discussion of the prohairesis state in Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle* (Oxford: OUP, 1991), 78-82.

⁸⁹⁸ *NE*, 1106a3-4.

⁸⁹⁹ *NE*, 1106b36.

⁹⁰⁰ A further masterful summary of *orthos logos*, right reason, is to be found in Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 82-87.

⁹⁰¹ *NE*, 1107a. “Virtue is a state of character, concerned with choice, lying in a mean... determined by a rational principle, by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it.”

⁹⁰² Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, 4 ad 2.

⁹⁰³ *ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.13, Art.1.

In short, virtuous action is characterised by well informed, right desires. The glimpses into Nagai's life illustrate some important clarifications about choice. Note, for example in the Chinese field hospital, the series of choices that make possible Nagai's powerful and articulated conviction that he is now a doctor for both friend and enemy. He chooses to carry out a repulsive task in the treatment of an enemy, he chooses to focus not on the disagreeable nature of what he is doing or a natural fear in treating an enemy, and instead he chooses to broaden this isolated incident into rule for his general behaviour; finally he chooses to write about the moment that night further reinforcing the conviction about what he has done and will do in future.

Sherman comments extensively on the complexity of the range of tasks and operations associated with choice. She holds that all have a role to play in virtuous action: correct perception, consideration of all issues, comparison of compelling ends,⁹⁰⁴ sound deliberation about means⁹⁰⁵, choice of actions "for their own sakes",⁹⁰⁶ sensitivity to ethical salience.⁹⁰⁷ She writes,

Virtuous action will combine a judgement of circumstances, reactive emotions, and some level of decision about how to act. (Virtuous action may involve the following) emulated models... general precepts and rules of thumb. ... (Also required will be) cognitive skills, imagination, sensitivity...(Furthermore being) sensitive to the circumstances in which action is called for as well as flexible in one's conception of the requirements of a precept is all part of practising virtuous action.⁹⁰⁸

Ultimately, this habit of choosing requires rectitude in the sensitive appetites, in the rational appetite and in the intellect: "Since moral virtue is a state of character concerned with choice, and choice is deliberate desire, therefore both the

⁹⁰⁴ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 174.

⁹⁰⁵ *NE*, 1113a14.

⁹⁰⁶ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 175.

⁹⁰⁷ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 28.

⁹⁰⁸ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 179.

reasoning must be good and the desire right, if the choice is to be good. Desire must pursue just what the reason asserts.”⁹⁰⁹

3.2.2 Virtue lies in choice of the mean.

Virtue lies at the intermediate point, between excess and defect in relation to passions and actions.

To feel (passions) at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue. Therefore virtue is a kind of mean.⁹¹⁰

We see this exemplified in the circumstances of Nagai’s fabrication of the flag, an act of soundly considered fortitude. He accepts help from others and allows someone else to lead with the flag, but he sufficiently overcomes his own life threatening weakness to carry out the decisive actions required to restore hope to his shattered friends. Although, given his very great blood loss, the exertion is life threatening, the risk is warranted because the circumstances are dire. Nevertheless where he can step back and pass the responsibility to others he does so.

Aristotle argues that it is of particular importance to note that the mean is understood in relation to the particular person and his circumstances, and is dependent upon the correct deliberation and evaluation of the subject acting.

Virtue then is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, that is *the mean relative to us* (my italics), this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it.⁹¹¹

⁹⁰⁹ NE, 1139a18-26.

⁹¹⁰ NE, 1106b21-23.

⁹¹¹ NE, 1107a1-3.

In Nagai's situation, it was essential for him to assess his own physical state, judging the extent to which he needed to rely on others to sustain his own capacity to lead, yet provide the effective leadership required.

3.2.3 The motivation of virtue: "Virtuous actions are done for the sake of the noble."⁹¹²

Motivation is the end to which we aim in an action. Gilson explains the need we have for fortitude and temperance perfecting the sensitive appetite, and of justice in our rational appetite, at the commencement of the human act:

Ends are, in human acts, what principles are in the speculative sciences. To will the fitting end depends on a moral virtue. Once the end is willed, it is an intellectual virtue which will deliberate and choose the means suitable to the end. This virtue is prudence.⁹¹³

In the scenario involving the flag, Nagai envisages his goal and the important impact it will have. He then he sets about fabricating a flag when an actual flag cannot be found. Prudence perfects the practical intellect in its deliberation and election of means.

Aristotle holds that virtuous actions are carried out "for their own sakes"⁹¹⁴, but this expression needs to be understood correctly. We must reconcile this with the understanding, time and again in Aristotle, that virtuous actions are carried out for noble reasons: "Virtuous actions are noble and done for the sake of the noble."⁹¹⁵

⁹¹² *NE*, 1120a23.

⁹¹³ Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas*.

⁹¹⁴ *NE*, 1105a34. Also, in personal communication from Professor Julia Annas, July 2008.

⁹¹⁵ *NE*, 1120a23.

A brave man will face death, “as the rule directs, for honour’s sake... it is for a noble end that the brave man endures and acts as courage directs.”^{916 917}

Aristotle makes clear that noble reasons are not extrinsic optional goods such as fame and wealth, but intrinsic goods such as one’s own true welfare, and service to others. Virtuous actions are carried out “for their own sake”, for intrinsically good reasons, whereby the very action of the virtue brings about the good outcome intrinsic to the action. Such intrinsic goods are manifestly present underpinning Nagai’s actions: his very service to another in washing his foot, the very action manifesting remarkable dedication to duty and self control, is the end of his action. Intrinsic to this action also is the good respect for fellow man, perfected by justice. Therefore actions can be virtuous, “even if these actions do not ultimately achieve their planned goals.”⁹¹⁸

3.2.4 Virtues bring about states of character.⁹¹⁹

Our character is the sum total of our behaviours arising from our habits. Virtue characterises who we are. An isolated action, perhaps an anomalous deed, does not define our character but habituations towards certain actions do. From their actions we know what things are.^{920 921}

Aristotle argues that virtues are a fundamental feature of soul:

⁹¹⁶ *NE*, 1115b12, 23-34.

⁹¹⁷ *NE*, 1116a15. Whereas to face death for an ignoble end is not courage: “To die to escape from poverty or love, or anything painful, is not the mark of a brave man, but rather of a coward.... it is softness to fly from what is troublesome, and such a man endures death not because it is noble but to fly from evil.”

⁹¹⁸ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 176. We see this in Nagai’s commitment to noble activity regardless of outcome. Noble actions enrich us regardless of the outcome. In this the human flourishing engendered by virtuous action is evident. Nagai has no control over whether or not message to his young visitors to go and meditate away from the pressures of daily existence will be put into effect, but by giving the message in all good will, he himself is perfected.

⁹¹⁹ In the expression “states of character” I offer a plural of “character”. I am not suggesting two distinct concepts.

⁹²⁰ *ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.18, Art.1. “*unaquaque res talem actionem producit, qualis est ipsa.*”

⁹²¹ Hence we read in Aristotle: “The quality of a life is determined by its activities.” *NE*, 1.10.

Things that are found in the soul are of three kinds – passions, faculties, states of character, virtue must be one of these..... by states of character (I mean) the things in virtue of which we stand well or badly with reference to the passions eg with reference to anger we stand badly if we feel it violently or too weakly, and well if we feel it moderately; and similarly with reference to the other passions.⁹²²

Virtues are distinct from faculties: “We are not made good or bad by nature.”⁹²³ Nor are they passions. “We feel anger and fear without choice, but the virtues are modes of choice or involve choice.”⁹²⁴ Rather “a virtue is a state (*hexis*)”⁹²⁵ being neither a faculty nor a passion.

