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The Virtuoso Human: A Virtue Ethics Model Based on Care

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by

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Abstract

   The goal of this thesis is to develop the foundation and structure for a virtue ethics theory grounded in a specific notion of care. While there has been a recent revival of interest in virtue ethics theory, the theory has its roots in Aristotle's work as well in the medieval writings of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas worked out many of Aristotle's ideas in much more detail. However, while Aquinas offers a very rich and compelling ethical theory, it is problematic because it is very tightly wrapped in his theology. A key component in Aquinas's theory is charity. Charity is one of Aquinas's theological virtues, which express the relationship between humans and God. Charity is the love of God and of neighbor and he construes it as the foundation for all the other virtues. My thesis explores the idea of replacing charity with the virtue of care. The virtue of care to be used in this essential role is primarily based on recent work on the ethics of care by Nel Nodding. The virtue of care, as I develop it, combines three interrelated parts: instinctive, maternal and relational care. By comparing and contrasting care and charity, I demonstrate that the virtue of care can fill the role of charity. In this capacity care can serve as a naturalistic foundation for a virtue ethics theory. Since the ethics of care is relatively new, it has yet to take shape. I propose building a care-based virtue ethics theory on the structure of Aquinas's theory. This new care-based virtue ethics theory also benefits from utilizing many of the components of Aristotle's theory which are found in Aquinas's work. My argument is that care can fulfill the role of charity in

Aquinas's theory. Care-based virtue ethics theory is a completely naturalistic version of Aquinas's virtue ethics theory. My thesis contains both the foundation for this different kind of care-based virtue ethics theory and some direction for future work on revising Aquinas's theory using the virtue of care. The essence of this care-based virtue ethics theory is captured in the notion I outline of a virtuoso human.

Chapter 1: Introduction

   The intent of this thesis is to develop the foundation and conceptual framework for a virtue ethics theory based on care. I start by extracting components of Aristotle's discussion regarding the nature of a virtue in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and looking at them from a perspective different from his original intent. The second step is to take from Aquinas's work certain aspects of his notion of charity and the function it serves in his theory. Finally, I develop the concept of care as a virtue, based primarily on the work of Nel Noddings. This notion of care has three connected aspects. First, there is an instinctive element of care related to human animal nature. This instinctive aspect is the basis of a second, more sophisticated notion of care, based on maternal care. Finally, maternal care serves as the source of a strong notion of relational care. These three concepts form the virtue of care to serve as the foundation of a care-based virtue ethics theory. I argue that this conception of care functions in a manner similar to how Aquinas utilizes the virtue of charity in his theory.   I then present the outline of a care-based virtue ethics theory which I believe can be constructed around this foundational role for care. I propose that this structure is conceptually supported by Aristotle's and Aquinas's ethical theories.

   I argue that a properly conceived virtue ethics theory, based on care, will both have structural integrity and be useful. As a theory, it is based on sound principles and logically consistent. Care can be justified as a naturalistic first principle. It can function

as a universal foundational principle in a manner similar to aspects of Aquinas's charity. With care in the role of charity, it will then be possible to reworked Aquinas's theory as a wholly naturalistic theory. The virtue of care also integrates well with, and enhances the role Aristotle assigns to his central virtue of prudence, which will maintain an important role in this care-based virtue ethics theory. However, the most important aspect of this care-based virtue ethics theory is found in is its application. In combination with the mechanics of certain parts of Aristotle's and Aquinas's virtue ethics theories, care can be a powerful aid in moral decision making and taking action. I propose that the virtue of care can provide strong motivation for ethical behavior. It can be easily understood and applied to specific moral situations. The virtue of care can be taught and habituated in the manner of an Aristotelian moral virtue. However, more than simply being taught, care can be instilled in children. Aquinas conceives charity as something which is infused into an individual. I believe that this conception of charity can provide a very useful analogy related to how care can be instilled into an individual.

While my intent is to develop the outline for an ethical theory, I also suggest certain areas where it may be possible to address moral development. In this thesis, I focus on a very narrow area of the recent literature surrounding the ethics of care. There are many different books and articles that I do not have the space to examine herein, which explore aspects of the connection between care and moral education. In addition, I do not make a specific argument for every possible issue which may be encountered along the way. I do point in directions worthy of exploring in more depth in the future. For example, I do not endeavor to provide a specific and comprehensive list of virtues or do a detailed examination of the relationship between care and specific virtues. Rather,

one direction worthy of exploring in the future would be the question of the unification of the virtues. Could care, in the place of charity, unify the virtues in a sense similar to what Aquinas intends? My focus in this thesis is on the heart of virtue ethics theory which is the conceptualization and functioning of the virtues. The central part of this thesis is to explore how the functions of one particular powerful divine virtue, charity, can be accomplished by a related naturalistic concept, care. Care can play a fundamental role in virtue ethics, similar to aspects of the role Aquinas ascribes to charity in his discussion of it in the *Disputed Questions on the Virtues* (*DQV*). Aquinas's foundational role for charity is based on his notion of it as "(i) the form of the virtues, (ii) their moving cause, and (iii) their root."[1] In using care in this role, in place of charity, it is possible that Aquinas's theory can be reworked as naturalistic virtue ethics theory, without the theological elements.

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[1] Williams, Thomas and Atkins, E.M., Editors, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues,* 124.

Chapter 2: Ethics

Up until about 40 years ago, moral theory was dominated by Kantian inspired deontology and utilitarianism based on the work of Bentham and Mill.[1] Both of these theories offer general notions of what constitutes an ethical action. Deontology usually takes its start from the notion that an action is ethical if and only if it is in accord with a correct rule or principle. From that point forward different deontological theories focus on determining the correct rules or principles. Various versions of deontology are constructed around different assumptions regarding how to ground the moral rules. There is usually some form of obligation or duty involved, which requires an individual to follow the rule. Utilitarianism generally takes as its starting point the notion that an action is ethical if and only if it promotes the best consequences.[2] The various utilitarian theories have different principles about how to promote the best consequences and how the best consequences are to be determined. Consequences are often defined as some version of the best outcomes that will make the most people happy in some way. There are many different varieties of both of these theories, with an assortment of different premises and principles. Both theories also have well documented general strengths and weaknesses. One of the primary advantages of these two types of ethical theories is that they appear to be easy to use for determining what action an individual should take. A

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[1]See discussion in the introduction to Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 1.

[2] See Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 26.

person simply needs to adhere to a rule or he just takes the action which will have the best consequences. However, this is not as simple as it sounds. It is not easy to find a rule for every situation an individual may encounter. Furthermore, rules always seem to have exceptions which are determined by circumstances. A rule such as always tell the truth might not apply if a person was hiding an innocent person from a potential killer. The notion of determining the best consequences includes the basic problem of predicting the future. All of the ramifications of an action can never be foreseen in order to determine whether or not the best consequences are achieved. The more complex discussions in utilitarianism centers around the problem of determining what are the best consequences and for whom do they apply These are application problems, referring to the difficulty encountered by an individual when putting the theory to use in taking a specific action.

Conceptually, deontological and utilitarian theories also give the appearance of having integrity in their theoretical structures. They both seem to have well grounded first principles and logical consistency. Deontology has a rule book and an individual follows it. Utilitarianism has measurements of happiness and once the calculus is done the answer should be apparent. However, as Rosalind Hursthouse points out, both of these ethical theories have problems with their foundational principles and logical arguments. Deontology must determine "*which* moral rules or principles are the correct ones" and the reasoning behind why an individual has a duty or obligation to follow the rule.[1] Utilitarianism must determine what constitutes a good consequence. Also, utilitarian theorists are faced with the problem that "different cultures, different

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[1] Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 33.

individuals, have different ideas of happiness."[1]   It is very difficult to define "precisely

and correctly that 'happiness' we are supposed to be maximizing."[2] Utilitarian theories

also have another more significant problem. Defining what is ethical as 'the best

consequences' or 'the greatest happiness' for the most people opens the door for the

possibility that there are no moral prohibitions.   If an action makes enough people happy,

it would be considered moral, no matter how abhorrent it may seem.[3] A more serious

problem for both of these theories is found in the many different arguments which have

been made, by a variety of authors, that some of the major moral failings of the 19th and

20th centuries may have occurred as a result of a general reliance on these two approaches

to morality.[4]

In response to these and other shortcomings of utilitarian and deontological

theories, virtue ethics has arisen as a third major ethical approach. Hursthouse points that

in the short time since its recent modern revival virtue ethics "has acquired full status,

recognized as a rival to deontological and utilitarian approaches, as interestingly and

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[1] Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 34

[2] Ibid., 34

[3] This oversimplification of the potential problem has been addressed since the very origins of the theory with Bentham and Mill. As George Sher points out, "at first glance, Mill's greatest-happiness principle may seem to imply that society should interfere with people's libertied whenever such interference will maximize the overall happiness." *Classics of Western Philosophy* (2006), 1057, Hackett Publishing Company. However, Mill argues that there must be an accounting of justice in the actions so that, for example as he argues in *On Liberty*, the only time a government should exercise power against the will of the individual is when he may harm others. Others like John Austin and Henry Sidgwick have also made arguments rebutting this claim.

[4] This conclusion has been stated in many different ways, but I think Alasdair MacIntyre summarized it well in *After Virtue* (1984). He captures a possible root of this problem with the comment that "ever since belief in Aristotelian teleology was discredited moral philosophers have attempted to provide some alternative rational secular account of the nature and status of morality, but that all these attempts, various and variously impressive as they have been, have in fact failed, a failure perceived most clearly by Nietzsche." 256.

challengingly different from either as they are from each other."[1] While there are still

some who argue that virtue ethics is more a term of art than a viable ethical theory, the

volume of recent literature would indicate that at a minimum it has acquired an important

position in the current ethical dialogue.[2]

Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics generally refers to an approach to ethics "according to which *the*

basic judgments in ethics are judgments about character."[3] Character basically refers to

a specific collection of traits an individual has which are in the form of dispositions to

act. People have different levels of habitual action, ranging from infrequent mild

tendencies to deeply ingrained habitual routines and instinctive like behavior. A

character trait is a strong disposition or tendency to act regularly in a specific manner.

Dispositions to act ethically, which have developed into character traits, are called

virtues. Obviously, virtues are at the center of virtue theory. Different versions of virtue

ethics theories address various aspects of character and a variety of different collections

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[1] Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 2.

[2] Elizabeth Anscombe is frequently credited with one of the first entries in the modern revival of virtue ethics theory with her 1958 article "Modern Moral Philosophy." Martha Nussbaum presents an argument that virtue ethics is not an ethical theory in general and argues that what is often presented as a VE theory is actually a confused story. That VE is not a standalone ethical theory nor is it a cohesive alternative and is often presented by its proponents as "radically anti-theoretical." Nussbaum, Martha, "Virtue Ethics: A Misleading Category," 164.

[3] Statman, Daniel, *Virtue Ethics*, 7. Stateman has a good discussion of this characterization. He refers to two authors of articles in *Virtue Ethics* (1997): David Solomon 165 and Peter Simpson, 245. He also refers to discussions by: Schneewind, Jerome B. (1990) "The Misfortunes of Virtue," *Ethics* 101, 43; Baier, Kurt (1988) "Radical Virtue Ethics,", in *French et al.*, 127; Slote, Michael (1993) "Virtue Ethics and Democratic Values," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 24, 15; Van Inwagen, Peter (1990) "Response to Slote," *Social Theory and Practice* 16, 392; Dreier, James (1993) "Structures of Normative Theories," *Monist* 76, 34; McDowell, John (1979) "Virtue and Reason," *Monist* 62, 331.

of virtues categorized in various ways. One way of understanding the parts of a virtue

ethics theory is to think of going in two directions from the central notion of a virtue.

One part of the theory requires a look upward from the virtue to understand the guiding

or central principles of the theory. This involves determining what makes a disposition a

virtue, what excellent dispositions are on the list of ethical virtues and what a person

needs to qualify for having the proper collection for his or her character to be considered

virtuous. The other direction goes downward from the virtue to the action an individual

takes and involves determining what actions are ethical and how they emanate from the

virtue.

For example, one issues of concern is whether or not virtues can be independent

of actions. Can an individual who appears to have the virtue of honesty take a dishonest

action in a specific situation? The strongest position, sometimes attributed to Aristotle, is

that it is not possible for the ethical status of the disposition and the action to be separate

in the fully virtuous person. A virtuous person is someone who has reached the highest

level of excellence in his moral dispositions. A person is virtuous if and only if every

action they take in the sphere of morality is ethical and comes from his virtue. Another

associated component of the relation between virtue and action is the notion that it is the

virtue, the disposition, which justifies right conduct. An action is virtuous if and only if it

is the one done by the virtuous person, from the proper disposition. For example, an

action is honest if it is what an honest person would do. What is meant by this distinction

if that the intent of an individual determines the moral status of the act. If a person takes

an honest action by accident, or because it will injure another person, it is not considered

a virtuous action. This facet of the virtuous action is similar in certain aspects to the

deontological approach. In deontological theory the agent acts because of the rule. An action is ethical because it is an application of the rule and the agent acts out of a duty to follow the rule. The outcome of the action does not matter. In deontological theory the rule determines the moral status of the act. In virtue ethics theory the virtue determines the moral status of the act. Both the virtue and deontological approaches are opposed to the utilitarian method, where the outcome of the action determines its moral status. If an individual followed the proper rule or acted from a virtue, and due to circumstances outside his control there was a bad result, the action would be unethical in an utilitarian theory.

A virtue ethics theory must address the foundational principles upon which to call a particular, disposition, character trait or collection of traits ethical. In many virtue theories, the virtues generally are thought to derive their justification from the principle that they are necessary for, and possibly constitutive of, the flourishing of the individual and perhaps some form of human societal flourishing in general.[1] The foundation for virtue ethics is also usually built upon a naturalistic element, related to the notion of flourishing. The virtues are part of a characteristically natural flourishing human life. As a part of an individual's nature there is some kind of harmony found within the fully virtuous person, so that he does the right thing naturally, without internal conflict.[2] For example, in certain virtue ethics theories, this conflict is considered to be between the

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[1] See Statman, Daniel, *Virtue Ethics*, 8. For this discussion Statman References Hursthouse (1995), "A virtue is a character trait that human beings, given their physical and psychological nature, need to flourish (or to do and fare well)." 68.

[2] See Statman, Daniel, *Virtue Ethics*, 15-16. For this discussion Statman refers to two authors in his *Virtue Ethics* (1997): Gary Watson, 62-66 and David Solomon, 166, as well as Swanton, Christine (1995) "Profiles of the Virtues," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 76, 60; Jerome B. Schneewind, "The Misfortunes of Virtue," *Ethics,* 101 (1990), 43.

reasoning part of a person, and his animal or emotional desires. The conflict and harmony can take different forms. In addition, the principles of virtue ethics are usually located in the naturalistic world of human experience and require no claim to some other realm. However, the notions of flourishing or happiness can vary. For example, Aquinas classifies Aristotle's notion of natural happiness as something earthly and postulated that there is also a divine happiness found in union with God. Other theories have been built on a Platonic type of foundation and ground the virtues or happiness somewhere else, like a Kantian realm of ends or Nicolai Hartmann's similar realm of values.[1]

This generic synopsis of virtue ethics captures some of the common principles of different approaches to virtue ethics. Much of virtue ethics theory is built on an Aristotelian foundation. There have been a fair number of articles, and books with collections of articles, related to various parts virtue ethics, such as Statman's *Virtue Ethics* (1997), which I have been using as a reference. In addition, many different texts, such as Philippa Foot's *Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (1978) address aspects of virtue ethics and usually relate them to specific ethical problems, such as abortion or euthanasia. While there has been a lot of recent interest in virtue ethics, I intend to follow the path set out by Rosalind Hursthouse in her 1998 *On Virtue Ethics*. As she points out, her text was one of the first "which explores virtue ethics systematically and at length."[2] Another of the first modern in-depth texts on the subject is Michael Slote's *From Morality to Virtue* (1992). Slote has more recently added to his

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[1] See W. H. Werkmeister (1990), *Nicolai Hartmann's New Ontology,* particularly chapter VI for a discussion of Hartmann's *Ethics* (1932/33). Werkmeister gives a good summary of Hartmann's 746 page book, which is a virtue ethics theory based on Kant's work and grounded in the "realm of moral values," 196.