A virtuous character may be understood as a person habitually with desires in accord with his good. Following discussion of just acts, courageous or cowardly acts, and temperate or self indulgent or irascible acts, Aristotle writes: “States of character arise out of like activities... this is why the activities we exhibit must be of a certain kind”.⁹²⁶ Consistency is required to build qualities of character.⁹²⁷

In a real sense our choices that make us who we are: “Choice is closely bound up with virtue and discriminates characters better than actions do.”⁹²⁸

Virtues are... means, states of character, tending by their own nature to the doing of acts by which they are produced, and they are in our power and voluntary, and act as right rule prescribes.⁹²⁹

⁹²² *NE*, 1105b20.

⁹²³ *NE*, 1106a9.

⁹²⁴ *NE*, 1106a2.

⁹²⁵ *NE*, 1106a10.

⁹²⁶ *NE*, 1103b15.

⁹²⁷ *NE*, 1139a31-35. “The origin of action – its efficient, not its final cause – is choice, and that of choice is desire and reasoning with a view to an end. This is why choice cannot exist either without reason and intellect or without a moral state; for good action and its opposite cannot exist without a combination of intellect and character.”

⁹²⁸ *NE*, 1111b6.

⁹²⁹ *NE*, 1114b26-28.

Although in particular situations a man may act under the compulsion of unregulated passion, if he was responsible for the choices that led to this state, there is an argument that the subsequent state of compulsion is freely chosen: “By their slack lives (they are) responsible for becoming men of that kind, and men make themselves responsible for being unjust or self indulgent.”⁹³⁰

Of relevance here is a comment from one of Nagai’s biographers, Glynn, who points out that at a point in the early 1930s Nagai stopped drinking heavily. He accepted responsibility for character and therefore modified his actions to bring about a different habitual state with respect to temperance and, in his last years, a most remarkable self control. By this action he would win praise from Aristotle.

Not to know that it is from the exercise of activities on particular objects that states of character are produced is the mark of a thoroughly senseless person.⁹³¹

3.2.5 Virtues accord with the natural perfecting of the person.

We have seen that the capacity to act habitually in accord with right reason is the hallmark of goodness, hence, the virtuous man is good: “It is impossible to be practically wise without being good.”⁹³² Aristotle understood a virtue as an excellence of character, making “its possessor good and his work good likewise”.⁹³³

He argues that the development of virtue is a perfection according to nature, represented, for example, by Nagai in his maturity, who presents as the “true and finished man of character”.⁹³⁴

⁹³⁰ *NE*, 1114a3-8.

⁹³¹ *NE*, 1114a10-11.

⁹³² *NE*, 1144a37.

⁹³³ *NE*, 1106a15. Good is understood as that which is in keeping with nature.

⁹³⁴ Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magister* (1929). This is a document focussing on education of the person.

Virtue implies directly a disposition whereby the subject is well disposed according to the mode of its nature: wherefore the Philosopher says (*Physics* vii, 17) that “virtue is a disposition of a perfect thing to that which is best: and by perfect I mean that which is disposed according to its nature”.⁹³⁵

By inclining us to “that which accords with reason”,⁹³⁶ virtues order the organism to self management, and are therefore a *natural* perfection of the person.⁹³⁷ Note that Aquinas quotes Aristotle’s insistence that virtue involves not only good actions, but that the agent be perfect in itself, a rational being must not act below itself.

There is an increasing amount of literature linking ethical behaviour, self control, comprehension of consequences, empathy with others, and so on, to brain activity, and in a similar way, a growing literature linking anti social behaviours to other distinctive characteristics of brain activity. But this study goes two steps further than this.

- I argue that the development of a virtuous character itself has stable and predictable neuronal concomitants.
- Second, I argue that this rational creature is fulfilled by the perfected development of his rationality through changes in neurobiological activities, processes, and pathways and that this development of virtuous character is the natural and fitting trajectory for human development. Therefore persons who fail to develop in this way, have, in a real sense, failed to flourish.

3.2.5.1 Virtue is pleasant.⁹³⁸

⁹³⁵ *ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.71, Art.1.

⁹³⁶ *ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.71, Art.2.1.

⁹³⁷ *ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.71, Art.1.

⁹³⁸ For an understanding of the meaning of pleasure in virtue, see Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 90-95.

In the following sections we review the Aristotelian notion that virtuous action brings pleasure and ease of action in the short term, and in the longer term a stable disposition towards rational action, deep peace, and natural fulfilment in the perfection of the body itself.

There is a pleasure that arises simply because we pursue what we love and this pleasure results for all choices, virtuous or otherwise. All choices are accompanied by a certain pleasure. We choose according to what is noble, advantageous, and pleasant... most of all, pleasant, “for pleasure accompanies all objects of choice; for even the noble and advantageous appear pleasant.”⁹³⁹ In contrast, Aristotle urges us to *appropriate* pleasure and pain, the characteristics of virtue. “It is the mark of virtue both to be pleased and to be pained at the right objects and in the right way.”⁹⁴⁰

The pleasure of virtue must be understood correctly.⁹⁴¹ Irwin explains further that virtuous people “take pleasure in facing the dangers that brave people have to face, and in avoiding misguided pleasures that intemperate people avoid. This is an important difference between virtue and mere continence.”⁹⁴² The virtuous person has effectively come to a reassessment of what is pleasurable.

Broadie holds that this pleasure is distinct from the pleasures of enjoyment of an activity. She says that the virtuous person acts “freely, unreluctantly, ungrudgingly... taking satisfaction” in the activity:

The virtuous person takes pleasure in his virtuous acts because they do not go against the grain; and because they express his moral stature which is metaphysically anxious (so to speak) to be expressed in action.⁹⁴³

⁹³⁹ *NE*, 1104b33-35.

⁹⁴⁰ *NE*, 1121a4.

⁹⁴¹ Terrence Irwin, *Classical Philosophy* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), 260.

⁹⁴² Irwin, *Classical Philosophy*, 291.

⁹⁴³ Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 91.

This refined ability for pleasure and pain is more pleasurable, in the Aristotelian account, than the pleasures of non virtuous activities. The greater pleasure accompanying virtuous action is attributable to “increasingly fine powers of discernment”.⁹⁴⁴ Sherman writes,

The pleasure which arises from virtuous activity⁹⁴⁵ is the pleasure of realising a virtuous state without either internal impediments (ie insufficient or conflicting motivation) or external obstacles. In this way, the pleasure of virtue falls under the general account of the pleasure of excellent activity.⁹⁴⁶

She notes Aristotle’s view that virtue leads to more complete actualisation in an activity with therefore greater pleasure forthcoming, although “even the learner gains pleasure from the exercise of his abilities”.⁹⁴⁷

Ultimately, in a state of highest virtue, “that which is virtuous is pleasant or free from pain.”⁹⁴⁸ The hallmark of exquisitely virtuous action is that it is effortless and intrinsically rewarded.

Lovers of what is noble find pleasant the things that are by nature pleasant; and virtuous actions are such, so that these are pleasant for such men as well as in their own nature. Their life has... pleasure in itself.⁹⁴⁹

This intrinsic reward is seen in the joy that Nagai exhibits in treating the enemy soldier and most of all in the calm he communicates despite his illness. We also see in evidence a pleasure derived from the effortlessness of the action, the absence of internal impediment. Hence the energy that Nagai applies to his fabrication of the Rising Sun belies, is virtually oblivious to, his precarious physical state.

⁹⁴⁴ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 160.

⁹⁴⁵ *NE*, 1104b3ff.

⁹⁴⁶ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 185.

⁹⁴⁷ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 187.

⁹⁴⁸ *NE*, 1120a27.

⁹⁴⁹ *NE*, 1099a13.

3.2.5.2 “Happiness is the reward of virtue”.⁹⁵⁰

Ultimately however, not even the heightened pleasure of virtuous activity necessarily brings happiness. “Aristotle agreed with Plato’s claim that pleasure is insufficient for happiness. ... The goodness of pleasures must be measured by standards other than pleasure and pain.”⁹⁵¹

In this section I look at the subjective peace of soul that virtue bestows. In the following section, at the objective perfection of the organism. Both enjoy a relationship to rationality and self management.⁹⁵²

The happiness of virtue may be understood at a richer level beyond pleasure. In in **1.6.3**, we have seen that, according to the Aristotelian-Thomistic view, human flourishing requires the development of intrinsic qualities of self management. Virtues are seen as constitutive elements of human wellbeing. Virtues enable man to be self directing,⁹⁵³ and to reach his full potential in this life.⁹⁵⁴ “The happy life is the life according to virtue lived without impediment.”⁹⁵⁵ Ultimately virtue is ordained to flourishing.⁹⁵⁶

Because a virtue is essentially the facility for carrying out with ease a chosen action, virtues free us to act: releasing us from external pressures and also from debilitating bad habits, or vices. Virtues enable us to be self directing in life... education in virtue gives us the freedom to chart our own course in life. Baring misfortune, virtue allows the fulfilment of potential, self directed activity

⁹⁵⁰ *NE*, 1099b16.

⁹⁵¹ Irwin, *Classical Philosophy*, 260.

⁹⁵² Irwin, *Classical Philosophy*, 278. Irwin insists that a correct account of happiness “must give virtue a prominent place”.

⁹⁵³ Aquinas makes it clear that virtues facilitate *human* acts, actions proper to a human being. Hence the exercise of a virtue is dependent on free will.

⁹⁵⁴ *ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.55, Art.3.

⁹⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1295a36.

⁹⁵⁶ Aristotle’s term *eudaimonia* denotes primarily objective fulfilment, but also subjective peace of soul.

governed by right reason, and the choice and attainment of real goods:
“Happiness depends on ourselves.”⁹⁵⁷ Virtue brings a certain self sufficiency,
desirable in itself and conducive to peace of soul.

On this broad canvas, virtue is a decisive factor in human flourishing. Aristotle wrote, “Happiness is an expression of the soul in considered actions.”⁹⁵⁸ The Aristotelian notion of happiness requires activity, not merely potential for action. Aristotle pointed out that happiness is not found in being in a particular state, but rather in activities that are made possible by being in that state.⁹⁵⁹ “Happiness lies ... in virtuous activities.”⁹⁶⁰ This may be understood not simply as the pleasure intrinsic to a virtuous action, but as the sum happiness accruing in a life of virtue.

This is the long term view, transcending the simple pleasure of an isolated activity, but finding habitual fulfilment in the activities of virtue. Virtue empowers us to be happy in the long run:

For one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day;
and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man
blessed and happy.⁹⁶¹

Nevertheless, Aristotle argued that the life of virtue cannot guarantee external goods and so happiness is still unstable and subject to good fortune.⁹⁶²

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle listed constituent parts of happiness: good birth, numerous good friends, wealth, good children, plenty of children, a happy old age, bodily excellences such as health, beauty, strength and athletic powers, large stature, fame, honour, good luck, and virtue.⁹⁶³ Apart from those that are natural endowments such as stature and health, these constituent parts, most particularly friendships, good children and honour, derive from character itself.

⁹⁵⁷ NE 1.9

⁹⁵⁸ NE 1.8

⁹⁵⁹ NE, 1176bff.

⁹⁶⁰ NE, 1177a11.

⁹⁶¹ NE, 1098a18.

⁹⁶² Irwin, *Classical Philosophy*, 329.

⁹⁶³ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1360b.

However, Aristotle added the significant proviso that the virtuous person, as he will never act in a base or hateful way, cannot be unhappy.⁹⁶⁴ He summed up: “We have practically defined happiness as a sort of good life and good action.”⁹⁶⁵

This deep seated, subjective happiness, even despite external circumstances is exemplified in Nagai’s habitual peace of soul in his last years. His capacity for self management, although ultimately taken from him by physical deterioration, appears largely unhindered by fears or by the pursuit of illusory pleasures. He shows, on the contrary, an astounding capacity for the energetic pursuit of demanding goals.⁹⁶⁶

3.2.5.3 Virtue brings about human fulfilment.

Nagai’s mature years demonstrate the objective flourishing integral to the life of virtue. The Aristotelian and Thomistic view is not only that the development of virtue empowers us to act freely and therefore take control of our lives, but also that this development is fitting for the nature of the organism itself; the virtuous life is a state of maturity, at both organic and personal levels.

We witness that Nagai, his character perfected by the dispositions of virtue, is empowered to act freely and knowingly in ways that further enrich him as a person. Jean Porter insists:

The human person’s capacity to act well will be a component, and not merely a disposable means, of her attainment of perfection as a human being. Thus virtue ... enables the human

⁹⁶⁴ Irwin, *Classical Philosophy*, 329.

⁹⁶⁵ Aristotle argued elsewhere that happiness is in some form of contemplation, made possible in turn by virtue. Cf *NE*, 1098b20.

⁹⁶⁶ On the other hand Aquinas held that the ultimate task of the virtues, extends beyond self sufficiency to empowering man to reach his end in God. “The virtues are nothing but those perfections whereby reason is directed to God, and the inferior powers regulated according to the dictate of reason.... it is accidental to temperance and fortitude to subdue superabundant passion, in so far as they are in a subject which happens to have superabundant passions: and those virtues are *per se* competent to moderate the passions.” (*ST*, Ia, Q.95, Art.3.)

person to act well, that is to say, in accordance with her specific nature as a rational animal.⁹⁶⁷

It is suggested that the attainment of human goodness requires not only intellectual grasp of the human good, but this mastery must also reach into the passions and will in addition to intellect. Human goodness is both attainment of “an external standard of rationality or perfection and intrinsically consists in the perfection of the human capacities which are exercised in act”.⁹⁶⁸

Nagai’s state of virtue entails not only acts that are objectively good, but acts carried out with highly developed individual powers of action. Nagai’s incisive and practical intellect and his will, which is finely attuned towards the rights and needs of his fellow man, operate within the context of an enriched and enriching emotional life. His life therefore accurately reflects the understanding that in virtuous activity it is insufficient that the right things be done, but they must also be done *well*, ie “out of well formed passions, a good will, and intelligent judgement”.⁹⁶⁹ Not only the external act must be good, but its execution will be a “manifestation of the perfection of the individual’s powers of action.”⁹⁷⁰ There are, then, complementary outcomes accompanying a state of virtue: that the actions be good, and that virtuous activity make the agent good, formed as nature intended.

As the soul united to the body “perfects the soul”,⁹⁷¹ it is reasonable to argue that virtue, in its biological and rational elements, perfects the person. Aquinas tells us that the development of virtue, in all its bodily implications, is for the perfection of the person:

⁹⁶⁷ Jean Porter, *Moral Action and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 140.

⁹⁶⁸ Porter, *Moral Action and Christian Ethics*, 141.

⁹⁶⁹ Porter, *Moral Action and Christian Ethics*, 142.

⁹⁷⁰ Porter, *Moral Action and Christian Ethics*, 142.

⁹⁷¹ Aquinas, *Questions on the Soul*, trans. James Robb (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1984), 59-62. Cited in Hayden Ramsay, *Beyond Virtue Integrity and Morality* (NY: St Martin’s Press, 1997), 137.

Virtue implies not only a perfection of power, the principle of action; but also the due disposition of its subject.⁹⁷²

“Due disposition” implies a disposition suited by nature, a flourishing of the organism at the biological level, hence the teaching of Aquinas is that virtue implies a material biological ordering of the matter that is in keeping with nature, in keeping with the way it is meant to develop. This suggests a further dimension to the notion of flourishing when applied to virtue. Virtue permits man to develop in the way that he is meant to.