[2]Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 5.

work on virtue ethics, with the publication of *Morals from Motives* (2001). These all

start with similar expositions of the subject. The first step is to differentiate virtue ethics

from deontological and utilitarian theories. The second step is to define a specific virtue

ethics theory.[1] Both Hursthouse and Slote state that they are each espousing a "particular

version"[2] or "specific form"[3] of virtue ethics. I need to give a brief account of the

different directions of each of these works, and why I chose to follow Hursthouse's

approach.

Slote's initial approach in *From Morality to Virtue* is directed more toward the

theoretical and abstract, offering the "foundations for a general account of a specific form

of virtue ethics, one that is sufficiently oriented to conceptual/structural issues and

specific about what counts as a virtue to enable us to compare its merits with those of

currently dominant approaches to ethics."[4] He takes a more agent-based approach to

virtue ethics which is focused more on "the virtuous character of virtuous individuals

than in the actions of individuals" and more on being "grounded in aretaic concepts of

goodness and rightness."[5] His virtue ethics follows the thinking of some more modern

philosophers such as Martineau, Christian Swanson and aspects of Nietzsche, rather than

Aristotle.[6] He built on this theoretical approach and movement away from Aristotle's

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[1] Deontological and utilitarian theories also wrestle with these two subjects, finding some of their own identity as theories in the differences between each other and trying to determine their own foundations and content.

[2] Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics,* 5.

[3] Slote, *From Morality to Virtue,* xiv.

[4] Ibid., xiv.

[5] Ibid., xiv.

[6] See Hursthouse discussion, *On Virtue Ethics*, 8.

approach in *Morals from Motives*. However, an important aspect of his second text is that it is directed at a developing the ethics of care into a "warm, agent-based VE theory of individual morality."[1]

While I do believe that Slote provides some valuable insight in both of these works, because he takes a more theoretical approach, I do not intend to follow his approach. This is both because I intend to follow Aristotle and because the goal for the theory I am developing is for it to be simple and applicable. By his own admission, Slote's approach is problematic on both accounts. As he points out in his introductory comments "this present book deliberately avoids patterning its ideas on Aristotle," arguing that at times "the historical Aristotle seems irrelevant" to some of the ethical problems of the modern world.[2] From Slote's perspective "Aristotle seems to focus more on the evaluation of agents and character traits than on the evaluation of actions."[3] He also states that the account of caring he has offered is "somewhat complex" and problematic in that "it might well be asked how anyone could be expected to carry such a complicated (or philosophically sophisticated?) view around in her head and guide her life by it."[4] He goes on to discuss that his account is something which could be used to measure motivation and conduct, not necessarily to guide action. During the second phase of my project, reconstructing Aquinas's theory based on care, I will return to address Slote. In particular, he has a good discussion of the relationship between care and justice, which will be helpful in evaluating other virtues. However, my focus is on

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[1] Stohr and Wellman, "Recent Work on Virtue Ethics," 49.

[2] Slote, *Morals from Motives,* vii.

[3] Ibid.*,* 5.

[4] Ibid., 88.

developing a practical theory, based on Aquinas's work which is founded on Aristotle's

theory. In this thesis, which is the first phase of my overall project of rebuilding

Aquinas's theory, I intend to follow Hursthouse in the direction I take in creating the

foundation and structure for this version of a care-based virtue ethics theory.

Hursthouse offers an approach which is "more concerned with details, examples

and qualifications."[1] She defines her approach as neo-Aristotelian because, as is

commonly acknowledged, Aristotle was wrong about certain things like slaves and

women, but also because she does not want to be restricted to his narrow list of virtues.[2]

While she adopts many of the notions of Aristotle from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, she

states that in certain regards she is launching out on her own. She believes this approach

is necessary because what she imports from Aristotle is not only subject to interpretation

and the "history of ideas" but also needs to be modernized.[3] Since I will initially follow a

similar approach, importing components of Aristotle's work, I will not elaborate on her

overall theory. However, I will introduce what she has brought in from Aristotle as a

lead into a discussion of his theory. Hursthouse discusses five main ideas from Aristotle.

The first two are his conception of *eudaimonia* and concept of virtue (or vice). The third

is Aristotle's distinction between acting from reason, which is the rational wanting or

desire of adults, and the "mere passion or desire that impels the other animals and small

children" in what they do when they act.[4] The fourth piece she uses from Aristotle is

that she finds his theory hospitable to the notion that beliefs and desires are not separate

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[1] Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics,* 5.

[2] Ibid., 8.

[3] Ibid., 9.

[4] Ibid., 14.

distinct parts of human nature. Many modern ethical theories hold that belief and desire have very different roles in decisions and actions, and these theories struggle with this issue. Aristotle's concept of choice (*prohairesis*) can be "either desiderative intellect or intellectual desire."[1] Finally, she highlights the insight had into the cultivation of virtues in children. I will follow Hursthouse's approach and I plan to draw on several of the insights in Hursthouse's book.

I also plan to discuss some of the problems with virtue ethics theories in several parts. First, I plan to follow a specific path through the *Nicomachean Ethics* with a particular objective in mind. While I do intend to be consistent with Aristotle's work, I do not intend to provide a definitive account of exactly what he means in each area I discuss. Rather, my goal is to extract useful parts of his theory which address some of the problems of virtue ethics theory, along with some of Hursthouse's insights. I will also discuss how Aquinas addresses some of the problems with virtue ethics theory based on portions of his work. In particular, my goal is to try to remove the theological aspects of Aquinas's work, while maintaining the valuable components, and reformulate it in a naturalistic fashion. I will build on my interpretation of some of Aristotle's and Aquinas's important concepts with the intention of using them as components for constructing a care-based virtue ethics theory. I will then develop a notion of care which, when combined with these components will provide the foundation and structural for a sound virtue ethics theory which begins to address the basic problems.

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[1] Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 16.

Chapter 3: Aristotle's Virtue

The ethics of Aristotle is about human action and the decisions involved. At the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*) he states that "every action and decision, seems to seek some good" (1094a1-5).[1] He goes on in this first book to discuss how some actions are means to other ends while some things "achievable by action have some end we wish for because of itself" (1094a18). Aristotle argues that the end we seek for itself, which is the highest good, is *eudaimonia*. This highest good is the ultimate end of the actions which he is investigating. Eudaimonia is a form of happiness which "more than anything else, seems complete without qualification" (1097a34-35). While a lot of the commentary on Aristotle's work focuses on the nature of this end, Terence Irwin, in his footnotes to this important opening book of the *NE,* provides a reminder of the significance Aristotle places on the action component of his theory. Aristotle has four different classifications for human pursuits which are directed to some goal. Three of these pursuits, crafts, types of production and lines of inquiry, seem to aim at goals which go beyond the activity itself and the exercise of the activity. However, Aristotle sets out to develop an understanding of the special kind of action that "includes ACTIVITY that

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[1] Irwin, Terence, Translator (1999), *Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics,* Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana. I will use this translation throughout and reference the quotes from it with the Bekker numbers.

does not aim at any end beyond itself."[1] Certain actions which are "chosen for their own sakes are among the things chosen for the sake of some end, and hence (he will go on to argue) for the sake of some ultimate end."[2] Throughout the *NE* Aristotle develops, expands and elaborates on the relationship between the action and the end. As Irwin notes, Aristotle's work in the *NE* includes both an effort to "describe and understand the highest good *and to prescribe ways to achieve it.*"[3] What follows will be a brief outline of parts of the theory he built in the *NE* around his conception of virtue and the related action. In particular, I want to focus on both Aristotle's characterization of a virtue and the relationship he develops between virtue and action. Aristotle classified virtues into two broad groupings, the moral and the intellectual. I will first discuss the moral virtues and then give a brief account of the intellectual virtues both for completeness and for developing a better understanding of one of the most important virtues in his theory, prudence. Prudence and the moral virtues are the primary ethical components in his theory.

The dichotomy between the moral and intellectual virtues is based on Aristotle's account of the human soul. One part of the human soul is non-rational and one part is rational. He further categorizes the non-rational part into two more groupings. The first part has to do with the many bodily functions that are found in plants and other animals, such as the biological or chemical operation of the kidneys or digestive systems. Other parts are shared just with the animals, such as vision or other sensory perceptions. These

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[1] Irwin, Translator, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 172. As Irwin points out, ACTIVITY in the sense related to virtue is identical to action. While both action and activity are used in several senses in the *NE*, in relation to the virtues, "he ascribes to each virtue a distinctive range of actions." 353.

[2] Ibid., 172.

[3] Ibid., 172. Emphasis added.

parts are not directly under a person's control. For example, in a newborn infant, these biological systems function automatically as parts of the human animal. The actions related to these functions are generally construed as involuntary, and include other things such as growth, heartbeat and breathing. An infant needs food and water for survival, just like any other animal, and so he has an appetite or desire for food. Many of these biological desires and appetites, and the related actions, are generally categorized as instincts or instinctive. A child instinctively reaches out to his mother to nurse or seeks out other nutrition. He has an appetite or desire for food. If a certain activity results in satisfying an appetite or desire, just like any other animal, the human child will most likely repeat the action. These instinctive actions can become habituated in the human animal. A child's instinct to eat, if satisfied in a particular way on a regular basis, would cause a behavioral change which then becomes a disposition to act in a certain manner. I do not intend (nor is it necessary to) impute any modern behavioral psychology to Aristotle. This story fits with basic observation and categorization, an approach Aristotle took to ethics. Aristotle's discussions of pleasure and pain in Book II of the *NE* indicate his concern with this aspect of human development. He points out that some pleasure "grows up with all of us from infancy on" and it is difficult to change the associated feelings which can become "dyed into our lives" (1105a2-5). The moral virtues are concerned with these aspects of a human.

Aristotle describes a moral virtue as a particular state within a human being which is "concerned with actions and feelings" (1104b14-15). The virtue is not a feeling or a capacity to feel, but something which "causes its possessors to be in a good state and to perform their functions well" (1106a16-17). The virtuous state is a disposition an

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individual has which causes her to act and feel a particular way in certain situations. There are a variety of different situations an individual can encounter which require action and which involve a range of emotions. Therefore, in order to better understand the human dispositions related to morality, Aristotle groups human feelings and actions into different categories. He starts from what might be construed as the more basic human attributes related to emotions and the human animal nature and works his way to the more complex dispositions related to thought.[1] Some moral virtues, such as temperance, are more concerned with the desiderative and appetitive part of the person. As the name suggest, these parts of an individual are concerned with the desire for things like food and drink or the appetite for sexual or other pleasures. Other moral virtues are more directly connected to emotions, such as courage, as it relates to fear. Aristotle argues that the moral virtues, which deal with desires and emotions, are primarily acquired through habit.

Aristotle also observed another part of the soul which to him seems "to be nonrational, though in a way it shares in reason" (1102b14-15). This other part of the soul can be observed in human animal systems. For example, the sensory part of the nervous system can cause a person to take an involuntary action, such as pulling his hand away from intense heat in order to prevent bodily damage. However, an individual can also endure intense, damaging heat by choosing to keep his hand on a hot surface. This leads Aristotle to postulate that there is a second portion of the non-rational part of the soul. Aristotle observes that there seems to be some part of the appetitive and

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[1] This is based upon the sequence within the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle starts with the moral virtues in Book II which are related to a more basic animal nature and then proceeds to discuss the virtues of thought, in Book VI, which he attributes to higher human functions found in reason.

desiderative parts of a person which, while generally related to his animal nature, "shares in reason" and yet at the same time it appears to be apart or somehow separate from reason as well, so that this part of the soul appears at times to be "clashing and struggling with reason" (1102b14-20).

Aristotle postulates that there is a struggle within the soul because we can observe how the body parts go astray when "incontinent people have impulses in contrary directions" (1102b20-25). While we cannot observe the soul, he argues that "we should suppose that the soul also has something apart from reason, countering and opposing reason" (1102b20-25). Aristotle also observes that over time an individual can develop some level of control over some of his bodily systems. This control occurs when the countering part of a person's animal nature "obeys reason" (1102b26-29). Control can best be observed in a continent person. The struggle and the relation between reason and the body can be explained in simple examples. How much a person eats and what he eats will affect overall bodily weight. An individual who decides he wants to lose weight though a diet will struggle with the body's need for nourishment. A similar struggle occurs in a person who has developed a strong desire for alcohol and has made the conscious decision to not drink alcohol. There is a struggle between the addictive desire in the physical operation of the body and the mind, which attempts to control this addictive desire. Prudence is the disposition or part of a person which serves the function of trying to implement the commands of the intellect (reason), and get the body to obey those commands.

The appetitive and desiderative parts of a person's bodily functions are related to human animal nature and are considered natural or in some cases instinctive in their

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movement. However, there is something in these bodily function, a part of them which "both listens to reason and obeys it" in a manner more like the way a child obeys his father, rather than the way we conceive the certainty of math (1102b30-35). Two plus two does not sometimes equal four, it always does. Yet, a child (particularly a teenager) may or may not obey a parent. The child sometimes provides no more reasoning for not doing something than saying he didn't feel like doing it. Aristotle seems to be describing a way in which a person appears to choose not to listen to reason. It does not appear to be purely a desire or appetite which overcomes reason. It sometimes is difficult to separate this part which disobeys reason from the case where a person may not be able to control his desires and appetites. An individual may decide it is too difficult to continue dieting. But there also may be a point when a person needs food and something inside of him drives him to eat. Up to some point, short of starvation, an individual may be able to control his desire to eat. However, if the animal instinct becomes strong enough, it may overpower reason and at that point the individual would act purely from his animal nature for survival. Similarly, an individual may choose to drink or it may be the case that the addictive craving for alcohol overcomes reason.

This notion of control and loss of control is central to Aristotle's definition of a moral virtue and Aristotle does not construe it as a simple matter. It is a complex subject which he addresses at length both in general and related to specific virtues. What makes it even more difficult to explain and justify is Aristotle's target. A moral virtue is not a simple disposition an individual has for controlling his animal appetites and desires, and directing the related actions. A moral virtue is an excellence, a disposition in which an individual has the highest level of control possible for a human being. He excels in the

particular area under consideration. A virtuous act of courage is the most ethical action

an individual could have taken given the circumstances of the situation he encounters.

Understanding Aristotle's concept of excellence requires further elaboration because the

description of a moral virtue that I have given thus far is somewhat behavioral and might

even be observable in other animals.

A dog can be trained to sit and stay put when presented with food, until it is

released by command. Different animals can be trained to excel in certain behaviors. In

like manner, the ability of a person to control his appetite is something which can be

learned and then observed in external behavior. What is different about Aristotle's moral

virtue is what is taking place within the person. In the case of a dog's behavior the

internal struggle to repress its instinct to eat the food presented can sometimes be

observed. The dog may intensely stare at the food or manifest a tension in her body,

ready to pounce on the morsel upon the release command. However there is no way of

determining exactly what is taking place inside the animal. Similar observations can be

made in humans. A person dieting may gaze at another person's meal with what might

be construed as a look of hunger. While the definition of a moral virtue starts in this

simple behavioral fashion, it very quickly becomes complex. The reason the individual

has for taking a particular action and the feeling associated with the action are important

to determining whether or not a person has a particular virtue.

The intention and state of the individual taking a particular action are what

qualifies it as a virtuous action. As I have delineated it, this is what in I mean by going

the direction of going from the virtue to the action. Furthermore, the state and intention

are related to specific goals, going from the virtue in the direction of the principles. For

purposes of understanding Aristotle's requirements of a virtue, I will break the analysis

into three parts. The first part relates to the characteristics of a virtuous action. The

second part has to do with the state and character of the individual. The third has to do

with Aristotle's overarching goal in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and how he connects his

goal to the virtuous action. All three of these are integral, interrelated parts of Aristotle's

definition of a virtue with no one part standing separate. To be considered a virtuous

action, the action must be taken from a particular state, as a part of an individual's overall

character and be directed to the proper goals within Aristotle's theory.

Aristotle's first two requirements, the characteristics of an action and the state of

the individual, are very tightly related and so I will discuss them together. A virtuous

action is an excellence, the most ethical action an individual can take in a given situation.