We find insights into this term “due disposition” in Aquinas’ speculation about the presence of virtue after the resurrection of the body. He holds the virtues of fortitude and temperance to be compatible with man’s perfection, arguing that in the resurrected state,

...the irrational powers will be in the bodily organs, just as they are now. Hence it will be possible for fortitude to be in the irascible, and temperance in the concupiscible part, in so far as each power will be perfectly disposed to obey reason.⁹⁷³

Hence, in Thomas’ vision of the perfected man, virtue has an integral role to play for it is none other than a rightly ordered management of the body. He writes,

...the function of virtue (is)... to make (the sensitive appetite) execute the commands of reason, by exercising their proper acts. Whereby just as virtue directs the bodily limbs to their due external acts, so does it direct the sensitive appetite to its proper regulated movement.^{974 975}

⁹⁷² *ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.71, Art.1.

⁹⁷³ *ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.67, Art.1.3.

⁹⁷⁴ *ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.59, Art.5., Further, Aquinas holds that while the development of virtue is natural while the development of vices are somehow not natural for a human being.

⁹⁷⁵ We have seen that this ordering by reason brings major consequences:

- a. In the animated flesh of a human person reason disposes matter such that the habituated behaviours of the person bring ease of action, pleasure, autonomy, and a consequent happiness.

3.3 Acquisition of virtue.⁹⁷⁶

Aristotle refers with frequency to children and to the process whereby they acquire virtue. By nature, the child's deliberative capacities are "in an underdeveloped form",⁹⁷⁷ and so the child lacks the reflective capacities for choice and action that characterise the adult.⁹⁷⁸ As a consequence children pursue pleasures "not unqualifiedly good".⁹⁷⁹ Therefore a child requires external reason to guide him or her.⁹⁸⁰ The virtue of the child is "relative"⁹⁸¹ to the one in authority over him.

Of course it is not only children who are able to learn virtue. All of us can develop new behaviours and eliminate previous behaviours. Nevertheless the process of raising a child in virtue, involving as it does, not reformation of bad habits, but formation from a state of absence of habit, the state of childhood is naturally prior

-
- b. At the more immediate level, by rational actions the person is able to modify his organism in a way that the execution of future acts of the same type are facilitated. In this second sense, the person acting rationally, orders what Thomistic philosophers have called "secondary matter".
 - c. A third implicit consequence makes clearer the relationship of this ordination to human flourishing. Virtue orders passion. Just as the role of virtue is to bring about right order in bodily actions, fortitude and temperance, facilitated by acts of prudence and justice, give rise to passionate acts of the corresponding virtue. This right ordering includes "ordinate passion" (*ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.59, Art.5.1.)⁹⁷⁵ and, in justice, joy. Just as the role of virtue is to bring about right order in bodily actions, fortitude and temperance give rise to passionate acts of the corresponding virtue. The virtue of justice can give rise to joy. Hence: "Those moral virtues, however, which are not about the passions, but about operations, can be without passions. Such a virtue is justice; because it applies the will to its proper act, which is not a passion. Nevertheless joy results from the act of justice; at least in the will, in which case it is not a passion. And if this joy be increased through the perfection of justice, it will overflow into the sensitive appetite; in so far as the lower powers follow the movement of the higher, as stated above (Q.17, Art.7, Q.24, Art.3). Wherefore by reason of this kind of overflow, the more perfect the virtue is, the more does it cause passion." (*ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.59, Art.5.)⁹⁷⁵

⁹⁷⁶ The work of Nancy Sherman on moral education in Aristotle is a most useful source here. See for example, Nancy Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); and Nancy Sherman, *Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)..

⁹⁷⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1260a13-14.

⁹⁷⁸ *NE*, 1111a25-26, 1111b6-8, 1144b8.

⁹⁷⁹ *NE*, 1152b19-20, 1153a28-31, 1176b28-30.

⁹⁸⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1260a34, 1260b3-8.

⁹⁸¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1260a32-3.

to that of an adult. Fittingly the formation of children in virtue receives much attention from Aristotle.

The points which follow are not intrinsic to virtue, but contextual factors, in most cases, necessary contextual factors for the development of virtue. They are inherently associated with the development of virtue and represent, in most cases, the normal trajectory for its development. As such they reveal to us characteristics of virtue itself.

In many cases illustrations from the life of Nagai for a point in question immediately spring to mind. A source in this section is Nagai's most beautiful writing left for his children, published posthumously under the title *Leaving my beloved children*.⁹⁸² Aristotle's and Aquinas's understanding of the process of the acquisition of virtue are reflected in Nagai's life and writing; these parallels further strengthen the case for the doctrine of virtue as a model of human development.

3.3.1 Both "training" and "education" are needed to build virtue.

Aristotle explains that virtues develop as a result of training, understood as habituation, and education, moral tuition.⁹⁸³ This is true in adults and children alike although a time of training is particularly appropriate in laying foundations for virtues. Habituation and teaching are presented as both necessary and complementary. A correct understanding of the distinction between habituation and teaching is important.

Intellectual virtue in the main owes its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time), while moral virtue comes about as a result of habit.⁹⁸⁴

⁹⁸² Nagai, *Leaving my beloved children behind*.

⁹⁸³ Aristotle writes, "Some think we are made good by nature, others by habituation, others by teaching." (*NE*, 1179b20.) While he proposes a certain natural virtue in some (*NE*, 1144b3) an endowment received by virtue of particular temperament, his main focus is on habituation and teaching.

⁹⁸⁴ *NE*, 1103a15-15.

In total, Aristotle's vision of moral education is of an education which "involves the rational understanding and appropriate training of one's emotions."⁹⁸⁵

Habituation is primarily associated with the moral virtues; teaching, with the development of prudence, and to some extent justice. Aristotle relates these tasks respectively to training and education. Within training he includes the role of parents and tutors in habituating certain behaviours, he includes compliance with demands placed by laws and family culture and affection, and he includes the virtually subconscious role of imitation and example.

Education is the process of developing the mind of one's charge, of nurturing fine and noble ways of seeing and responding to the world, of giving criteria. Broadie holds that this education does not lie in a teaching "which is a business of words, reason and explanations, but by a process called *ethismos*, the inculcation of *ēthe* understood as habits or customs."⁹⁸⁶ In turn *ēthe* is the building material of *ēthe*, moral qualities. Hence education also employs strategies of habituation.

These features are found in the approach Nagai takes with his own children. He forms his children (his fellow survivors, visitors to his hut, and readers of his works, as well) in refined emotional responses: to difficulties, to self indulgence, and to the needs of others. He insists that they think their way through difficulties. He strives to provide example, teachings, affection, inspiring goals and experiences that will reinforce the formation he offers.

3.3.2 An emphasis on the early years assists in fostering virtue.

Nagai is dedicated to the training and education of his own children even in their youngest years.⁹⁸⁷ This approach is certainly in keeping with Aristotle's insistence

⁹⁸⁵ Irwin, *Classical Philosophy*, 290.

⁹⁸⁶ Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 103.

⁹⁸⁷ The dedication of Nagai is evident throughout his writings for his children. Nagai, *Leaving my beloved children behind*.

that the habits underlying virtue are more easily learned in younger years and that the opportunity must not be missed.

It makes no small difference, then whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference.⁹⁸⁸

Aristotle argues that children are particularly suited for education in virtue. There are a number of reasons for this: the affection and attentive care of parents assists in the process; children are disposed to imitate; and the practice of obedience is training for obedience to one's reason. Furthermore the very fear of dishonour, which he calls shame, is more prevalent in youth (at least in those of ancient Athens) curbing excesses.