This excellence comes from the individual's disposition which is his character trait. It is

a characteristic way an individual has of doing the right thing, which is habituated into

the individual through his efforts over time. The individual "must know [that he is doing

virtuous actions]; second, he must decide on them, and decide on them for themselves;

and, third, he must also do them from a firm and unchanging state" (1105a30-35). The

person needs to be able to figure out what must be done (or not done) and do it in the

proper manner. A virtuous action is one that "should accord with the correct reason"

(1103b32-34). The individual takes the prudent action. It is at this point that the

intellectual virtues come into the account of virtue.

The intellectual dispositions are things like understanding and wisdom. However,

there is one intellectual virtue which plays a critical role in Aristotle's account of the

moral virtues. The intellectual dispositions concern the reasoning part of the individual

and are mainly acquired through teaching (1103a15-19). Prudence is the one virtue

which does not fit neatly into Aristotle's system. Prudence (*phronesis*) is defined as a

"state grasping the truth, involving reason, and concerned with action about human

goods" (1140b20-22). While Aristotle categorizes prudence as part of the intellect, he

also believes that it has a connection with the animal side of the soul, and thus is also

concerned with feelings and action. In this role, prudence serves a key function in

Aristotle's theory. It is the link between knowing what the proper ethical action is

through the intellect (reason) and directing the body to carry out that action. The virtuous

person must be wise enough to know what to do. Then he must be prudent enough to

execute the action and do it properly.

Prudence plays a pivotal role in Aristotle's theory. He argues that "we cannot be

fully good without prudence, or prudent without virtue of character" (1144b30). This ties

the virtues together in his sense that they all share in prudence, which connects and

unifies the virtues. If a person has courage, they make prudent decisions related to fear.

The same is true for other virtues, such as temperance or truthfulness. Aristotle argues

that virtue is "not merely the state in accord with correct reason, but the state involving

the correct reason" which is virtue (1144b26-30). A person can "have all the virtues if

and only if one has prudence" (1145a1-3). Prudence connects reason, which is part of the

intellect, with the action of the body, in that prudence "makes us achieve the things that

promote the end" (1145a5-7). The end is happiness and having the virtues entitles a

person "to be called good without qualification" (1145a1-3). It is important to note that

Aristotle as usually read as using this separation of the parts of the individual only for

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purposes of elucidation of functioning of ethical behavior. His general view of a human, in modern terms, might best be described as holistically.

Aristotle's focus on prudence and the importance it plays in his theory reflects the emphasis he places on action. In my interpretation of Aristotle, I see a virtue ethics theory which considers action as one of the most important components. Aristotle states at the conclusion of the *NE* that "the aim of studies about action, as we say, is surely not to study and know about a given thing, but rather to act on our knowledge" (1179b1-4). This is to some degree counter to the opening comment about virtue ethics, which I provided from Statman that virtue ethics is primarily about character. Many modern virtue ethics theories reject the notion that the most important question in morality is about what it is right to do or what is the right action to take.[1] While the concept of a virtue is central to virtue ethics theory, its purpose is to provide the vehicle or method for a human to consistently and regularly take ethical actions. Aristotle built his theory from the question 'How can we get people to take ethical action?' His answer was the concept of a virtue. The critical element is the repeated efforts to make the right, ethical decision and take ethical actions in order to develop the virtues. To understand the role for prudence more fully first requires a further analysis of Aristotle's conception of the human and a critical element of Aristotle's account, the notion of the mean.

While reason is the key element of Aristotle's account, to be considered a virtuous action the emotional condition of the individual must also be right. A person must have

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[1] Gregory Trianosky provided a survey and analysis of the variety of modern virtue ethics theories. He outlined nine of the most common components of modern virtue ethics theories. However, he points out that "nearly all contemporary writers on the virtues" reject the notion that the most important question in morality is 'what is it right or obligatory to do?' Trianosky, "What Is Virtue Ethics All about?", 335. He goes on to explain that contemporary theories almost always contain arguments indicating that the emphasis should be on aspects of the virtues or the related virtuous life.

the proper feelings, in a particular situation, so that he will have "these feelings at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way" (1106b21-24). The individual's reason and emotion must be a part of a particular state of his character, from which he acts on a regular basis. To be a virtuous person each of his moral actions reflects this state. That is a lot to ask of an action. What is particularly challenging is how to address the emotional state of the individual.

As an example of the requirements for virtue, consider a dangerous situation involving fear of death. A person with the virtue of courage will take the best possible action he can take, will feel the proper amount of fear, and will take action for the right reasons. In order to define a virtuous act, Aristotle must not only address the reasoning part of the soul, but he must also figure out how to define the proper emotional response. To describe the proper emotional state he develops the idea of a continuum. He considers an emotion as something which is "continuous and divisible" in which "we can take more, less, and equal" where the "equal is some intermediate between excess and deficiency" (1106a25-34). He then relates this continuum to the emotional response a person has in a situation. He bases his analysis of emotion on observation. In the case of fear, on one end of the scale there are various levels of feeling fear too much. On the other end of the scale there are levels of feeling fear too little. The continuum runs from some level of extreme fear to feeling no fear at all. The excellent action is a courageous action somewhere in-between the extremes, in a mean relative to an individual, in a particular situation. An action toward one side of the mean, too much fear, represents the vice of cowardice. Toward the other end of the scale, not enough fear, is the vice of

foolhardiness. The courageous action is just like "well-made products that nothing could be added or subtracted" (1106b10-15).

A person working with the mean in view and exercising the excellent disposition of courage, the virtue of courage, creates an action which "like nature, is better and more exact than any craft" (1106b10-15). The person performing a virtuous action takes the best action possible for him in the situation. Aristotle also argues that the mean can apply either to "feelings or action" (1106b25). The mean is specific to an individual or as he states it, the mean "is not the same for all" (1106a33). The action and emotion are "intermediate relative to us" (1106b5-9). The idea of the mean is an important component in the implementation of a virtue by an individual in a specific situation. It is essential to Aristotle's concept of virtue. The essence and definition of a virtue is "a mean, but, as far as the best [condition] and the good [result] are concerned, it is an extremity" (1107a6-9). A person has the ability to perform a virtuous act because over time he has acquired an excellence in dealing with one of the areas of human life involving an emotion such as fear. Over time, through repeated efforts and work, as well as education, feedback from experience and maturity, a person learns to take the right action in a given situation. A virtuous action is an excellent action and all the parts involved within the individual are in harmony. His emotions and his reason are in accord with what should be done and he executes the action. He no longer has a desire or appetite to do something which reason would not agree is in the ethical action.

Both the account I have just given of the characteristics of a virtuous action and the state of the individual, require a further understanding of the third part of my account of Aristotle's notion of a virtue. I started my account of Aristotle's virtue ethics with a

brief introduction of the goal of his theory. The moral decisions and actions of individuals seem to be directed toward some good or end. Aristotle is trying to explain the good for humans, how this good relates to the human end or *telos* and how this end can be achieved through proper human decisions and actions. He concludes that the "human good proves to be activity of the soul in accord with virtue, and indeed with the best and most complete virtue" (1098a15-20). Virtue is achieved over a lifetime and will lead to *eudaimonia*, which is a form of happiness or human flourishing. It is a type of happiness achieved in some sense throughout an individual's lifetime, or "in a complete life" in the sense that "one day or a short time" does not "make us blessed and happy" (1098a15-20). A virtuous action is a good action, a virtue is a good character trait and a virtuous life will lead to the good life. The end or *telos* which moral human beings aim at is *eudaimonia*, a flourishing, good life. One of Aristotle's primary goals in the *NE* is to prescribe a way to achieve *eudaimonia* and have a good life.

Aristotle develops his notion of the good related to the moral virtues as something proper to the function of a human being as a rational animal. This argument is made both at the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, primarily in Books I and II, and again at the end, in a slightly different fashion, in Book X. Aristotle argues that the ends of many decisions and actions are actually means to some other end, and the ultimate end is found in happiness, which is the ultimate good or "best good" (1094a22). The end of happiness is never chosen because of something else but "is complete without qualification" (1097a35). Individuals may seek many other different ends, and it is not entirely clear

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that Aristotle necessarily connects them all to happiness.[1] However, he clearly goes the

other direction and connects happiness to the good of the virtues and the good in the

virtues.[2] A virtue is an action which accords with reason. Aristotle connects the good,

which is found in happiness, to the virtues, by connecting happiness to reason through his

function argument.[3]

Aristotle's function argument starts with observation. He is trying to understand

what it is which separates humans from the other life forms and is unique only to

humans. Humans share things like nutrition and growth with the plants and sense

perceptions like sight and hearing with some animals. Reason is the unique characteristic

which is not shared with the other animals. In particular, the part of reason which is

purely intellectual thought is possessed only by humans. He concludes that "the human

function is activity of the soul in accord with reason or requiring reason" (1098a1-9). His

next step is to try to express what it means for a human to excel at the particularly human

function of reason, as this relates to the human life. He conjectures that like the manner

in which the excellence of a musician in playing music will lead to the best song, the

excellence in the function of a human reason will lead to the life of happiness. Aristotle

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[1] There is some controversy over whether Aristotle defines the path to happiness in the first part of
the *Nicomachean Ethics* as it relates to the moral virtues, or as he construes it at the end, in contemplation
found in the intellectual virtues. I do not intend to address this issue herein because it is not relevant to my
overall thesis. However, I do not believe he construed happiness to only be found in a life of
contemplation. If this were the case, it would be a mistake born out of his elitist view of the world. Rather,
I think what he means is that an individual must have the time and capacity to contemplate in life in order
to be at least continent and have any chance at becoming virtuous. Someone who spends all his time and
energy surviving will have difficulty in ever bringing reason to bear on controlling his appetites and
desires. Only in and through contemplation can an individual find the road to happiness.

[2] See comments by Terence Irwin in his footnotes to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, page 172, note 1 to
Book I.

[3] The strong reading of this thesis is that Aristotle believes that a person can be happy if and only
if he is virtuous. I will address this concern later on in my thesis.

argues that we take "the human function to be a certain kind of life, and take this life to be activity and actions of the soul that involve reason; hence the function of the excellent man is to do this well and finely" (1098a10-14). The excellent human being is not the greatest athlete, musician, writer, scientist or someone who excels in a certain human endeavor. The excellent human is someone who is virtuous. The end for humans can be achieved through the proper use of human reason to control the animal and emotional parts of the human soul. However, reason cannot accomplish this excellence on its own. It needs the help of the moral virtues, which are the habituated dispositions which a person develops to facilitate this effort. The connection between the end of happiness and the disposition or acquired habit of a virtue can be understood in an example.

If an individual was in the military he might be required to stand at a post without moving for a very long time. His ability to resist the instinctive desire to eat, drink or scratch an itch would be important. In this instance if the soldier acts properly over a long period of time, he might be promoted to a higher rank, which may be his goal. Thus in this context he considers an action which goes against his natural desires as a good thing. It helps him attain his end. If over time he exhibited the appropriate behavior, he would be considered a good soldier within the military system to which he belonged. This is the context which defines 'good' for this soldier. It might take time for him to develop the disposition of standing still and it may come easier to some individuals. For him to have developed the disposition to behave in the manner required of a soldier, related to controlling instinctive desire, would be definitive of what might be considered one of the 'soldiering' virtues or dispositions. This is the disposition or habit of resisting the inclination to move while standing guard. When he attained the level where he no

longer had the feeling that he wanted to move, where his reasoning was aligned with his emotions, he would have the full virtue. If this particular action was important for all soldiers, then as a soldier, his reasoning for acting in this fashion would matter. However, if Aristotle's notion of a virtue were imposed on this example, to be considered virtuous the soldier would not act for personal advance in the ranks. If we could conceive of him as a soldiering animal, or having the nature of being a soldier, he would act because by doing so he would flourish as a soldier. When he had achieved all the appropriate soldiering virtues would he flourish as a soldier. He would be an excellent soldier based on the nature of a soldier, as defined by the military organization. This analogy goes a little beyond Aristotle's work in the NE and moves towards his *Politics*. I want to be clear that I am not imputing this overarching view to him. Rather, I chose this type of example because it is important for two reasons which will be valuable in extending Aristotle's theory to a care-based virtue theory.

First, this example highlights an important aspect of virtue ethics. A soldier virtue may have special features which may help the soldier survive. The soldiering virtues have significance to the individual soldier and the military unit to which he belongs which connect to the functioning of the unit. Soldiers who can stand at a location for a long time without movement give the unit a very structured appearance. Marching in unison and other actions associated with military precision give the perception of excellence. The difference between a unit of new recruits and a well trained unit marching in formation would highlight this analogy. How both the individual soldier and the military unit would excel with soldiering virtues parallels how an individual and a society might excel with human virtues. However, a soldiering

disposition may also help the soldier, or the unit, in a dangerous situation. He could find himself in a situation where any motion would cause him to be discovered and killed. His training could help him stay alive. The teamwork found in marching in unison likewise helps the function and survival of the unit. While the primary reason for taking the virtuous action is because the soldier will then be an excellent soldier, it also would entail the survival of the soldier. Other soldiering virtues would be important for the functioning and survival of the entire military unit. The idea of survival underlies flourishing. I will return to this discussion and relate it to ideas within of care-based virtue ethics theory as part of the foundational principles.

The second reason I chose the example of soldiering virtue is that it helps understand the top down conceptualizing of a virtue ethics theory. The military unit can be thought of as having an overarching goal. This goal is what determines the actions required of the soldier. The disposition to carry out these actions the best way possible are what defines or constitutes the virtue. The military example would represent a top down approach to virtue ethics. The military unit has a goal and this goal defines the soldiering virtue which then defines the right actions. I will not argue the point as to whether or not Aristotle conceives his theory as a top down approach. Rather, I want to use this example in contrast to how care-based virtue ethics is built, as a bottom up approach.

Borrowing from Aristotle

As an overall work, the *NE* appears to be an attempt to make sense of the world and then use that knowledge to help a person take actions. One of my goals is to develop this care-based virtue ethics theory as something an individual can put to use in his or her day to day decision making. In order to address this aspect, I must first give an account of how a virtue ethics theory can address action. I will start by building on the account Hursthouse gives of action.

In the notion of action I take from Aristotle, I mean intentional human action and the choice involved. As mentioned earlier, in Aristotle's account choice (*prohairesis*) can be from belief, desire or both belief and desire. Hursthouse gives a very good account of how virtue ethics addresses action.[1] She argues that virtue ethics theory can provide action guidance as well as either utilitarian or deontological theories. The way to understand this account is through the practical syllogism. The practical syllogism is a decision making tool which is relatively simple and, in its shortest version, requires three components. It starts with a universal premise, which is followed by a specific premise involving the evaluation of a situation. It concludes with action guidance. This simple syllogism is of the form:

An action is right if and only if (iff) it is X.
Action A is X (and actions B, C, D, etc. are not X).
Therefore, I should take action A (the right action to take is A)

Additional premises can be added to further define the universal premise. Other premises can also be inserted to qualify or elaborate on the situation and the action involved.

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[1] The following is based on Hursthouse's discussion in *On Virtue Ethics*, pgs. 25-32, with some modifications. Along with the focus on character, she points out that virtue ethics is usually improperly construed as agent-centered rather than act-centered, concerned with Being rather than Doing and in general that it is not focused on rules to provide action guidance, but more on *arêtic* concepts. 26.

Hursthouse uses simplified versions of utilitarian and deontological theories for comparative purposes and to clarify how the practical syllogism works in each theory.

Utilitarian theories start with the universal premise that an action is right iff it promotes some form of best consequences. Deontological theories start with the universal premise that an action is right iff it adheres to the correct moral rule. Virtue ethics theories can be approached in two ways. The starting premise in a virtue ethics theory could be either a virtuous principle or it could be a virtue. In the first case, an action is right iff it corresponds to the virtuous principle. The second case is more complex because a virtue is a character trait or disposition in an individual. Therefore, the second case would be stated that an action is right iff it corresponds with what a person with the specific virtue would do, or more simplistically the action is what a virtuous person would do. This is considered the same as saying that the action corresponds to a virtue. I want to first elaborate on Hursthouse's discussion of how a virtuous principle would function in the practical syllogism. I will then address the more complex workings of how a virtue functions or how action can be derived from the instruction to doing what the virtuous person would do.

Hursthouse points out that a virtuous principle or rule might be 'do what is honest'. She refers to these virtue ethics principles as v-rules and compares them to the rules of deontological theories. A v-rule could also be a prohibition, such as 'do not do something which is uncharitable'.[1] While she acknowledges that the broad nature of these principles opens them to being evaluative or value-laden, she argues that the same can be said for the initial principles of both utilitarian and deontological theories. Unless

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[1] See Hursthouse discussion, *On Virtue Ethics*, 37.

a utilitarian theory uses content free definitions for happiness (and she claims that a few try to), or does not try to rank higher and lower pleasures, it will also will need evaluative conditions. The deontological theories run into the same problems with rules such as 'do no evil' or 'help others', both of which contain evaluative terms. She points out that both deontological and utilitarian theories provide guidance for action in the same manner which virtue ethics theories would provide action guidance. The first premise of the argument for justification of an action would be similar in structure for all three approaches. An action is right (ethical) iff it promotes the best consequences, or is in accordance with the correct moral rule, or it is in accord with a v-rule. Each of the three theories must then turn to the next premise in order to determine what information satisfies the first premise. A utilitarian must determine what the best consequences are. deontologist must ascertain the proper rule . Someone adhering to a virtue ethics theory must determine the proper v-rule. Hursthouse argues that when appealing to v-rules, virtue ethics theories have a very clear action component. The difficulty involved in understanding the connection between action and a virtue generally arises when the principles of a virtue ethics theory are based on the character of the individual. There tends to be confusion in trying to understand the relation between action and 'what the virtuous agent would do'.

A virtue ethics theory will sometimes use as the first premise the notion that an action is right iff it is what a virtuous agent would characteristically do in the situation. Hursthouse states that this approach only adds additional subsequent premises. There needs to be additional qualifications on the universal premise or additional premises leading up to the action instructions. In the virtue ethics syllogism the additional premise

could be as simple as stating that the virtuous agent would do the v-rule. It could be as complex as discussing the character traits of the virtuous agent. It is no different than what may be necessary to qualify the meaning of the most happiness in a utilitarian theory, or explaining the meaning of a rule in a deontological theory. In fact, Hursthouse makes a very important point. The account of action in virtue ethics theory actually reflects the real world as well, if not better than, either deontological or utilitarian theories. It is an issue which leads to an important perspective of virtue ethics theory. In moral decision making, individuals may consider rules and also take into account the consequences of their moral actions. However, they also frequently ask others for advice about those rules or consequences and they also look to how other individuals act in similar circumstances.

What is of significance in Hursthouse's commentary is how she addresses the idea that the right action for a person to take is to do what the virtuous agent would do. One of the more common objections to virtue ethics theories is that this method of determining ethical action is not valid. She turns this objection into a strength of virtue ethics theory. To determine what he should do, an individual should ask a virtuous person what to do. Or he could ask a virtuous person what she would do in the particular situation. Asking for help and advice is a method which people regularly employ. In building her case, Hursthouse starts with what she finds as one of the strengths of Aristotle's work as it relates to the everyday world of human ethics. She states that to "read almost any other famous moral philosopher is to receive the impression that we, the intelligent adult readers addressed, sprang fully formed from our father's brow."[1] In our

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[1] Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 14.

day-to-day lives seeking and giving moral guidance is a very common method of determining how to proceed in a situation. It is particularly important and prevalent in raising children. Most people experienced it themselves in their upbringing. Moral guidance comes from a variety of sources such as parents, family members, educational institutions, sports groups, religion and other parts of society. As adults we also seek moral advice and guidance from people whom we believe to be morally better than ourselves. In considering how individuals take moral action, she points out that "we do not always act as 'autonomous', utterly self-determined agents."[1] She goes on to point out that this can also apply to the negative side of human moral action. When a person wants to do something wrong, he may also ask those he believes to be morally inferior, in order to facilitate rationalizing an unethical action he may want to take. She argues that this aspect of virtue ethics is an advantage that it has as a theory over deontology or utilitarianism. It more closely reflects the way individuals function in real life and it contains an element which addresses moral development.

The obvious response to this argument, from opponents of virtue ethics, is that finding a virtuous person may be very difficult, if not impossible. Even Aristotle claims that to become a fully virtuous person is a very rare accomplishment.[2] To this Hursthouse responds that it is "simply false that, in general, 'if I am less than fully virtuous, then I shall have no idea what a virtuous agent would do' as the objection claims."[3] Many good pieces of advice are qualified within the context of 'do as I say, not

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[1] Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 35.

[2] See my earlier comments regurading the comments by Susan Wolf in "Moral Saints." The problems with this view are highlighted in her article.

[3] Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 36.

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as I do'. Because someone is not fully virtuous does not mean that they do not know the right thing to do. If a person has achieved some level of virtue (continence) or some minimal list of virtues, such as honesty and temperance, she can give reasonable advice. Someone morally better than an individual could provide advice to him. It is not necessary that the individual has achieved the highest level of virtue possible, such as that conceived by Aristotle. It is also not necessary to actually find and consult a virtuous person in every situation. It is not too difficult to conclude that the virtuous agent would do the honest or temperate thing, or would be characteristically honest. In furtherance of this argument she turns toward some parallels with deontological and utilitarian theories.

Hursthouse both provides some insight into the hierarchy which can be found in morality and relates this to moral development. Rarely do we teach our children just plain and simple rules. We generally start by giving explanations regarding the consequences of a rule. We may teach a child not to lie because the child may be punished, or not to steal because he might end up making the person he took something from sad. Throughout the moral education of a child we try to give some merit to the rule, some explanation or justification. As the education process progresses, teaching a child not to lie or steal develops into teaching him about honesty. For example, there are many rules related to food consumption, sexual relations or financial responsibility which are related to temperance. The rules taught as part of temperance can be explained with a variety of reasons. A child may be instructed to share food so that he makes more people than just himself happy or so that others less fortunate will have food. One of the strengths of virtue theory is found in teaching about the value of truth in general, rather than simply instructing a child to refrain from lying because of the consequences or

because it is a rule. This type of moral education occurs from an early age. A young child may be told to be kind to his younger sibling because he is smaller and needs the protection of his older sibling. This benefit continues as the child grows older and he is told not to lie because of the importance of friendships or relationships, or what it means to his reputation. It is important to not simply teach a rule. This broader moral education is a part of how society functions. Providing children evaluative conditions helps them to not just learn rules to repeat without thought. Individuals learn rules through the understanding of principles, which is a method employed in many other areas of education.[1]

The developmental aspect of virtue that Hursthouse has outlined contains another important component which would be a direction worth exploring in the construction of the full care-based virtue ethics theory. I will only briefly touch on it here in reference to ideas Aristotle has regarding the next step he intended in the enlargement of his ethical theory. In an analysis of Aristotle's virtue ethics, Peter Simpson summarizes what Aristotle says are the "three things through which we become good: nature, habit and teaching."[2] Aristotle argues that there is nothing a person can do about his nature, and that teaching only works if the individual's character is already disposed or has been properly prepared. This preparation is a very important aspect of developing a good character and the related consistent ethical action. Preparation of character requires "proper training from youth up, and that, in turn, cannot be achieved without the right

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[1] See Hursthouse discussion, *On Virtue Ethics*, 38-39.

[2] Peter Simpson, "Contemporary Virtue Ethics and Aristotle," 250.

laws."[1] This argument is made at the end of the *NE* in Book X as Aristotle's lead into the

Politics. It highlights the importance Aristotle placed on the indoctrination of habits into

an individual from a very young age. In some regards the *Politic*s can be seen as

Aristotle's attempt to outline a way in which society could be structured to accomplish

Aristotle's the preparation of character in an individual.[2] By many accounts, the *Politics*

appears as a method of structuring the formal legal and governmental parts of society.

However, Simon sees in Aristotle some of the more personal aspects of his approach. As

Simon puts it, in order to learn ethical teaching a person's "character must first be

disposed to virtue and already be in love with the beautiful."[3] As Aristotle outlines it,

habituation and teaching in the upbringing of young people are critical components of

virtue ethics. In a sense, virtue ethics theory is about how an adult individual ought to

develop virtues, but it starts with addressing how a person develops his character traits as

a child. The early moral development of a child is an important component of Aristotle's

virtue ethics theory. He emphasizes at the beginning of the *NE* that individuals "need to

have had the appropriate upbringing – right from early youth" (1104b10-12). He

concludes the *NE* with a similar sentiment, that the "student needs to have been prepared

by habits" (1179b25). There is a societal role to be played in the moral development of a

child. This is a component of the ethics of care which I will only touch on in this thesis.

There are many rich areas in the literature regarding the ethics of care which address the

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[1] Peter Simpson, "Contemporary Virtue Ethics and Aristotle," 250.

[2] As Richard Kraut points out in the introduction to *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle "does not think of political theory and ethics as two separate and autonomous parts of philosophy. The *Nichomachean Ethics* , then, is conceived as the first volume of a two-volume study," 2. The second volume would be Aristotle's *Politics*.

[3] Peter Simpson, "Contemporary Virtue Ethics and Aristotle," 250.

moral development and care. Noddings devotes the final chapter of her book to the subject. He states that the "primary aim of every educational institution and every educational effort must be the maintenance and enhancement of caring."[1] She includes a very broad listing of those involved in this education, from parents and teachers to coaches and preachers.

Applying Aristotle's approach to virtue, a virtue might be thought of as starting with the development of humans. As individuals develop, the virtues are drawn out of the nature of the actions coming from the desires, appetites and feelings of the human animal, which are directed by reason. The directions of reason first come from others, such as parents, teachers and friends. The social component is important from the very beginning, so that it "is best, then, if the community attends to upbringing, and attends correctly" (1180a30-33). Other people help shape the early actions of a child toward a particular disposition. Dispositions which grow into virtues are ones which appeared to lead to flourishing. Courage and honesty are virtues because they are thought to be good. This comes from observing people individually and within society. Thus Aristotle opens and closes the *NE* with a discussion of the aim of his work, toward the developing an ethical society through political science. Action is the end of political science and "for those who accord with reason in forming their desires and in their actions, knowledge of political science will be of great benefit" (1095a5-11).

My intent is not to read too much into Aristotle's work, but rather to extract from it and put it to good use. In Aristotle's account, a virtuous action must come from a virtuous state which is aimed at human happiness. The virtues represent a kind of

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[1] Noddings, *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education,* 172.

harmony within an individual. Aristotle is both describing and prescribing. He starts

with observations of the nature of the human animal, as creatures of habit that seem to

have conflicts within themselves, between their animal and rational parts. This is

observable in a person's actions and his related emotions. Aristotle prescribes a formula

for what he believes individuals seek in life. My being virtuous and teaching children

virtue an individual can find "happiness or satisfaction in the attainment of one's natural

human end of perfection."[1]

Modern Challenges to Virtue Ethics Theory from Aristotle's Work

As I have indicated, I plan to draw on Aristotle's work for some of the structure

of care-based virtue ethics theory. Before I move on from Aristotle to Aquinas, I need to

address two interrelated challenges which are unique to virtue ethics theories. These

problems relate to Aristotle and will help introduce Aquinas's religious account of virtue.

The first problem is the close tie between virtue ethics theory and Aristotle's work. The

second problem is the connection between Aristotle and religion.

Since deontological and utilitarian theories are relatively new, they have

reasonably clear recent foundations from which most modern theories have been built.

On the other hand, virtue ethics theory carries with it the legacy of Aristotle's work. His

work is generally considered the foundation of modern virtue ethics theories.[2] Some

modern authors, such as Alasdair MacIntyre, have argued that there is great merit in a

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[1] Veatch, Hendry B., *A Modern Interpretation of Aristotelian Ethics,* 186.

[2] See Stephen Gardiner' introduction to *Virtue Ethics Old and New* where he discusses the paradox between the arguments that contemporary work in virtue ethics is in its "theoretical infancy" and the historical account that the likes of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Aquinas, and (perhaps) Hume and Nietzsche have forms of virtue ethics theories. He believes this "bifurcation is now beginning to dissolve" and in fact that is the intent of the compilation of articles in this text which he edited. 3.

return to Aristotle's theory. MacIntyre concludes that the modern state of morality in the

world represents the failure "of three centuries of moral philosophy and one of one of

sociology" to develop a valid moral theory centered on the "liberal individualistic point

of view" espoused by these projects.[1] He argues that "the Aristotelian tradition can be

restated in a way that restores intelligibility and rationality to our moral and social

attitudes and commitments."[2] So much has been written about the *NE* and Aristotle's

other related or unrelated works, that it is difficult to simply extract something from his

theory and use it, or to reference something like the *NE* as a complete theory. Aristotle's

theory was by no means complete but it is a great foundational document. This problem

can be stated as the difficulty in developing a modern virtue ethics theory based on

Aristotle's work, without being construed as bringing all, or most of his other

components along. Resolution of this first problem is highlighted in the project of

Hursthouse. She pulls the valuable components out of Aristotle's work and leaves the

problematic parts behind. I have the same intention.

The second problem, somewhat unique to virtue ethics, is also pointed out by

MacIntyre. This is the connection between Aristotle's virtue ethics theory and western

religious traditions. MacIntyre states that "no doctrine vindicated itself in so wide a

variety of contexts as did Aristotelianism: Greek, Islamic, Jewish and Christian; that

when modernity made its assaults on an old order world its most perceptive exponents

understood that it was Aristotelianism that had to be overthrown."[3] He does not elaborate

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[1] MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 259.

[2] Ibid., 259.

[3] Ibid.,118.

in any detailed manner on this comment (other than to espouse the fact that "Aristotelianism is *philosophically* the most powerful of pre-modern modes of moral thought"[1]) but he implies that the connection was very tight between Aristotle's notions and many of the doctrines of western religions. The assault which MacIntyre is referring to comes from both the scientific revolution's effect on religious beliefs, and the effects of the separation of church and state espoused in the modern democratic state, particularly in the United States. My project is designed to address this second problem. Obviously a large part of the close connection between Aristotelian virtue ethics and religion (particularly Christian religion) was forged by Aquinas. I plan to extract some of the value out of what Aquinas constructed based on Aristotle's work and his virtue ethics, and leave behind the problematic areas related to Christianity.

I have repeatedly tried to qualify my use of Aristotle's work and I will apply the same qualification for my use of Aquinas's work, as I enter a discussion of his virtue of charity. My intent to draw on a narrow component of his complex system and utilize it within the care-based virtue ethics theory I plan to outline. However, MacIntyre's commentary offers some insight into what I find exciting about making the connection between Aristotle's work on virtue, charity, and the use of care in the functional role of charity. What I understand MacIntyre to be saying is that when modern society threw out religion, it threw out Aristotle. In extracting religion from the education system it seems that much of the morality of Aristotle came out with it. My project is to reinstate Aristotle and the excellent contributions Aquinas made to his work, through the virtue of care.

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[1]MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 118.

Aquinas and Aristotle

Moving from Aristotle to Aquinas requires some introductory comments. Philippa Foot expresses the close nature of the relationship between the two, in that "by and large Aquinas followed Aristotle–sometimes even heroically–where Aristotle gave an opinion, and where St. Thomas is on his own, as in developing the doctrine of theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, and in his theocentric doctrine of happiness, he still uses an Aristotelian framework where he can: as for instance in speaking of happiness as man's last end."[1] However, she goes on to discuss the fact that Aquinas had different emphasis in some areas. While there are many similarities between them, an important difference is pointed out by Martin Stone in his analysis of both of their theories. Most notably Stone points out that Aquinas's ethics is always secondary to his theology.[2] For example, while his natural law theory has similarities to the naturalism in Aristotle, Aquinas starts with the premise that natural law proceeds from God's reason and fits with man because it was instilled into him.[3] While the relationship between Aristotle and Aquinas is close, Stone warns us that we need to be careful not to get too carried away the similarities.

Stone thinks another important difference between their theories comes out of Aquinas's focus on theology. Stone does not believe that Aquinas should be included among "the pantheon of so-called virtue ethicists…at least as this term is presently

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[1] Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices*, 1.

[2] See discussion in Stone, "The Angelic Doctor and the Stagirite: Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Aristotelian Ethics," 104-105.