Young people ... live by feeling and therefore commit many errors, but are restrained by shame; and we praise young people who are prone to this feeling.⁹⁸⁹

Early training then has the aim of fostering self regulation and independence of thought. It should be carried out with an eye on the future: "with a view towards the next stages",⁹⁹⁰ looking forward to the day when this person possesses the intrinsic and extrinsic goods necessary for happiness.⁹⁹¹ Texts also suggest that early impressions are virtually indelible and that these first impressions must be well managed.⁹⁹²

The earliest years are years where training must take place if the process is to be most successful. Aristotle draws a distinction between virtues of intellect which require time and experience, and virtues of character, for which "no time should

⁹⁸⁸ *NE*, 1103b.

⁹⁸⁹ *NE*, 1128b15-18.

⁹⁹⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1336b37 and 1340b35-9.

⁹⁹¹ *NE*, 1100a1-4.

⁹⁹² Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1371b4-10. Texts from Plato concur: "Anything received into the mind at that age is likely to become indelible and unalterable; and therefore it is most important that the tales which the young hear first should be models of virtuous thought." (Plato, *Republic*, Bk 1).

be lost before inculcation begins".⁹⁹³ Sherman is also quick to point out that the pre-rational years of childhood are also a rich period for moral attitudes, the development of refined attitudes towards others which will play such a part in later prudential assessment of situations.

3.3.3. Imitation can assist the formation of virtue.⁹⁹⁴

Nagai's consciousness of the importance of imitation shows in his example to his followers in the tragic days following the bomb. He is careful to model bravery, calm deliberation, self control, and loyalty and patriotism. With his own children we see that he reinforced explanations with his own abiding serenity.

That children are impressionable and superb imitators was lost neither on Nagai nor on Aristotle. Aristotle noted how life experiences play such a great part in the training for virtue that is required in the young. He wrote of how natural it is for us all to derive joy from the perception and discrimination of sight.

Imitating is natural to humankind from childhood up and human beings differ from animals in this, that they are the most imitative of creatures and learn first through imitation... learning is the greatest of pleasures... we delight in seeing representations...⁹⁹⁵

We see an echo of this in Nagai's encouragement to young visitors to find peace in natural beauty. Aristotle linked the joy in natural discovery found in children to their propensity for imitation, "this discriminatory activity will often take the form of mimesis."⁹⁹⁶ He noted that first impressions are often the strongest. He noted that experiences can also dispose to vice.

⁹⁹³ Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 71.

⁹⁹⁴ See Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 116 for useful insights into the role of example in parental action.

⁹⁹⁵ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448b4-17. See also *Rhetoric*, 1371b4-10.

⁹⁹⁶ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 167.

We always like best whatever comes first... and therefore youth should be kept strangers to all that is bad, and especially to things which suggest vice or hate.⁹⁹⁷

Note Nagai's warning to his young visitors that unless they take deliberate action to manage their emotion, there will come a point where their emotions will manage them, they will become the *type* of persons who just "stamp and scream".⁹⁹⁸

Aristotle insisted on the corrupting effect of bad example.

Banish indecent speech, and indecent pictures and speech from the stage, from the sight and hearing of the young. The Legislator should not allow youth to be spectators of iambi or of comedy until old enough to sit at the public tables and drink strong wine; by that time education will have armed them against the evil influences of such representations.⁹⁹⁹

This impressionability requires great responsibility on the part of those responsible for the child, whether they be family or in civil roles. He stressed the role that example can play in teaching adult responsibilities.

The Directors of Education, as they are termed, should be careful what tales or stories the children hear, for all such things should be designed to prepare the way for the business of later life, and should be for the most part imitations of the occupations they will pursue in earnest.¹⁰⁰⁰

We see Nagai's preoccupation to publish, to influence national culture in the crucial years after the war. He realised that if calm reconciliation did not prevail, anger and bitterness would exact a further terrible toll on his people.

⁹⁹⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1336b35.

⁹⁹⁸ Scenario 4 above.

⁹⁹⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1336a 27ff.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1336a 27ff.

3.3.4 Virtues are acquired by repeated acts.¹⁰⁰¹

In Nagai's life there is abundant evidence that steady application to particular tasks is required to consolidate behaviours. He shows, from his reading and rereading the leaflet, that he had developed a facility for staying with a task until mastered. We know too from his biographers that he that treated wounded enemy soldiers consistently in an even handed, compassionate manner. We know too that he asked of his children what he demanded of himself: he encouraged his children to be persistent.¹⁰⁰²

These are examples of the process of habituation described by Aristotle. We have seen that moral education consists of habituation and education. Habituation is possible because behaviour builds a greater facility for subsequent behaviours of the same type. "We get the virtues by first exercising them."¹⁰⁰³

We become just by performing just actions, temperate by performing temperate actions, brave by performing brave actions.¹⁰⁰⁴

Children, most of all, learn by doing.¹⁰⁰⁵ Children, although not understanding all the reasons can still perform correct behaviours... to share, to wait patiently, to be satisfied with what one has eaten.¹⁰⁰⁶ All these behaviours are the stuff of habit, which in turn is the stuff of virtue. Children do not have the maturity to analyse what a situation requires, desire right action and enjoy its accomplishment. Instead we train them to behave correctly according to situations.¹⁰⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰¹ *ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.65, Art.4.

¹⁰⁰² Nagai, *Leaving my beloved children behind*, 94.

¹⁰⁰³ *NE*, 1103a32.

¹⁰⁰⁴ *NE*, 1103b1.

¹⁰⁰⁵ An insight also utilised by Jean Piaget, John Dewey and others.

¹⁰⁰⁶ D. Goleman, "What makes a good leader," *Harvard Business Review*, (Nov-Dec 1998).

¹⁰⁰⁷ D Goleman, "What makes a good leader".

This habituation in the concupiscible and irascible appetites is central to the acquisition of moral virtue, and, in a sense, to the development of virtuous character, being in the state of virtue.

Character, being as its name indicates, is something that grows by habit. That which is under guidance other than innate is trained to a habit by frequent movement of a particular kind... in things inanimate we do not see this..... Consider, then, character to be this: a quality in accordance with governing reason belonging to the irrational part of the soul which is yet able to obey the reason.¹⁰⁰⁸

A further dimension of ethical habituation is discussed by Broadie, that of the child's growing awareness of the need to manage impulses. Broadie explains that getting a small child to act in a certain way out of obedience teaches a vital lesson.

(The child) becomes aware that his own not anyway wanting to do it is not a consideration for the parent.... we learn that things are good in a way which belongs to a world beyond the world of impulse.¹⁰⁰⁹

Critical practice is required.¹⁰¹⁰ So for example, we are told it is not just a question of playing the lyre but of measuring our performance against real expertise, and in the same way moral excellence is attained. This guided experience is crucial. Life experience of particular cases is for the development of practical wisdom.¹⁰¹¹

There is no short cut to virtue.

3.3.5 Obedience to others empowers for obedience to one's own reason.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1220b6-8.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 103.

¹⁰¹⁰ As practical reason needs to operate in conjunction with the sensitive appetites, Aristotle presents the view that experience also trains practical reason through trial and error in our behaviours, and that this inquiry based approach is at the heart of sound ethical training. Sherman calls this form of experience critical experience... guided and appropriate training, taking place at the right time. cf Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 160.

¹⁰¹¹ *NE*, 1142a13-16.

As we have seen, children are directed by the reason of their parents and minders. Through obedience in childhood, Aristotle's argument is that they develop the facility to obey their own reason later on.

He writes on the necessity of the habit of obedience.

The rich find it hard to follow the rational principle, being neither willing nor able to submit to authority. The evil begins at home; for when they are boys by reason of the luxury in which they are brought up they never learn, even at school the habit of obedience.¹⁰¹²

Training for the rationality of desire is a "kind of obedience"¹⁰¹³ to a separate and higher power "as a child listens to his father".¹⁰¹⁴ The father's bonds of affection with a child assist his son in obeying.