[3] See Stone Discussion, "The Angelic Doctor and the Stagirite: Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Aristotelian Ethics," 107-108.

understood."[1] Stone does not consider Aquinas's theory as virtue ethics to some degree

because of the historical setting, but more particularly the difference arises from the

theological context of Aquinas's work. Aquinas has a strong sense of duty to God

underlying his theory and thus his theory could be considered more of a deontological

theory. My thesis is that without the theological aspects, Aquinas has an exceptional

virtue ethics theory. Further, as already noted by Foot, Aquinas worked things out in

much more detail than Aristotle.[2] I believe there is great value to be found in this detail.

However, the theological aspects of Aquinas's work are found throughout his theory and

it will take a significant effort to review all of his work without them. That is why I have

keep a narrow focus within Aquinas's work. My goal is to lay the foundation for a later

full reworking of Aquinas's theory, using care in place of charity. I will carry forward

much if what I have taken from Aristotle, but in this thesis I will limit in what I borrow

from Aquinas.

I will focus my work on charity to the section Aquinas dedicates to it in the

Disputed Questions on the Virtues, although I will review some limited commentary from

the *Summa*. I will maintain this narrow focus to try to control the scope of my thesis. In

addition, what I plan to discuss is the role of charity found in that section and the

similarities between it and charity. My focus will be on taking the foundational aspects

of charity and demonstrating how care can fill this role. From this foundation there will

be many opportunities for developing the structure of a virtue ethics theory similar to

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[1] Stone, "The Angelic Doctor and the Stagirite: Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Aristotelian Ethics," 125.

[2] Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices*, 2.

Aquinas, without the theological problems. I will point the direction to some of these opportunities in sections of the body of this thesis and in my concluding comments.

Along with his account of virtue, the most important part of Aristotle's virtue ethics theory is found in reason, and in particular prudence. As Stone points out, Aquinas's account of moral reasoning is consistent with Aristotle's view.[1] However, Aristotle's account of reason has problems which Aquinas seeks to address. If we consider the problems with reason in modern terms, they are similar to problems found in deontological or utilitarian theories. This problem can be seen in taking a form of logical reasoning and trying to apply it to an ethical situation. There is the appearance that there is an algorithm, form of calculation or logical argument which could be used that would lead to the correct action to take in a situation. If all the parameters and facts about the situation can be entered into the formula, an answer will be produced. While prudence incorporates aspects of the logic of reason, there is something in the practical side which cannot be addressed in a formula. It could be that there are too many inputs for any human to manage, or it may be that the issue of the indeterminacy of the future that makes resolution of a problem impossible. It could be in the problems related to understanding choice and free will. Most likely it is a combination of all of these issues. While Aquinas would not have viewed the problems in this fashion, he might have seen similar issues. Reason needs to be grounded in a first principle.

Aristotle's function argument is built around reason and he tried to ground this theory in *eudaimonia*. Along with other possible problems with Aristotle's account, Aquinas addresses two specific issues. First, Aristotle's function argument does not

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[1] See Stone Discussion, "The Angelic Doctor and the Stagirite: Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Aristotelian Ethics," 125.

address question about the designer of the function of humans, just like the designer of a tool determines its function and thus excellence. Secondly, reason allows one to start with different first principles to attain this end. Aristotle devoted a whole section of the *NE* to discussing some of the misconceptions about what leads to happiness. However, other than prudence, he never really provides an answer to what it is that ties all the virtues together or grounds them all, other than the end of *eudaimonia*. As discussed earlier in relation to utilitarian theories, what makes people happy is still something which is not a settled issue. Aquinas solves both of these problems with God. God designed humans and He is the end. The virtue of charity ties all the virtues together and connects them to God. If Aquinas's work can be utilized without the theological underpinning it will provide a very strong structure for a virtue ethics theory. As Stone points out, Aquinas "reveals a way of talking about the virtues and of their place within the moral life that is rarely articulated within modern-day ethics" and he believes that this might "help to provoke virtue ethicists to broaden their chronological horizons and consider the vast materials of reflection about the virtues that can be found in medieval and early modern philosophy."[1]

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[1] Stone, "The Angelic Doctor and the Stagirite: Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Aristotelian Ethics," 128.

Chapter 4: Charity

There are several different meanings associated with the word charity. Although Aristotle did not discuss charity he did have some virtues which might be considered similar to charity, such as liberality, magnificence and friendship. However, none of them capture the depth of Aquinas's notion of charity. While Aristotle classified the virtues into two broad groupings, the moral and the intellectual virtues, charity is a part of a whole new category of virtues which Aquinas developed and called the theological virtues. While I will mainly focus on Thomas Aquinas's definition of charity as a virtue, I will also refer to the other related aspects of his theory where necessary. In this section I will provide an overview of charity. I will also discuss more of the details of charity in the section later on regarding the similarities between care and charity and how care can fill the role of charity.

In building on Aristotle's work, Aquinas added virtues in the new category of theological virtues. The theological virtues are faith, hope and charity.[1] The primary distinguishing characteristic of a theological virtue is the fact that it is infused by God and not something an individual could acquire on his own. This new categorization could be considered an extension of, or connected to, Aristotle's work in two ways. While this is a loose connection, I believe it is an important one. This connection

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[1]These are not the only virtues infused by God. There are other virtues which, while not construed as theological, are infused such as the infused versions of some moral virtues. These three are the primary theological virtues. See Discussion in Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues,* xxvii.

contains an important thread not only in the transition from Aquinas to Aristotle, but also to some of the notions of care that I will be addressing. The first way the theological virtues are connected to Aristotle's virtues of character stems from Aristotle's discussion that a human being has a proper function, based on the design of a human. Aristotle leaves open the question of who was the designer of humans. Aquinas answers this question directly, attributing the design of humans to God through the "rational soul, which is brought into being directly by God."[1] God's hand in human design is one of the foundations of Aquinas's theory. It is in the rational part of the soul that Aristotle finds the excellence of the function of a human and in which Aquinas sees the hand of God.

The second connection between the theological virtues and the virtues of character is in the similarity between one particular aspect of both types of virtues. The theological virtues are infused into humans by God. Humans cannot do anything to acquire a theological virtue like charity except "prepare ourselves to receive charity from God."[2] However, while it is not possible to acquire charity on her own, Aquinas sees human charity as something that an individual can improve on. Charity can become more complete in a person through her actions "not by growing in quantity, but by intensifying in quality."[3] Aquinas does not believe that a person can possess complete charity in this earthly life because that can only happen in the presence of God, but he does believe that in this life a person "can possess charity completely in relation to the

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[1] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues,* 65

[2] Ibid., 77

[3] Ibid., 171.

stage of time."[1] Aquinas contrasts this to an acquired virtue which "is caused by its subject and is not wholly dependent on something external as charity is."[2] In a similar fashion, Aristotle states that "none of the virtues of character arises in us naturally" so that they "arise in us neither by nature nor against nature. Rather, we are by nature able to acquire them, and we are complete through habit" (1103a19-25). Aquinas's theological virtues come from outside the human, from God. Aristotle's moral virtues must be acquired also, so in a sense they come from outside the human. The sense that Aristotle has is that it is the obligation of the community to prepare children for be ready to develop the virtues. While there is not a direct correlation between Aquinas's sentiment of receiving an infused virtue, and then intensifying it, and Aristotle's notion of being equipped by nature and prepared by society to acquire a virtue, and then developing it, there is a parallel.

The two connections between Aristotle's and Aquinas's notions of virtue are that there is need of something to ground reason (*eudaimonia* or God) and that humans must somehow obtain certain virtues (from society or God). These two general concepts are important to the notion of virtue ethics. I will try to address these foundational issues from a third perspective in care-based virtue ethics theory. I will try to accomplish this by building on the specific characteristics and roles Aquinas develops for charity as part of his solution to these two issues.

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[1] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues,* 168.

[2] Ibid., 193.

In the place which Aquinas puts it, charity "is not only a virtue, but the most

powerful of the virtues."[1] What is unique about how Aquinas construes charity is that it

is not only an important virtue, but it has a role to play in all the virtues. It unifies the

virtues and as such is "(i) the form of the virtues, (ii) their moving cause, and (iii) their

root."[2] The first part of this sentiment indicates that in some sense every virtue is a form,

type or variety of charity. The second part indicates that charity is the action component

of a virtue causing movement or motivation and, in keeping with Aristotelian aspects of

Aquinas, implies that charity has some relation to prudence. Finally as the root of virtue,

charity has a connection to first principles and other virtues grow from charity. I will

briefly review each of these aspects of charity.

Every virtue takes some part of its form from charity. Aquinas states that charity

is the love of God. However this love must be qualified. The infinite love of God can

only be received by humans "in a finite way."[3] Thus God infuses a love similar to His

love into humans. God's love is a very powerful thing, beyond the ability of a human to

handle, so He provides a human version which is found in charity. While the love God

given humans is to be returned to God, Aquinas also construes charity to be something

humans need to use in their earthly life. This is because "charity has two objects: God

and neighbor."[4] God always maintains the primary role, so that "the neighbor is loved

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[1] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues*, 119.

[2] Ibid., 124.

[3] Ibid., 109.

[4] Ibid., 128.

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only for the sake of God."[1] However, loving a neighbor for the sake of God is a very

powerful sentiment for Aquinas. He takes these two sentiments, love of God and love of

neighbor, and uses them as a part of charity in its function underling the virtues, as their

form. Things like honesty, courage or temperance are forms of the love of God or

neighbor.

As the moving cause of the virtues, charity in turn moves the individual to action.

Charity is the disposition of the love of, and from God, that a person expresses in the

actions she takes in life. Individuals possess the "*created disposition* of charity which

can be the formal principle of an action of love."[2] Aquinas places God and neighbor out

in front of the virtues as the good, so that "all the actions of all the virtues are ordered

towards the highest good as something loved."[3] It is charity which is the "*moving cause*

of all the virtues, in that it commands the activities of all the other virtues." [4]

Finally, every virtue is rooted in the love of God and neighbor found in charity.

In Aristotle's theory, it is the higher capacity of reason, as the human function, to which

the virtues are ordered.[5] Aquinas's builds the structure one level higher, so that God,

through charity, is the highest order capacity which moves the lower capacities and thus

the "lower are ordered towards the goal of the higher."[6] In order to connect charity to

Aristotle's notion of a virtue and the resulting action a human takes, Aquinas relates

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[1] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues*, 131.

[2] Ibid., 111.

[3] Ibid., 125.

[4] Ibid., 125.

[5] See discussion in Aristotle (1098a1-20).

[6] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues*, 125.

charity to reason and prudence.   He does this through the concept of the will. The will is a complex topic in Aquinas. However, for my thesis I will take a narrow focus and primarily address the will in relation to charity.

Aquinas adds to Aristotle's discussion of the struggle between reason and the lower animal parts of the soul. He builds on Aristotle's discussion of this struggle through the development of the concept of the will. Aquinas's notion of the will is not found in Aristotle, but is related to the appetitive and desiderative parts of a person's soul which participates in reason and "both listens to reason and obeys it" (1102b30). Aquinas follows Aristotle's lead in stating that the soul controls the physical movement of the body in a despotic way. For example, unless externally constrained, if a person commands her arm to move, it will move. However, Aquinas states that reason "controls the lower parts of the soul with a royal or political rule, i.e. as kings or princes of cities control free men, who have the right and ability to resist with respect to some of the orders a king or prince might give."[1] The lower part of the soul has the ability to resist reason. The virtues help reason to get the lower parts of the person to cooperate and are "a kind of tendency or completeness in the sensory desire that will enable it to obey reason easily."[2] Aquinas introduces the will into the struggle in this middle ground.

In Aquinas's theory, the human faculties capable of possessing virtue are "(i') intelligence, (ii') will, and (iii') lower desire, which is divided into the sensual and the aggressive parts."[3]   Aquinas construes each of these three parts as having "(a) receptivity

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[1] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues*, 23.

[2] Ibid., 23.

[3] Ibid., 46.

to virtue and (b) an active principle of virtue."[1] The will is the key component within the human soul. Charity is in the will, which is the only capacity which possesses it, so that charity is considered "the virtue of the will."[2] Charity is also the form of the virtues or "the principle of all the other virtues in this sense, in that it moves them all towards its own end."[3] In this function then, charity is the force that moves the will. One of the primary roles for the will is as actuator of the body. Reason determines what is good and the will "aims at something that it understands as good" as presented to it by reason.[4] The will then actuates the body, cajoling it into following what the will perceives as good. Charity plays the primary role in this actuation. Charity, the love of God and neighbor, moves the will, and the will moves the individual. Charity is the love of God. Aquinas puts theology first and thus charity, the love of God, is the virtue which keeps God as primary.

It is important to note that without charity, there would be circularity in Aquinas's theory. This is because the will is needed to get the intelligence in motion for the person to do anything since "the will *qua* active moves the intelligence."[5] Reason presents something to the will, which the will pursues. Yet the will actuates reason toward the good which reason presents. Aquinas resolves this circularity through charity. It is charity which moves the will and thus charity which moves the intelligence or reason. Without charity, the intelligence can present the wrong thing to the will as good. The

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[1] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues*, 46.

[2] Ibid., 127.

[3] Ibid., 88.

[4] Ibid., 49.

[5] Ibid., 127.

will which contains charity seeks God and both moves the intelligence to seek the proper end and moves the individual to take the proper action. In moving the will, charity plays the primary role in Aquinas's theory, in a place ahead of reason. In the role charity plays in Aquinas's theory, it represents the first principle, as it relates to God, Who is the ultimate first principle. Charity moves the will and in this sense it may be thought of as prior to reason.

Stated as a thesis, Aquinas's ethical theory is based on the principle that any disposition rooted in charity, or which is a form of charity, is a virtue. Any action taken based on this type of virtue is the right, ethical action. This is based on the connection to God provided by charity. The desire to unite to God, which is the love of God, and the related love of neighbor, is provided to virtues and thus action by charity. The desire to unite with God is also the motivation found in charity which is the moving cause of the action coming from a virtue.

Chapter 5: Care-Based Virtue Ethics Theory

I develop care-based virtue ethics (CVE) theory in the form of a generic applied ethics theory. In order to outline the structure I build around CVE, I need to limit the parts I address. I start with a general statement of the problem to be solved. Next, a central hypothesis or idea is developed, with an interrelated group of ideas. Some assumptions or premises are introduced and a logical argument is presented. Peter Simpson offers some helpful guidance for virtue ethics theory construction. Simpson argues that a virtue ethics theory should give at least "a reasoned account of what virtue in general is and why it is necessary to be virtuous, or why being virtuous is good." [1] He also believes that there should be some account of the kinds of the particular virtues, why they are good and what acts emanate from those virtues. He believes that appealing to Aristotle's notion of human happiness, or appealing to flourishing alone, does not fulfill these qualifications.

My formulation of CVE theory addresses these issues in outline form. I present a thesis and argument that as a virtue, care is universal and can be justified as a primary ethical principle. I draw on some of the commentary related to Aristotle's and Hursthouse's arguments, to address the application of care and how it relates to the status of acts. The central feature related to the nature of a virtue is drawn out of Aquinas's notions of charity.

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[1] Simpson, "Contemporary Virtue Ethics and Aristotle," 246.

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The Problem

I have already briefly discussed the problems with both Utilitarian and Kantian

ethics. In that discussion, I also drew on the work of Hursthouse in addressing some of

the challenges virtue ethics theories face. My aim in this section is to frame the problem

by discussing an overarching problem with ethics in general. The CVE theory outline

follows Aristotle, who opened and closed the *NE* stressing the point that the aim of his

enquiry was not just knowledge, but action. In the early part of the 20th century, P.S.

Burrell described ethics as a form of practical philosophy. It is intended to help a person

discover in general terms what he ought to do, why he should do it, and motivate him to

follow its principles. These instructions should be in a format such that a person can

apply the theory to his day to day life.[1] An ethical theory must set down instructions

which a person can follow regarding what he ought to do in any particular moral situation

he may face. However, that is not always easy to accomplish. The difficulty of the

struggle in ethics is found in the constantly changing nature of the world and the nature of

the human animal. The problem remains the same today as it was in the time of

Aristotle, in that it "is the business of everybody to determine what is the best for him to

do or to be, but as the situation in which he finds himself is different for every individual

and is constantly changing from moment to moment, the particular problem with which

each has to deal – shall I do this? or shall I do that? – is always changing and always

new."[2] While ethical situations may have similarities, no two will ever be exactly the

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[1] See Burrell Discussion, "The Problem of Ethics," 63.

[2] Burrell, "The Problem of Ethics," 62.

same. Not only does each situation vary, but every individual person is unique in a wide variety of ways.

Aristotle recognized the difficulties presented by the fact that there is no clear cut answer which can be imposed on a specific individual moral dilemma. His doctrine of the mean is an effort to address this problem. A courageous action is something which falls somewhere between the extremes of cowardice and rashness. In Socratic fashion, Aristotle states that there is no definitive, objective or exact notion of courage which can be applied universally to individuals in different specific situations, no matter how similar the situations appear. The mean "is not one, and is not the same for all" but is "intermediate relative to us" (1106a30-1106b10). This does not imply that there is no courageous action, just that the person and circumstances determine the measure of morality in the action. It is clear to Aristotle that "there is only one way to be correct" (1106b32). However, this is not a universal way, but a specific way of being correct, given all the circumstances surrounding the individual and the situation encountered. If it were possible to account for all aspects of a situation, and the history of the individual life, then the one way of being correct might be objectively definable. The structure of virtue ethics theory which Aristotle outlines takes this into account. That is why he gives prudence such an important role.   Aristotle states that the mean, which is "defined by reference to reason," is to be determined as "the prudent person would define it" (1107a1-4). There is a hierarchy in everyday ethical decision making. The moral character of an individual is based on his dispositions. His dispositions (virtues) are based on principles, and principles provide rules to individuals to guide action. The circumstances determine the right action. An honest and courageous individual follows

the principles of honesty, courage and prudence. Since principles are flexible enough to allow for the variety of situations, an individual can determine which rules to apply to a situation and how to apply them. The problem with this simplistic scenario is found in determining how to properly construct a virtue ethics theory, one that will have a solid structural foundation from which to ground the principles, provide flexible, useful action guidance, and avoid being relativistic. In addition, the theory should be built from the bottom up, so that the action creates the virtuous disposition.

Hypothesis

The central thesis of the CVE theory is that a properly construed notion of care, instilled and developed in an individual, can provide the foundational basis of moral decision making. Properly developed, the virtue of care is the naturalistic form, moving cause and root of all the other virtues. Any action taken based on a disposition which is a form of care is ethical. Stated another way, a care based action is an ethical action. The virtue of care is based on a clearly defined notion. It has a naturalistic, universal aspect. As a part of instinctive human animal nature, care is in everyone. Care is a natural characteristic of a human. A second, higher level of this natural care can be instilled in an individual, starting at the very earliest moments of his or her life. This second level of care, while based primarily on the maternal relationship, includes consideration of the paternal aspects and anyone involved in the care and upbringing of a child. The natural care, and care instilled early in life, can be drawn out of any individual and developed into the highest level of care, which is relational care. This highest level of level of care contains the instinctive and emotional content of both of the first two levels, and is where

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the element of reason begins to play a more significant role. It serves as the basis for relations with others. As the root of other virtues, over a lifetime, the other virtues grow out of care. Any action taken, based on a disposition which is rooted in care, will be ethical. Care is the primary virtue and moves the individual to action through the will. Care is the virtue of the will. In this capacity, it resides in the middle of the human soul, connecting the desires/appetites and reason. Through care based ethical action, developed into the virtues, individuals can create a moral society, and hopefully achieve some level of harmony.

Parts of the CVE thesis obviously sounds a lot like the portions of Aristotle's and Aquinas's theories which I have been discussing. My thesis is to propose that what I have drawn out of Aristotle's work would be carried into Aquinas's theory. It would then be possible to rework Aquinas's theory using care. There are several important differences between CVE and Aquinas's theory, which I address in more detail when I discuss the various components of CVE. However, there is one significant difference with what I bring from Aristotle. One of Aristotle's goals in the *NE* was to provide instructions in how to become virtuous. A virtuous person would flourish, or have the happiness of *eudaimonia*. However, Aristotelian virtuous agents are very rare individuals. Not only must the virtuous agent have mastered all the virtues within himself, but he must also have external goods including things like health and friendship. Aquinas might be said to have a goal similar to Aristotle. However, the aim of Aquinas's theory is to direct the individual in how to become a saint, a person who is in some way united with God. A saint is also a very rare individual. The goal of CVE theory is to

provide a notion of virtue which is more attainable, while at the same time challenging an individual to achieve a level of moral excellence.

The notion of a virtuous individual in CVE theory is someone who excels at being an ethical human being. At each stage of life, an individual will both be able to attain a level of virtue and yet still have room to improve. Development of the virtues is a lifetime undertaking. This idea of development is in keeping with Aristotle's and Aquinas's theories of virtue ethics. However, within CVE theory, making progress with any and every other virtue is based on the continual development of the central virtue of care. The excellence in each virtue is rooted in the excellence of care at any stage of an individual's life. Each of the other virtues is developed at different paces, for different people, depending on the events in their lives. The way to understand how care functions in this role is found in Aquinas's notion of charity.

God gives charity to an individual.[1] Charity is the love of God and neighbor. A person with charity can still be considered virtuous to some degree, even though he is imperfect, because there is charity in all his efforts. In his discussions in Article 13 of the *Disputed Questions on Virtues* (*DQV*) Aquinas explains how charity is not destroyed by one bad act. Rather, charity is only lost when a person turns completely away from God or in a sense, gives up any attempt to be charitable (to love God).[2] Jean Porter, in a footnote to an article in which she discusses the problem of understanding what unites the virtues, or is common to all of them, observes that "Aquinas allows for a great deal more

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[1] Aquinas uses the terminology of 'infusing' charity into an individual. See discussion in Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues,* 66-69.

[2] Aquinas's discussion is more theological. He is concerned with mortal sin, which represents a serious offense against God, versus some of the lesser sins. See discussion in Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues,* 190-193.

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actual imperfection on the part of those who are virtuous through grace, than those who are virtuous through their own labors."[1] An individual can make some mistakes and still have charity, thus he would still be considered virtuous. An Aristotelian type of virtuous person must have all the virtues and not take any unethical actions to maintain the status of virtuous agent. Aquinas allows for flexibility in this aspect of virtue because he has set the bar higher. His goal is the saintly individual, united with God. The imperfect human can still love God, while struggling to be ethical in earthly life. In a similar manner, an individual with the virtue of care may not have fully developed all, or any, of the other virtues in an Aristotelian sense. To help separate the notion of what it means to be a virtuous agent within the CVE theory, I will utilize the term virtuoso human. If a person has a properly developed virtue of care, for her at any particular stage and place in her life, she would be a virtuoso human. In following Aquinas, the virtuoso human would continue to develop care, no matter what mistakes she made in life. As long as she had the virtue of care she would be virtuous. The term virtuoso human also carries another important connotation about how an individual becomes virtuous. I will provide a brief introduction of the idea of a virtuoso human here because it is important to keep this notion in mind as I develop the notion of care. I then conclude my thesis with a more definitive description. As a notion, it follows the parallel Aristotle draws between virtue and skill.

As Aristotle explains it, a virtue is similar to a skill or craft. The problem of ethics, as I have described it, is that there are no clear cut answers to use in specific ethical situations. Aristotle compares ethics to the areas of health or navigation, where

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[1] Porter, Jean. (Spring, 1993), "The Unity of the Virtues and the Ambiguity of Goodness: a Reappraisal of Aquinas's Theory of the Virtues," 139.

"the agents themselves must consider in each case what the opportune action is" (1104a5-10). There is a certain knack involved which needs to be applied to the situation.[1]

Generally someone who becomes very skilled in an area, like medicine or music, starts with some inherent ability. An exceptionally talented piano player generally has some level of musical ability which she appears to be born with. Training, education and practice draw out this talent. As the talent is pulled out, it develops and with enough work, she could excel to the level of virtuoso performer. The virtuoso performer is considered extremely skilled at her particular craft. However, not everyone has a musical, medical or other innate talent which can be developed to some level of excellence. However, every human has the ability to care. This is central to the CVE thesis.

First Principle

A basic premise or first principle of CVE theory is that everyone has some measure of the ability to care. They are born with it as a form of good inside them. This is to some degree a normative claim. However it requires no more than claiming that an individual exists, and that she has some inherent or instinctive desire to continue existence. This desire is found in the notion that she cares about her existence and sustaining her life. This inherent desire to continue existing is the first principle of the three component parts of the concept of care. This three part form of care is a natural ability within every human. It can be drawn out of anyone and developed to a level to

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[1] In the case of a craft, the excellence can be found in the object, whereas with a virtue the excellence must be in the action and how the virtuous individual performs the action. See discussion (1105a20-35).

which any person can become a virtuoso human. Through care, a person could excel at being human at each stage for her life. Furthermore, everyone has the opportunity to perform ethical acts. Repeated ethical actions based on care determine dispositions. The care which goes into ethical actions creates the dispositions which become the virtues. One of the most important elements of ethics is the care we give to our children in drawing out this initial talent or caring capacity. In this regard, children can begin to put care into their actions at a very early stage in life and thus develop caring dispositions. Developing caring dispositions can occur long before any advanced level of reasoning begins. As Aristotle states in Book X of the *NE*, "the soul of the student needs to have been prepared by habits for enjoying and hating finely, like ground that is to nourish seed" (1179b25-26). The next step in CVE theory is built on developing the care we give to ourselves and others.

Care as a Foundation

The purpose of my thesis is to outline the foundation and structure of a full theory built on the thesis and principles of CVE theory, which I have just briefly introduced. Much of this outline will be centered on how care can fulfill the foundational role of Aquinas's notion of charity. There are many similarities between care and charity. Each of these concepts can be viewed as an emotion, a disposition and in a central role in an ethical theory. The first parallel between charity and care is found in that they are emotions which are similar in nature. Charity is the love of God. In one sense of the word, to care for someone expresses an emotional connection which could be considered a weaker form of love. Care is an emotion felt toward someone or something. To love

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someone contains some level of caring. They both can also be construed as dispositions around the emotion. An individual is considered charitable, in Aquinas's sense, if she loves God from a firm and unchanging state. A person is caring if they care for others from a caring disposition. Finally, the foundational sense of charity relates to the role it serves as in Aquinas's theory. It encapsulates his theology. Morality in human life is ordered toward God in Aquinas's theory, through the love found in charity. The love in charity becomes the connection between God and an ethical action involving another person. This is the conception of charity (love) as foundational in Aquinas, focused on the ethics involved in human interaction. Humans have an emotional bond with God which is expressed in charitable action toward neighbor. Aquinas has what might be visualized as a straight between an ethical action, the love of God and the love of neighbor. The three interconnected concepts which I develop for care, instinctive, maternal and relational, provide a similar foundational principle of a care-based virtue ethics theory. Humans have an emotional bond with others which is expressed in care. Care has a straight line at the point of the ethical action, which is caring for another person. But the line has three prongs at the other end, which are instinctive care for one's own life, care for the life provided as represented in the maternal notion of care, and care for others found in relational care. A part of all three of these is incorporated in an ethical action. In order to explain this conception, I need to first refine and further develop the notion of care.

The concept of care, like charity, has a number of different connotations. This is the starting point for developing a conception of care which is an emotion, virtue and can serve as the foundation for an ethical theory. The concept of care is fairly broad in its

definition and even more so in its everyday use. A look at a dictionary will provide a good idea of how generally the word care can be used. With the notion of care, there is the idea of a person being troubled or having anxiety regarding someone or something. This definition of care comes from the notion of feeling interest or concern about something. Furthermore, this feeling can have an active component, where a person then wants to do something about the object of care, to relieve what is troubling or change the situation. Care also connotes the responsibility, burden for, or watchful attention to someone or something. A person may be charged with the care of an elderly relative or of a valuable item. This definition of care can also contain the active component of doing something for someone else. Care can be more passive in its definition, such as the care directed at a thing that is the object of attention or concern. Care can further be construed as a fondness or enjoyment of something, as in caring for the taste of a particular food. In this context, value can be assigned to the object of care. In the common vernacular, it is even considered a synonym for, or a component of, prudence. I will return to the relationship between care and prudence. This relation parallels that of charity and prudence. In its usage related to prudence, a person may be warned to take care, by which is meant that she needs to be prudent in her action. To take care not to make a mistake in a given action, can be construed as being prudent. Alternatively if a person is prudent, they are considered to have taken proper care in their actions. In order to compare care to charity it will be necessary to narrow the definition of care.

The starting point for developing the meaning of care to be used in CVE theory is the concept as defined by Nel Noddings in *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education* (1984). Her approach involves an emphasis on both the relational and

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the naturalistic aspects of ethics. Noddings acknowledges the many different uses of the word care but composes her central definition of care in a manner which has similarities to the way Aquinas clarifies and narrows his use of the concept charity. She starts by describing care as an emotion "in the deep human sense" and inside of which a person can "feel a stir of desire or inclination."[1] It is one of the prime movers of a human. Throughout her work she emphasizes the power and importance her notion of care carries in human endeavors and in ethics. She construes care as the first "enabling sentiment" without which there can be no "ethical sentiment."[2] It is the human longing for relational caring "that provides the motivation for us to be moral."[3] Noddings argues that ethical caring arises out of natural caring. Ethical caring is found in the relation in which we "meet the other morally" and where we respond to the other as one who cares "out of love or natural inclination."[4] This human condition of natural caring is perceived as good. Noddings's natural care is one of the three interrelated definitions to care which she uses. All three definitions carry with them a sense of care which includes a sense of this love or natural inclination. Her three definitions of care are maternal care, instinctive care and relational care.

The intensity of Noddings's notion of care is first expressed in her discussion of maternal care. This is her strongest version of care, and it is found in the bond between mother and child. This maternal care also contains the notion of a naturalistic caring instinct. A mother's responsibility to take care of her own child is not only considered a

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[1] Noddings, *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education,* 9.

[2] Ibid., 79.

[3] Ibid., 5.

[4] Ibid., 4-5.

moral requirement, it is considered something natural and normal. Maternal care

embodies such an important obligation, that a "woman who allows her own child to die

of neglect is often considered sick rather than immoral."[1] This bond between a mother

and child is the product of both a physical and emotional connection. Every human spent

the first few months of his or her life, as part of his or her mother, another human being.

In this stage of life the unborn child and the mother share everything physically, and the

child is wholly dependent on this one other person. During this period a very strong bond

is created between the mother and child, in the form of an instinct or memory, which is a

naturalistic grounding for the mother-child relationship. This bond, and the memory

created, also provides an example to an individual of the connection and bond he should

have with others. Noddings expresses what she sees as the intensity of this relationship

in that mothers "quite naturally feel with their infants."[2] A mother does not project onto

her child or interpret his internal thoughts as commands or requests for help, but simply

feels the infant's feeling as her own.[3] A mother cares for her child in the internal sense of

an emotional bond so that in one sense of maternal care, a mother has an attachment or

feeling toward her child which is love. However, the maternal caring for a child also

carries the sense of physically taking care of the child. In terms of the human animal

instinct, this sense of caring could be considered care for the survival of the offspring and

the species.

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[1] Noddings, *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education,* 83.

[2] Ibid., 31.

[3] Ibid., 31.

Noddings's second definition of care is instinctive care. It is a part of maternal care as it relates to the physical care of a child and the infant's survival. The notion of care is not something confined to the human animal. It is something which appears to reside in a variety of animals. A sense of care is found in animal nature and thus is not postulated simply to address human behavior and human emotion. The instinctive nature of care can be observed at a very early age in humans. A child shows the capacity for love, tenderness, feeling and reciprocation of the love received "long before the capacity for sustained reasoning develops."[1] Noddings postulates that the child is responding to a natural inclination, and in some instances this response could even be construed as altruism. The instinctive aspect of care is an observable animal behavior and Noddings argues that defining care this way is not simply anthropomorphic. It is true that humans add both the emotional content and the value component to naturalistic caring. This content added care is an expanded notion of caring which is generally applicable to human relations. However, basic instinctive caring is shared with the animals and is part of the human animal.

The depth of the instinctive aspect of care is captured in comments made by Jack Miles, regarding Noddings's notion of caring, in that her "deeply original book shows us how to think afresh about this most primeval of human relationships."[2] The primeval nature of care is an important component in Noddings's work. She ties the activities associated with the internal states of caring in a human, to human animal nature, through a connection to behavior observed in animals. In this sense she argues that care may be

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[1] Noddings, *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education,* 120.