As in cities, laws and prevailing types of character have force, so in households do the injunctions and the habits of the father, and these have even more because of the tie of blood and benefits he confers; for the children start with a natural affection and disposition to obey.¹⁰¹⁵

The rule of a father over his children is 'royal', for he rules by virtue both of love and of the respect due to age, exercising a kind of royal power. His authority is moral as well as social. But he is called to moral virtue in perfection. Aristotle tells us,

Homer has appropriately called Zeus "Father of Gods and men".
If the ruler is intemperate and unjust, how can he rule well?¹⁰¹⁶

¹⁰¹² Aristotle, *Politics*, 1295b16-25.

¹⁰¹³ *NE*, 1102b12 – 1103a4.

¹⁰¹⁴ *NE*, 1102b31-1103a3.

¹⁰¹⁵ *NE*, 1180b.

¹⁰¹⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1259a.

Habituated obedience would appear to have a clear biological dimension that is analogous to that of a dog trained to obey its master.

A dog develops by training the capacity for obeying the command of another to sit at the kerb, etc. Children are like dogs, in that they too are trained to obey the reason of others, of their parents; the difference is that they will, unlike Fido, develop as they grow the capacity to rule from within. Before reason is developed, in either the dog or the child, only the biological is present, albeit in a state of developing also. The dog and the child are only capable of exercising, of the cardinal virtues, temperance and fortitude. With developing reason, the child will develop the capacity for justice and prudence, to take others into account and to rationally self manage.

The suggestion that obedience habituated in a pre-rational child lays foundations for the rule of reason over desire for pleasure and aversion to pain is of great interest to us in this study and we will return to this.

3.3.6 Affection assists in fomenting virtue.

We gain a glimpse of Nagai's affection for his children in the short extract above in commentary on **Scenario 4**, but some of his writings are motivated almost exclusively by his love for them. In *Leaving my beloved children behind* Nagai wrote a personal message to his children in the face of his approaching death. He seeks to pass on to his son and daughter his main discoveries about life. He describes, in a typical understated manner, the encompassing love he feels for his children. These words of Nagai exemplify the powerful educative effect Aristotle has observed in the affection children feel for their fathers:¹⁰¹⁷

It is an affection born of flesh and blood, which for some strange reason seems akin to the steam that bursts forth from the hibachi at the head of my bed. ... As I continued pretending

¹⁰¹⁷ Cf *NE*, 1180b.

to be asleep that day, Kayano became bolder and held her cheek against mine. Her cheek gradually became warmer. As though she were secretly enjoying a little treasure that she was hiding from others, Kayano softly whispered, "Daddy." She wasn't really calling me. It was rather that the thoughts that were stuffed into her little breast had leaked out just a little.¹⁰¹⁸

Aristotle insisted on the importance of a loving home atmosphere as the preferred place of early moral education.¹⁰¹⁹ Moral education requires great rectitude from the parent, and respect for the person of the child. This rectitude is fostered in the home where each family member is valued for who they are, rather than what they can do. The parent must be careful not to manipulate the child's beliefs and emotions to conform with whim and opinion, but to guide the child to form true judgements. The child "borrows the eyes of wisdom",¹⁰²⁰ "listens to the words of elders and the more experienced",¹⁰²¹ and to their reasoned admonition and exhortation.¹⁰²² In turn the child discovers, as Sherman says, "the intrinsic pleasure of approximating virtue through action and emotion."¹⁰²³ Note the imitative aspect is linked to the parent child relationship.

3.3.7 Development of virtue requires formation in what is appropriate in respect to pleasure and pain... emotional education.¹⁰²⁴

Nagai entitles one chapter "Words of wisdom I gave my children".¹⁰²⁵ He encourages them, "Don't scream out just because the light went off in a power blackout."¹⁰²⁶ Elsewhere he writes for them, "Physical pain is relatively trivial. It can be borne, and it's gone when you die. Spiritual pain is more serious. You can't

¹⁰¹⁸ Nagai, *Leaving my beloved children behind*. 24.

¹⁰¹⁹ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 152.

¹⁰²⁰ *NE*, 1144b10-12.

¹⁰²¹ *NE*, 1143b11-13.

¹⁰²² *NE*, 1102b33-1103a1.

¹⁰²³ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 152.

¹⁰²⁴ Nancy Sherman is a particularly good source for this subsection.

¹⁰²⁵ Nagai, *Leaving my beloved children behind*. 94.

¹⁰²⁶ Nagai, *Leaving my beloved children behind*. 94.

cure it on your own. Furthermore it's still there after you die.”¹⁰²⁷ His parenting intuition is that he must form his children in these matters. Note that it is not simply a question of stoically gritting one's teeth. Rather intellect is engaged. It is a question of analysing the type of pain and making a judgement. He explains the lesson to his child, and reinforces it with his own example.

This view is very much in step with Aristotle and Plato on the necessity for formation of children in appropriate emotion, and the suggestion that the virtues should also be considered as dispositions to *feel* appropriately. Broadie argues that Aristotle is interested in *feeling* because feeling will often lead to action; also he is concerned with appropriate and inappropriate feeling on its own account.¹⁰²⁸

We must take as a sign of states of character the pleasures or pain that ensue on acts; for the man who abstains from bodily pleasures and delights in this very fact is temperate.... Hence we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth, as Plato says, so as both to delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought; for this is right education.¹⁰²⁹

In its simplest form this appropriate emotion is the expression of what is appropriate in respect to pleasure and pain. He writes, “All moral virtue has to do with pleasures and pains.”¹⁰³⁰ Virtue is not simply about maximising pleasure and minimising pain, “but within the limits of ‘as one ought to’, and ‘when one ought and ought not’”.¹⁰³¹ Here he is referring to action according to the right rule.¹⁰³²

He argues that parental training involves a range of guided experiences.

In educating the young, we steer them by the rudders of pleasure and pain; it is thought too that to enjoy the things we

¹⁰²⁷ Nagai, *Leaving my beloved children behind*. 95.

¹⁰²⁸ Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 75.

¹⁰²⁹ *NE*, 1104b5-13. The reference to Plato: Plato, *Laws*, 653Aff; *Republic*, 401E-402A.

¹⁰³⁰ Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1121b38.

¹⁰³¹ *NE*, 1104b26.

¹⁰³² *NE*, 1103b32.

ought and to hate the things we ought has the greatest bearing on virtue of character.¹⁰³³

Finding appropriate pleasure and pain consists in an emotional education with a focus on such emotions as compassion, solidarity, right admiration and appreciation, appropriate shame, appropriate contrition, pleasure in obedience, pleasure in self control, and pleasure in generosity and sincerity in the right occasions. Appropriate intellectual delight at discovery, also constitutes appropriate emotion and an introduction to “non procedural” reasoning and inference.¹⁰³⁴

3.3.8 Laws, culture and expectations assist in fostering virtue.

We have seen a little of Nagai’s persistent efforts to build a culture of peace and reconciliation amongst his countrymen. He understood that to foster such personal attitudes on a widespread basis would take enormous work and energy. He threw himself into the task despite his leukemia.

Aristotle’s view too was that the culture prevailing in any environment has a profound effect on the development of virtue. Family and parental expectations on the one hand, and social mores and laws on the other, must assist in training in virtue.

The man who is to be good must be well trained and habituated... (hence there is a need for laws) proceeding from practical wisdom and reason.¹⁰³⁵

Good laws “providing for the education of individuals and of groups and good occupations are an important factor that should not be neglected. However,

¹⁰³³ *NE*, 1117a24.

¹⁰³⁴ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 168.

¹⁰³⁵ *NE*, 1180a21-23.