[2] Ibid., cover.

construed as inherent and instinctive. An animal will care for, nurture and protect its offspring. The same type of caring instinct which is exhibited toward an offspring can be observed in the caring for oneself in the desire for survival. The instinctive care for survival can be seen in an infant fighting an illness at birth or an adult having an instantaneous reaction to life threatening danger.

While Noddings construes the primeval, instinctive description of care to be a deeply rooted part of human nature, she is aware of the problems associated with considering the human response of caring as instinctive. However, she argues that this concern is misguided and is a linguistic problem inherent in using the term instinct in relation to the broader, more complex notion of human relational caring. Her claim is that "the impulse to act on behalf of the present other is itself innate."[1] She describes natural caring as something which "lies latent in each of us, awaiting gradual development in a succession of caring relationships."[2] The main element of Noddings' concept of care is built around this relational aspect of care.

Noddings is primarily focused on relational care and her main notion of caring starts with the connection to others. Therefore she does not spend much time discussing the instinctive notion of care or exploring how it appears implicit in the human desire to survive. However, she does briefly discuss how caring for oneself emerges from relationships and caring for others. She goes on to point out that without the initial caring for one's self, the realities of others "as possibilities for my own reality would mean

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[1] Noddings, *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education,* 83.

[2] Ibid., 83.

nothing to me."[1] In her account of care she states that an individual's ability to care first

requires some measure of self-knowledge in that "knowledge of what gives me pain and

pleasure, precedes my caring for others."[2] Comments like this in Noddings's discussion

of care sound similar to passages in Aristotle. For example, at one point he states that

"virtues are concerned with actions and feelings; but every feeling and action implies

pleasure or pain; hence, for this reason too, virtue is about pleasures and pains"

(1104b14-16). However, Noddings is careful to try to distance parts of her work from

Aristotle's notions of virtue.

   In the first printing of her text, Noddings specifically states that she does not want

to contextualize care as a virtue. She wants to stress that the relationship between the

care giver (one-caring) and the recipient of care (cared-for) is ontologically basic. She

believed that focusing on the virtues in an individual places too much importance on the

person. The emphasis in her work is on the caring relation, so that "caring is a

relationship that contains another" and that the "one-caring and the cared-for are

reciprocally dependent."[3] Her emphasis on the relationship is so strong that in order to

emphasize it she states that if "the recipients of our care" believe that nobody cares then

"caring relations do not exist."[4] Nodding's notion of relational care requires a direct

caring relationship between two people who know each other, interact with each other,

and become united in their caring relationship. The two individuals involved need to

know they are in a caring relationship. She also states that she builds her notion of

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[1] Noddings, *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education,* 14.

[2] Ibid., 14.

[3] Ibid., 58.

[4] Ibid., xiv.

relational caring from two sentiments. She classifies the first sentiment, found in the

maternal and instinctive caring sentiments, as the "sentiment of natural caring" which is

the "initial, enabling sentiment."[1] This is based on "the natural sympathy human beings

feel for each other." [2] The second sentiment is "the longing to maintain, recapture, or

enhance our most caring and tender moments."[3]   In some regard this second sentiment is

also in "remembrance of the first."[4] It is from these two sentiments, which are internal to

an individual, that her ethical ideal springs. The ethical ideal is the proper balance of

caring for others and self which is formed as a "vision of best self."[5] While caring does

deal with feelings and sentiments, she is clear to emphasize that she is not concerned with

the internal development of the concept of care as a virtue, at least not in the traditional

sense. However, in comments she makes in the 2003 reprinting of her book, she believes

that in reviewing her work anew and in light of the many comments from others, it is

obvious that the way she describes care, it can be taken both in the relational sense and as

a virtue. It is the notion of care as a virtue to which I will now turn.

The Virtue of Care

In "Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics" (2003) Rata Halwani argues that the concept

of caring, as developed by Noddings, should be given the status of a virtue and should

hold a prominent place in virtue ethics. She thinks this can be accomplished by

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[1] Noddings, *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education,* 79.

[2] Ibid., 104.

[3] Ibid., 104.

[4] Ibid., 79. Noddings refers to these as the love and memory of which Nietzsche speaks.

[5] Noddings, *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education,* 80.

expanding on Noddings's definition of care. Halwani's argues that it is possible to define

care as a virtue and then find a place for it within a virtue ethics theory. She believes that

it may not be possible for care to "be the sole foundation" of an ethical theory.[1] This

conclusion is due in part to her concern with the fact that she also believes that "the status

of care ethics (CE) as a moral theory is still unresolved."[2] While care ethics may not

develop into a standalone theory, Halwani's wants to see that the ethical concept of care

continues to be developed. Her challange is to find "a theoretical framework within

which CE can be appropriately housed."[3] I believe care can be the primary foundation of

a virtue ethics theory. However, I concur with her position that care cannot be the sole

foundation of an ethical theory because, just as is the case with charity, care needs

prudence as part of the foundation of the theory. Prudence must maintain its role because

at the heart of ethics is the fact that "in the last resort every individual act must be the

product of the individual judgment of each individual."[4] An ethical theory must not only

give every person instructions regarding the right thing to do (and in some theories the

right intention to have), but it must provide every person with a way to take action. In

virtue ethics action occurs though the use of practical wisdom. Prudence and care can

work together as the central virtues in CVE theory.

Halwani addresses Noddings concern that care shouldn't be construed as a virtue

because then we pay too much attention to our own characters, rather than focusing on

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[1] Halwani, "Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics," 161.

[2] Ibid., 161.

[3] Ibid., 185.

[4] Burrell, P.S., The Problem of Ethics," 62.

relationships.[1] Noddings has a very narrow focus on caring relations, which she argues exist solely between individuals who have a direct relationship. Noddings's focus is on the direct connection and thus she rejects the notion that a person can care for everyone, at least not in the sense she intends it. Nodding's notion requires the acknowledgement or appreciation of the caring by the cared-for. Thus as Noddings construes care, someone cannot care for a person they will never meet or with whom they will never directly interact. She also argues that an individual cannot care for non-human things such as animals or plants, which are incapable of returning the sentiment. Halwani argues that Noddings's notion of care can be expanded to a much broader concept. Care can be a broad based virtue, which can account for caring about anyone, caring for a variety of ethical issues, or caring about a specific situations which an individual might encounter. Halwani starts by identifying a virtuous person as someone who is not simply concerned with relations, but "one who is concerned with her character and her life: she is someone who cares that she maintains an ethical character and that her dealings with others are moral."[2]

Halwani describes caring as a virtue in a more Aristotelian sense, as a disposition to care not only specifically about someone, but about a variety of things. While Noddings describes care as an emotional reaction to another person, the broader emotional area Halwani describes is related to human emotions such as concern, feelings of interest or liking. The disposition of care deals with an emotional arena or a sphere of action, in a fashion similar to how courage deals with fear. She argues that Noddings's

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[1] See Halwani discussion, "Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics," 181.

[2] Halwani, "Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics," 175.

narrow relationship-based caring meets all the criteria of an Aristotelian virtue. Caring is obviously a state which "would dispose the agent to act given the right circumstances."[1] Care also involves choice and it is "ultimately up to the agent to decide" whether or not to care in any given situation.[2] Caring also admits of a mean or Aristotelian type of excellence which, as Halwani indicates, was initially developed in Carol Gilligan's book *In a Different Voice* (1992).

A key part of Gilligan's thesis is that a morally mature person must have the right balance of caring in her life. A person develops her moral maturity in three steps. In the beginning she cares only for herself. At the next level she cares excessively for others to her own detriment. Finally she reaches the highest level of maturity. At this highest level, she finds the appropriate balance of caring for herself and caring for others. According to Gilligan, once a person reaches moral maturity, she develops a concept of goodness that incorporates the demands placed on her by others and that also accounts for her own self-worth. She finds the mean or excellence in care in her actions. In this mean of care "the disparity between selfishness and responsibility dissolves."[3] Gilligan's account is an explanation of moral maturity, rather than of an Aristotelian notion of virtue. However, her account does demonstrate a form of harmony in the individual with a proper caring disposition. She also describes a continuum on which an individual can find the mean of the virtue of care.

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[1] Halwani, "Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics," 182.

[2] Ibid., 182.

[3] Gilligan, Carol, *In a Different Voice*, 94.

Halwani uses Gilligan's work in developing the transition from Noddings's notion

of care to an Aristotelian virtue of care. Care falls within the realm of the feeling of

caring or concern. It is a disposition to which humans can be either well or ill disposed.

An individual could care too little or too much about something or some person. Halwani

states that caring admits of an Aristotelian mean. Just as with the other virtues, caring

can be done right, as Aristotle describes the mean, or it can be done wrong:

> one can care for the wrong person (for example a morally corrupt
> one); one can exhibit care at the wrong time (for example attending
> to X whereas it is Y, a stranger, which needs the attention at the
> time); one can exhibit care about the wrong thing (for example
> supporting a project that should not be supported); one can care for
> the wrong reasons (for example I give you chocolate because I
> want you to stop crying); and in the wrong way (for example I
> calm your fears by lying to you). [1]

Described in the form Halwani uses here, care can be put on an Aristotelian type of

continuum in order to determine the mean of the virtue and the vices of the emotion of

care.

A deficiency of care on one end of the continuum could be described as total

apathy, which would entail a feeling of absolutely no interest or concern. It could be no

concern for the well being of anyone else or apathy for an almost any moral situation

with which a person is faced. A person might not even be concerned with his own

happiness, well being or general survival. On the other end of the continuum, the excess

might be an obsessive disposition. It might be an overly controlling person who cares

about every detail in his life, the lives of others around him or every moral dilemma

which arises. He may obsessively care, worry and be concerned with everything, in an

emotional state which encroaches on some form of paranoia or neurosis. The extremes of

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[1] Halwani, "Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics," 182.

the continuum are very negative, unethical dispositions. One may be called excessive apathy and the other extreme neurosis. The vice in an action would be too much care, or to little care, for a specific situation, in the direction of either extreme.

Halwani concludes that caring is "an *excellence* because, simply, it is a *good* trait to have."[1] It is a proper concern for the whole world around a person, which motivates her to ethical action. Action is taken both with the proper feeling of care and with the proper reasoning from prudence. The closest virtue to care in Aristotle's *NE* is friendship, which has some components which sound like care. Aquinas addresses friendship and at one point even construes charity as "a kind of friendship with God."[2] There is a similarity with friendship in that care is considered a trait needed for flourishing because "without proper care human beings cannot generally grow up to lead mentally and emotionally healthy lives."[3] Halwani obviously takes the importance of care to be much greater than friendship. She states that the lack of care could strike "at the heart of the agent's flourishing *qua* human being" both from the lack of intimate relationships and the general lack of sociality.[4] Considering some of Aristotle's comments on politics he might also have concurred with this sentiment. Humans need others. A flourishing person is not "a solitary person by himself, living an isolated life" but someone who has the need of "parents, children, wife, and, in general for friends and fellow citizens, since a human being is a naturally political [animal]" (1097b7-12).

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[1] Halwani, "Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics," 182.

[2] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues*, 30.

[3] Halwani, "Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics," 183.

[4] Ibid., 183.

Care and Charity

The notion of the virtue of care which I have been developing can play a role similar to that which charity serves in Aquinas's theory. I will approach this comparison of care and charity from several different angles. The parallels between care and charity tend to center around three areas, upon which I will build the correlation. The first is how the relationship with the mother, found in care, parallels the relation with God, found in charity. The second is the similarity between the instinctive nature of care and the primacy of charity. Finally, there are aspects of care which mirror the component of charity which deals with the relations between people.

The first connection between charity and care is found in the bond between a mother and her child. This starts during the gestation period, when the child is part of the mother. This notion of care is a primeval, naturalistic bond between humans, which is best exemplified in the power of the relationship between a mother and her child. Noddings states that this maternal caring locates the motivation for morality in the "pre-act consciousness."[1] Her discussion gives this conception of care immense strength, similar to the love in charity, which is the powerful bond of love between a person and God. Part of the Christian ethic is the notion that the love directed to God originates in the fact that God created humans. God gave humanity existence and humans desire to reunite with God. It is charity "which makes the soul long to be with Christ" or to "be joined with God."[2] Aquinas builds his virtue ethics on charity as the disposition of the love of and from God, so that through it, a person expresses this love in the actions she

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[1] Noddings, *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education,* 28.

[2] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues*, 177-178.

takes in her life. Aquinas states that people possess the "*created disposition* of charity which can be the formal principle of an action of love."[1] Noddings's care is described with a similar strength to the love in charity. Maternal care is so strong that "motherhood is the single greatest source of strength for the maintenance of the ethical ideal."[2]

An additional correlation between maternal care and charity is to be found in the connection that Aquinas draws between higher order love and charity. Charity is the love of God which humans receive in a finite way, and thus is a created thing in humans. He construes the love God has for human beings as a perfect love. Charity is a less perfect version of this love. A similar relation could be seen in Noddings claims about care. The intense love a mother has for her child could be considered a higher order or more perfect kind of caring. Care can also consist in lesser forms of the maternal bond of care. Her ethic is based on the caring relationship, primarily between two human beings, associated with things like caring and tender moments and she states that a person does "not need to love in order to care."[3] A person can care for many people and things with intensity much less than this powerful maternal care. This parallels Aquinas's rendition of the relationship between God's love and the lower order human love found in charity. An individual cannot have the same level of intensity in the love he has for others, as he has for God. However, the love of God is to be reflected in the love of others. Likewise, the care between a mother and child is to be reflected in the care for others.

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[1] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues*, 111.

[2] Noddings, *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education,* 130.

[3] Ibid., 112.

The conception of the virtue of care in CVE theory starts with the highest order human care, found in the bond between a mother and her child, and it then moves to a lower order of care. As an individual develops the virtue of care, her goal is to strive to develop the higher level of maternal care in other relations and in all the moral actions she takes. What is important and different about this notion of care is that it is universal. Everyone has a mother. This is a simple idea and it has some interesting offshoots worth exploring. The most important one is to build on Aristotle's thoughts regarding the importance of early childhood development. In this early development lies the opportunity to give the virtue of care to a person. Aquinas has the notion within his virtue ethics theory that God infuses charity into a person. A mother and the caregivers in a child's life have the opportunity to instill the virtue of care into an individual from the earliest moments of his life. As Noddings points out, the bond of care not only goes from the mother to the child, but also goes from the child to the mother based on the remembrance of the early care a person receives in life.

The second relation between care and charity is found in the primacy of both sentiments. Charity is something which humans are given and in that sense it becomes a part of their nature.[1] Charity is the virtue of the will. It is the will which moves reason to seek the good and thus precedes reason. Reason presents something it perceives as good to the will, and the will moves the body to obtain what is presented to it by reason. The will is moved by charity to seek the good and the will then moves reason, so that in this sense charity is primary. Care also plays a primary role. The first actions of an infant

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[1] See Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues*, 109-111. The virtue of charity is something which is created in humans. There is obviously a metaphysical and theological argument that some individuals receive charity and some do not. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address that issue. Since I am only drawing a parallel, for purposes of this discussion, it is not a relevant point.

come from his desires and appetites. Repetition of these initial actions can generate

dispositions. Noddings argues that these initial emotions include a strong sense of care.

She emphasizes the importance of the emotion, by reference to Hume's discussion of the

role emotions in general play in ethics. Hume argues that ethics is rooted in feeling or

emotion and the "final sentence" on matters of morality is "that which renders morality

an active virtue." – "…this sentence depends on some internal sense or feeling, which

nature made universal in the whole species, for what else can have an influence of this

nature."[1] Care is an instinctive, universal human emotion, something humans have as a

part of their animal nature. It is internal, but it is not caused by the subject. Aquinas

expands Aristotle's naturalistic theory to include a God that infuses charity into a human

life. Care, in place of charity, can take this role, but is something a person has as part of

their human nature. This makes CVE a self contained naturalistic theory. In a way, care

is a better fit with Aristotle's naturalistic theory, filling the need Aquinas perceived for a

grounding principle, but better maintaining the integrity of Aristotle's naturalistic theory.