Aristotle warns, if the state helps little it is still up to each man to help his children and friends to virtue.¹⁰³⁶

Aristotle's concern was not solely with children but also with grown citizens prone and even hardened to ignoble behaviours.

Laws not only necessary for the young: most people obey necessity rather than argument, and punishments rather than the sense of what is noble.¹⁰³⁷

Sound laws and wise lawmakers are needed.

Arguments alone are insufficient. They may have the power to encourage and stimulate the generous minded among our youth, and to make a character which is gently born, and a true lover of what is noble, ready to be possessed by virtue, ... but they are not able to encourage the many to nobility and goodness (who have not shame but fear of punishment, but live by passion and have no conception of what is noble and truly pleasant).¹⁰³⁸

Right laws create a regime where certain behaviours of virtue can be inculcated.

The focus is on laws promoting temperance and a healthy hardiness:

To live temperately and hardily is not pleasant to most especially to the young... hence there is a need for training "under right laws" as this lifestyle will not be painful if customary.¹⁰³⁹

Yet this training must not simply demand conformity but must be accompanied by internal formation as well, of the type we have seen above.

¹⁰³⁶ *NE*, 1180a27-30ff.

¹⁰³⁷ *NE*, 1180a1-5.

¹⁰³⁸ *NE*, 1179b5ff.

¹⁰³⁹ *NE*, 1180a1-5.

The best laws, though sanctioned by every citizen in the state, will be of no avail unless the young are trained by habit and education in the spirit of the constitution.¹⁰⁴⁰

The role of environment and early experience in the inculcation of virtue, in general, has already been noted. Aristotle would argue that home environment and family culture (even institutional culture at grandma's, at pre-school, and at boarding school) play a clear role in establishing an environment of security and affection, as well as clear expectations for children, both for formation of conscience (one aspect of prudence) and in order to establish effective regimes of practice for habituation.

We shall now see that the developmental trajectory of virtue, moving from a young child's habituated behaviours to fitting affectivity and judgements, was recognized by Aristotle.

3.3.9 The development of virtue takes place over time and respects the development of the body.

We have already seen that training, to the moral virtues, is as education, to the practical reason.¹⁰⁴¹ Until a certain point is reached, a baby has no effective capacity for education in the Aristotelian sense, but only for training. Thereafter, progressively, the capacity for education develops. Aristotle is most conscious of the developmental trajectory established at the biological level.

As the body is prior in the order of generation to the soul, so the irrational is prior to the rational. The proof is that anger and wishing and desire are implanted in children from their very

¹⁰⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1310a12-36.

¹⁰⁴¹ *NE*, 1103a.

birth, but reason and understanding are developed as they grow older.¹⁰⁴²

In the development of virtue, nature, nurture and the rational principle,¹⁰⁴³ all play their part.

Nature involves a process of anatomical development that is a precondition for human flourishing at the biological level. Aquinas acknowledges what we understand today as the normal processes of neural development occurring as part-constituent of rational operations beginning to take place in the maturing human being. In his discussion about whether children in state of innocence would have had the perfect use of reason, Aquinas argues that in babies and young children there is a “special impediment” to the use of reason deriving from the immaturity (which he describes as “humidity”) of the brain.

Even other animals have not at birth such a perfect use of their natural powers as they have later on. ... birds teach their young to fly. Moreover a special impediment exists (for man to exercise his natural powers of reason) in man from the humidity (immaturity) of the brain, as we have said above.¹⁰⁴⁴

This concept of “special impediment” is in keeping with the view that biological development is a condition for the development not only of intellect, but of virtue. Man’s trajectory of development is not purely genetically programmed, but it reflects man’s free interplay with nature.¹⁰⁴⁵ States of virtue and vice may be understood as the natural endpoint of a man’s experiences. The self-actualisation of this biological “history” brings with it the potential for human flourishing or frustration.

¹⁰⁴² Aristotle, *Politics*, 1334b.

¹⁰⁴³ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1332a39.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *ST*, Ia, Q.101, Art.2.2. Reference to 99.1.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas*, 256. Gilson puts this beautifully: “Man’s efforts to attain his end leave their mark upon him. Man’s soul as well as his body has a history. It conserves its past in order to enjoy and utilise it in a perpetual present. The most general form of this fixing of past experience is called habit.”

Sherman observes that Aristotle adopts “a developmental conception of the cognitive and affective capacities, as well as a conception of habituation in varying degrees reflective and critical.”¹⁰⁴⁶ Initially a child develops, in an incremental way, perceptual and discriminatory capacities. As he grows the cultivation of these cognitive capacities becomes an essential task in his affective development. Nevertheless, “he will not yet, in a substantive way, cultivate the more deliberative skills that enter into complex choice making.”¹⁰⁴⁷

The time arrives when there is a change of ruler. Adopting an Aristotelian idea, Plutarch writes:

For intelligent people the passage from childhood to adulthood is not an abandonment of rules, but a change of ruler.¹⁰⁴⁸

The young person’s own reason takes over from the guidance of her carers. Personal and biological maturity permits responsible, autonomous action. Nevertheless, adolescence is a time when children “have strong passions and tend to gratify them indiscriminately.”¹⁰⁴⁹ Youth are, “owing to the growth that is going on, in a situation like that of drunken men.”¹⁰⁵⁰ It is a time of uneasy tension.

In the next chapter we will seek explanations at the biological level that assist in understanding this development.¹⁰⁵¹

3.3.10 Practice of virtue requires effortful attention.¹⁰⁵²

Amongst Nagai’s advice to his children he writes,

¹⁰⁴⁶ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 160.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 159.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Plutarch, *On Listening*.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1389a.

¹⁰⁵⁰ *NE*, 1154b10.

¹⁰⁵¹ Neuroscience has described the link between the slow maturation of the frontal lobe that assists in regulation of emotion and assessment of consequences for behaviour.

¹⁰⁵² Aristotle says three things are required for virtue: to know, to will, and to work steadfastly. “First of all, that a man be aware; secondly, that should he choose, it should be in view of a particular end; thirdly, that he should hold to his choice with firmness and steadfastness, and carry it out.” (*NE*, 1105a31.)

Don't start anything that you can't make into a first-rate job.
Don't quit anything you've started until you've made it into a
first rate job.¹⁰⁵³

Virtues are acquired by means of effort. At the heart of effort is sustained attention. "It is easy to perform a good action but not easy to acquire a settled habit of performing such actions."¹⁰⁵⁴

Recall the view of William James - our will is manifested in the attention we pay. When the will is underdeveloped, or biological maturity inadequately supports rationality, we may struggle to give attention where our reason tells us we should (as opposed to where our sensitive appetite takes us).

This steadfastness requires the application of patience and constancy. Repetition can be hard work. The acquisition of virtue is arduous.¹⁰⁵⁵

Virtue requires some process of learning or training ... all who are not maimed as regards their potentiality for virtue may win it by a certain kind of study and care.¹⁰⁵⁶

It is difficult enough for young men to develop virtue in depth, owing to the relationship between wisdom and experience.

It is thought that a young man of practical wisdom cannot be found... The cause is that such wisdom is concerned not only with universals but with particulars, which become familiar from experience, but a young man has no experience, for it is length of time that gives experience¹⁰⁵⁷

¹⁰⁵³ Nagai, *Leaving my beloved children behind*. 94.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *NE*, 5.9.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *NE*, 1105a31.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *NE*, 1099b16,20.

¹⁰⁵⁷ *NE*, 1142a13-16.

Yet, if the foundations of patience, constancy and determination, have not been laid in childhood, it can be difficult for older children and teenagers, in the adolescent tempest of emotion, to make moral headway at all.

3.3.11 Virtue requires intrinsic motivation.¹⁰⁵⁸

We have observed in Nagai's actions that he acts for intrinsically rewarding reasons. This does not mean that there may not be a desirable positive outcome, but that the performance of the action is rewarding independent of the outcome. Would Nagai have sought to rally his workers around the Rising Sun even should their efforts have been pointless in saving lives? Given the patriotism shown in his initial rejection of the message on the leaflet there seems every indication that he regarded this action as worthy for its own sake. Would he still have treated the enemy compassionately even if the wounds were mortal? No doubt he would have. Would he urge peace even if the message fell on deaf ears? Again without question this would have been the case.

Virtue fosters intrinsic rewards.¹⁰⁵⁹ As we have seen, Aristotle proposed that virtue is its own reward, and that the fulfilment ensuing on virtue, the acquisition of genuine goods, is intrinsic to the practice of virtue. Virtue is "a prerequisite to happiness and at the same time, happiness itself."¹⁰⁶⁰ Virtue is not a means to an end. Rather the end results of virtuous action are implicit in the very activities of virtue.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Samuel S Franklin, *The Psychology of Happiness. A good human life*. (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Franklin's discussion of the influence of Aristotelian ideas on the contemporary concept of intrinsic motivation gave rise to this section.

¹⁰⁵⁹ We have encountered in Chapter 2 the concept of reward devaluation and the observation that the development of habits fortifies against this. A fascinating study by Deci, Koestner, and Ryan who reviewed over 100 experiments on the demotivating effects of extrinsic rewards, found clear evidence of the way in which tangible rewards like money, candy, and prizes reduce interest in a task at hand. These results are consistent with the view that the intrinsic motivation of virtuous behaviour promotes wellbeing both subjectively and objectively. E. L. Deci et al., "A meta-analytic review of experiments examining the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation," *Psychological Bulletin* 25, (1999): 627-668. Cited in Franklin, *The Psychology of Happiness. A good human life*, 58.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Franklin, *The Psychology of Happiness. A good human life*, 17; cf 84.

3.3.12 Education specifically in wisdom and beauty is necessary in the formation of virtue.¹⁰⁶¹

Nagai advises his visitors to find pleasure in natural beauty as an antidote to a frenetic and aimless lifestyle that takes away peace. This advice is in close accord with Aristotle's view, noted immediately above, that moral education includes learning to feel appropriately. This sophisticated moral education extends to an appreciation, first lived and only then understood, of what worthy and noble. The soul must be cultivated by habits of loving and hating finely.¹⁰⁶²

Aristotle's argument is that perceptual, affective and deliberative capacities will all be most effectively fostered within such a refined education. "Full virtue is not simply the excellence of the non rational part but itself combines the excellence of character and of practical reason".¹⁰⁶³

It cannot be argued that "rationality emerges in an instant"; Sherman notes that Aristotle refers to clear stages of child development, from an early period of affective development and then the "more active development of the rational (and deliberative) capacities, and then eventually the emergence of full rationality."¹⁰⁶⁴

Aristotle urges an education which elevates the spirit. "There is a sort of education in which parents should train their sons, not as being useful and necessary, but because it is liberal and noble."¹⁰⁶⁵

He writes of the need not to vulgarise children in their upbringing.

Hence we may infer that what is noble, not what is brutal, should have the first place. And parents who devote their

¹⁰⁶¹ "For the sake of the noble." Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 90-95.

¹⁰⁶² Cf *NE*, 1179b24-31.

¹⁰⁶³ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 158.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 159.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1337b30ff.

children to gymnastics while they neglect their necessary education, in reality vulgarize them. For they make them useful to the art of statesmanship in one quality only.¹⁰⁶⁶

Rather than passing on a set of pragmatic skills, we must raise children to aspire to what is good, true and beautiful. Wisdom implies this deep respect for the truth. Not surprisingly Nagai echoes this sentiment in his advice for his children: “Science means falling in love with the truth.”¹⁰⁶⁷

In the Aristotelian vision music had an important role in moral education. The emulative and empathetic mimetic enactment combined with positive reinforcement from the music itself leads to a certain habituation.¹⁰⁶⁸ This is a reminder for our own times, that literature is a powerful medium for refined education, and a warning that Lady Gaga’s words and actions do more damage to young minds than we might be prepared to admit. “To judge rightly and to delight in good characters and fine actions” is the very stuff of moral education.¹⁰⁶⁹

3.3.13 Overcoming incontinence and unlearning vice.

Nagai is of the view that persons in maturity can change their behaviours and attitudes. He devotes much time in his final years to urging his fellow countrymen to paths of peace and reconciliation. It is also apparent that he regarded the effort to build peace as a difficult task that had to be attempted. It would be all too easy to surrender oneself to the bitterness and hatred for the occupying forces. He saw that such an unleashing of negative emotion would ultimately be counter productive as explicitly he argued that man has a calling to love,¹⁰⁷⁰ and that love, and a character disposed to love, fulfil our human nature. Again Nagai’s intuitions are in step substantially with the accounts of Aristotle and Aquinas.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1338b40-1339a5.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Nagai, *Leaving my beloved children behind*. 95.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 182.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 183.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Nagai, *Leaving my beloved children behind*. 164. Nagai’s Christianity becomes more explicit in his later writing, and he argues that love of God is man’s ultimate fulfilment.

The nature of vice is instructive of the nature of virtue.¹⁰⁷¹ Vice is the state of no longer having within oneself noble desires and a noble end for one's actions. The vicious man deliberates and chooses a course of action for a good that will harm him or others, taking pleasure in this. While virtue and vice are both habits, vice is contrary to nature.¹⁰⁷²

Hence, while virtue is freedom from those passions "that are not as they should be as to manner and time"¹⁰⁷³, vice is the disposition to give free rein to some passion. Applying to this context the insight that reason is the form of virtue,¹⁰⁷⁴ that rationality provides for the ordering of material constituents to establish the virtue, it would seem that vice can be seen as a lack or absence of right ordering of the material constituents indirectly by our rationality and directly by the person through the use of reason.

Essentially vice represents a complacent failure to have developed capacities for self management; capacities which could reasonably have been expected to have been developed are absent. This insight will have implications when we consider the neural substrate of virtue.

3.4 Conclusion.

In this chapter I have reviewed the principal features of the Aristotelian and Thomistic conceptions of virtue. On the basis of the scenarios from Nagai's life

¹⁰⁷¹ Aristotle also develops the notion of incontinence, of less direct relevance here. "The incontinent man, knowing that what he does is bad, does it as a result of passion; the continent man, knowing that his appetites are bad, refuses on account of his rational principle to follow them" (*NE*, 1145b10-11) "Incontinent people are not criminal, but they will do criminal acts." (*NE*, 1151a10) The incontinent man knows he is doing what is not good for him but is too weak to avoid it, whereas the vicious man is complacent in his choice.

¹⁰⁷² *ST*, Ia-IIae, Q.71, Art.2.

¹⁰⁷³ *NE*, ii 3.

¹⁰⁷⁴ It will be seen below that Aquinas specifies reason as the "form" of virtue (**4.1.1.2**). I would suggest that "to give free reign" could take place two ways: the deliberate choice to follow inappropriate passion, either for the recognised benefits of immediate gratification, or from motives of self love despite awareness of duties to others; the complacent refusal to exercise the reflection and judgement required to moderate the passion.

presented in **3.1.2** I identified prominent characteristics of virtue evident in real life in **3.1.4**. Then, in **3.2** and **3.3**, I identified broad characteristics of virtue distilled from texts from Aristotle and Aquinas. The 23 qualities identified will, at the conclusion of **Chapter 4** and in the light of the content of that chapter, be distilled into **Table 4.1**, in which they are cross referenced to the observations from Nagai's life, providing a simple demonstration of the effectiveness of the Aristotelian/Thomistic template in describing superior personal qualities encountered in real life.