As Noddings has pointed out, the notion of care, as an animal instinct, develops in a child

before he has the capacity to reason. Care is a primeval human instinct. Care moves the

moral reason to seek the good, as Aquinas argues that charity does. In this capacity, care

is the virtue of the will and provides the volition for action.

     As an instinctive capacity, care can provide a strong foundational root for virtue

ethics. The naturalistic sense of caring can be easily extended to something which is

considered a common human characteristic. It also is universal in its maternal form,

since every human being at one point in his or her life was cared for by another. Further,

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[1] Hume, David, "An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals," 275.

as a universal human characteristic, it would certainly seem plausible to take as a premise the idea that every human being cares about something or someone. Through care, as part of a person's inherent nature, he will naturally consider the "natures, ways of life, needs and desires"[1] of others. This discussion leads to the final comparison between charity and care, which is in the area of human relations.

Relational care builds on the foundation of both the maternal and naturalistic aspects of care. Care is not an abstract rational principle or a divinely inspired love of neighbor. What makes care such a powerful foundational ethical principle is, as Noddings puts it, the fact that the caring "regard for beings is not derived from a concept of 'respect for persons'; rather, it furnishes the foundation for such views."[2] Every individual human being's existence depends on someone else caring about him or her. Without the caring relationship no one would exist. At the most basic level, physically, without some relationship between a man and a woman, followed by someone caring for children, no one would exist. From the moment a person comes into existence, at conception, someone needs to care for him in order for him to survive. This starts with the mother carrying the child, through the gestation period up to birth. Someone needs to care for the individual through his upbringing, until the point he can survive on his own. The initial intimate relationship of co-existing between the mother and the fetus provides a physical and emotional bond which is the naturalistic grounding for Noddings's claim that the love between a mother and child is fundamental in ethics. The individual has a memory of the caring provided by those who brought about her existence and helped

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[1] Noddings, *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education,* 14.

[2] Ibid., 120.

sustain her. This is the remembrance of the receipt of care, which may be construed as a sentiment or a cognitive memory. This sentiment or memory helps develop the portion of the virtue of care which underlies the relational caring for others.

As discussed earlier, Noddings focuses primarily on the direct caring relationship. Her sentiment could be taken in a similar context as Aquinas, when he states that "charity does not recognize different degrees between the one who loves and the one who is loved, because it unites the two."[1] Care unites people in the caring relationship, as charity unites people through the loving relationship, as mediated through God. These sentiments of Noddings, and Aquinas's concepts of relational care, require further elaboration. There are ideas in Aquinas's discussion of charity which can be of benefit in expanding Noddings's conception of care.

Aquinas extends the love of God in charity to others, so that a person's "neighbor is loved only for the sake of God."[2] However, Aquinas does not limit this obligation to just others with which an individual has a direct relationship. Aquinas quotes Augustine's concerns that a person should "care most for those who are nearest to you" in a special way, however a person should not "exclude those who are not connected to us by any particular tie, as, for example, those living in India and Ethiopia."[3] Jean Porter provides some important insight into this aspect of Aquinas's structure for charity. Contrary to the general conception of Christian love "Thomas denies that charity as neighbor love requires each of us to love all our neighbors equally."[4] Porter draws on an

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[1] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues*, 164.

[2] Ibid., 131.

[3] Ibid., 156.

analysis of Aquinas's more indepth discussion of charity in the *Summa Theologiae*. She concludes that he has an explicit hierarchal order to the love found in charity. Of course God is to be loved above all else. However, Aquinas also argues that "each person should love himself or herself more than his or her neighbor."[1] The notions of charity are based on the Christian bible and a key component of this discussion comes from that source. After the commandment to first love God, comes the second commandment that "you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments the whole law is based."[2] The law referred to here is the Christian moral law. Aquinas goes on to discuss how some neighbors are to be loved more than others. He even develops an extensive list for the order of loving different groups of people. Aquinas holds the precept that it is acceptable to love in different degrees those in different circumstances. [3] This broadened version of charity applies to everyone, so that "no one is excluded from charity, or from the scope of the perpetual willingness to serve the neighbor that charity includes."[4] The hierarchal aspect of charity is something which needs to be added to Noddings's narrow notion of relational care. As previously discussed, this is an observation which Halwani made and an area of Aquinas's work from which CVE could greatly benefit. Noddings's conception of care needs to be extended.

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[4] Porter, "De Ordine Caritatis: Charity, Friendship, and Justice in Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologiae," 199.

[1] Ibid., 199.

[2] Mathew, 22, 37-39. *The New American Bible, St. Joseph Edition*, 32.

[3] See discussion. Porter, "De Ordine Caritatis: Charity, Friendship, and Justice in Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologiae," 205.

[4] Porter, "De Ordine Caritatis: Charity, Friendship, and Justice in Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologiae," 207.

In arguing for a broader notion of care, Halwani addresses the problem with Noddings's notion of care. She uses the example of two siblings or friends who care for each other, even though they are physically separate from each other and have no direct contact over time. Halwani argues that such relationships are caring and thus believes that this component must be added to Noddings's care. Halwani believes that "it would seem that Noddings's account is at best incomplete" because she does not think these indirect relationships are caring.[1] Halwani also points out that, while Noddings argues that the relationship is primary, she argues that it "difficult to see how human relationships can be ontologically basic when they conceptually *require* human beings" to exist in the first place in order for people to form the relationships.[2]

To fulfill the role of charity, the virtue of care must be expanded to allow for the general area of care for other people with whom the agent is not in direct contact. To serve as a foundational principle of a virtue ethics theory, is also necessary that a person care about other living things, such as animal life, plant life, and even inanimate objects, as well as ideas, thoughts, and activities. All of these are a part of the field of concern in ethics. As a core virtue, care can account for any valid area of ethics. Noddings's concept of direct relational care could easily be accommodated within Aquinas's hierarchy. Caring for those with whom a person has direct relations can be a higher level of care. However, it does not preclude care of others. An individual must care for himself and his own existence. A person first learns about care through the care he receives from others for his survival. An individual's ability to care first requires some

[1] Halwani, "Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics," 164.

[2] Ibid., 169.

measure of self-knowledge. It is important for a person to care for himself. The

Christian notion of love of self, equal to love of neighbor, can be easily applied to the

virtue of care.

In summary, the parallels between care and charity represent a very rich area to

explore. Noddings centers her notion of the good around caring, so that "natural caring –

some degree of which each of us has been dependent upon for our continued existence –

is the natural state that we inevitably identify as 'good'."[1] I believe this sentiment

encompasses instinctive, maternal and relational caring. Charity also has parallels this

idea with its focus on the good of God. In charity an individual cares about others for the

sake of God. In some sense, the care for others is initiated in the maternal care for the

individual and his own existence. It also comes from the memory of the care he received

from others, which was necessary for him to exist.

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[1] Noddings, *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education,* 49.

Chapter 6: Framework for Care-Based Virtue Ethics

I set out in this thesis to discuss the structure and foundation of a care-based virtue ethics theory. The initial structure is found in the concepts of Aristotle's virtue ethics theory with its focus on action and the development of the dispositions. The next step is to rework Aquinas's theory, utilizing much of his expanded Aristotelian structure, but using the virtue of care in place of charity. Using care in the foundational place of charity allows for use of many of Aquinas's theological ideas, but within a more naturalistic approach. This revised approach includes analysis of aspects of his accounts of natural law, happiness, prudence and action. This is a significant undertaking. As Williams indicates in the introduction to the *DQV* "Aquinas's ethics is so thoroughly systematic that one cannot adequately understand any of these accounts without drawing heavily on all the others." [1] I will say a few words about how some of these areas might be addressed in future work.

Care and the Virtues

Substituting care for charity means that care is part of all the virtues. This opens an avenue of investigation which addresses the question of what it means for care to be the form, root and moving cause of all the moral virtues. In this sense, the virtues are considered as forms of care. Courage is considered a form of caring for existence and

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[1] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues*, x.

overcoming the fear of death or injury. If a person does not care about her existence, she will not fear death and thus have no need of courage. Courage might include balancing care for oneself with care for others who need help or protection. Temperance would be considered a form of caring about controlling bodily desires. If a person does not care about moderating bodily pleasures, there would be no need to fight temptation and thus no need for temperance. Temperance could be born out of caring about health or others needs. Moderating consumption might mean not consuming more than a person's share of goods out of concern for the needs of others. In honesty there might be caring about the consequences of truth. However, this also opens the possibility of a concern for a principle, some kind of caring for the principle of truth. A person might be honest because he cares about what kind of person he is, his reputation or the intrinsic value in truth. Justice is a rich area to explore. The root of justice might be found in how a person cares about others and their fair treatment. The notion of concern for other individuals rights or one's own obligations could be a form of caring.

Caring about the well being of another person will provide both the motivation and the form for being kind to him. This might be first thought of in relation to what a person finds of value and the desires she has for things of value. Before a person desires something, it must have some significance to her. She must care about it. It is through caring, in the deeply human sense that has been discussed herein, that a person turns his attention and desire to an object or other being. Care is the emotion or the feeling which directs the attentive consciousness in matters of morality. This is a very brief summary of a very rich area of future exploration.

The Good

Awareness of and caring about ones' own existence happens early in life. This is followed by the realization that a person has a choice in what happens with her life. An individual who never develops a proper sense of caring for her own life will struggle to develop an ethical foundation. She must also realize that she needs others, in order for her to exist. These are others who cared for her in the beginning of her life and for whom she must care in return. The realization of the need for others initiates prudence. Prudence focuses on using reason to help maintain a person's existence, which also involves other people.

This is consistent with Aquinas's theory as well. A moral person is motivated by three broad types of goods. The first two types of goods are "to maintain ourselves in existence" and to "reproduce ourselves and to care for our offspring."[1] These are considered goods that humans share to some degree with animals. The third type of goods belongs to people alone this category "subsumes the other two without superseding them."[2] The third type of goods is for a person "to exercise the powers of rational thought and (consequently) to live in society and to know God."[3] It would seem that it would be a worthwhile effort to take this societal notion of Aquinas's theory and reconstruct it based on the virtue of care. His structure and in-depth analysis of human behavior would greatly strengthen CVE theory. At the same time, replacing charity with

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[1] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues*, xiii.

[2] Ibid., xiii.

[3] Ibid., xiii.

the virtue of care would help give his theory more universal appeal, with a more naturalistic foundation.

Because CVE theory is based on Aquinas's description of placing care in the role of the virtue of charity, it is important to try to bring the good of Aquinas, which is God, back to the more naturalistic good of existence. The nature of charity is to love "God for his own sake" and that loving the other is based on the premise that "God is in him, or so that God may be in him."[1] Aquinas connects individuals to each other and the good by reference to the "*common* good that relates to one person or another *qua* part of the whole," so that the "principal object of love is whatever the good principally resides in" which is people.[2] It is possible to consider a similar relationship with caring about others, existence and human flourishing.

A person needs to care about her own existence and take prudent action to sustain it. In addition, she needs others to exist, so at a minimum she must care about other people out of a concern for her own existence. Without proper self-care, a person will not care properly for others. Aquinas's states that "inasmuch as it is necessary for something to tend towards God, this inclination arises out of charity."[3] In like fashion, tending toward the good of flourishing existence is an inclination that arises out of care for existence. Noddings makes a strong argument that natural caring is something which each person has been dependent on in his life. Natural care is caring for continuing

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[1] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues*, 131.

[2] Ibid., 131.

[3] Ibid., 162.

existence and reproduction which humans share with animals. An individual has a natural concern for life and with prudence she can take caring action.

This is a significant area to develop within CVE theory which I touched on already and am only briefly outlining here. It is important to place good inside of every human being by nature of their very existence. Caring about existence is connected to the good of existence. Every human has the ability to be good, simply by virtue of existing as a human being. Everyone has the capacity to care at a higher level than just the basic caring for existence. Knowing that she exists, and that she has choices that she can make about that existence, are the first steps an individual takes toward reasoning. This notion can be used for educational purposes. Every person has good inside of him or her, in the form of care. This natural care can be developed and pulled out, like natural musical or athletic ability. The skills of always caring and always making the best practical decision possible can be taught and learned through habituation in youth and continued education and experience. This leads back to the discussion of the concept of the virtuoso human.

The Virtuoso Human

The term virtuoso generally refers to an individual who excels at a fine art. It is a term usually associated with a musician. A virtuoso violinist excels at the technique of playing the violin. However, she is more than just technically competent. The virtuoso performer is engaged in an art form and creates music. The meter and the scale are technical, each beat and each note standing in a specific relationship to the other. It is important that the virtuoso violinist be competent in the technical aspects, which takes time and practice. But there is something more in a great performer than simply the

collection of notes played at the proper tempo. The virtuoso musician adds something to the music which is particularly human. When done properly the music somehow connects to, and touches something inside of the listener. It is also generally thought that the virtuoso musician needs to have some inherent musical ability or something inside of her which is drawn out and developed. She has some measure of latent musical ability. When she reaches the peak of virtuoso ability, it seems that there is something drawn out of her that also connects to and touches the audience. Like the virtuoso performer born with some musical ability, the virtuoso human is born with a natural care. However, those born with natural care are not some select few. Everyone is born with a natural ability or capacity to care.

Instinctive care is a natural part of every human being. In addition, care is given to a person in a very special way in the unique caring relationship between a mother and her child. Every person has some experience of care. It is grounded in both animal and human nature. It is a universal human capacity. A virtuoso human is an individual who has had the care drawn out of her and developed from a very young age. As she grows, she continues to develop the virtue of care. A virtuoso person can possess the proper virtue of care completely, in relation to the various stages in her life. The caring acts of a virtuoso person also touch something special in others. There is a connection between the virtuoso caregiver (caring-one) and the recipient of care (cared-for). The primary subject of Noddings's book is this connection. If a person cares in the proper way, it will "render virtuous activities pleasurable *in themselves*, so that we can act more easily."[1]

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[1] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues*, 137. This is the description Aquinas gives to the working of charity and the other virtues together. This provides a connection back to Aristotle's conception of the workings of the virtues, as bringing reason and feeling in harmony.

Noddings supplies some perspective on the requirements of a virtuoso human and provides grounding for the concept. Her thought is different from both Aristotle's notion of the virtuous person and the religious aspect that Aquinas adds to the theory. She stresses the importance of the requirement of attainability. In defining the caring human, she states that it "is not necessary that I, a concrete moral agent, actually attain my ideal–surely, I shall fail repeatedly–but the ideal itself must be attainable in the actual world. It must be possible for a finite human being to attain it, and we should be able to describe the attainment."[1]

A virtuoso human being is someone who not only has the virtue of care, but also has prudence. He excels at being a caring person and can use practical reason to put the virtue of care into action. Care is an excellence which can be perfected in a very human sense as the foundational virtue of character. It may allow for some level of failure, which can be made up through the effort and future development. It allows for continuous growth, development and improvement of the morality of the individual. Excellence in caring is a human perfection at various points in life, never reaching a specific fixed point. In taking on the role of charity, care like charity "is found not in the reason but in the will."[2] Care and prudence work together so that care provides the goodness in a virtue and prudence is what a person uses to take action, in conjunction with the care in the other virtues. A prudent individual is a person who can "deliberate finely about things that are good and beneficial for himself…about what sorts of things promote living well in general" (1140a25-29). The development of the other virtues

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[1] Noddings, *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education,* 109.

[2] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues*, 159.

comes from the care in the individual actions a person takes. Care is the root of the virtues of character. The virtue of care is the moving cause of prudence in the application of the other virtues. The role of prudence is also critical, because as Aristotle's states it, "we cannot be fully good without prudence, or prudent without virtue of character" (1144b30-35).

Practical Wisdom

An individual can put care into their actions very early in life. As they mature, they begin to apply prudence as well. Repeated caring actions in various aspects of life begin to form the dispositions. The proper care in repeated temperate action begins to form the disposition which will become temperance. The same is true with honesty or courage. Learning and developing these actions comes from the care of others. A virtuoso human is one who puts the excellence in care into every action.   This is done with the virtue of prudence. Prudence (*Phronesis*) is a central part of virtue ethics theories. It is the primary virtue in Aristotle's theory. The human good is found in the human function which "is activity of the soul in accord with reason or requiring reason" (1098a8-9). Prudence is that part of reason which has to do with taking action in life. In his discussion of wisdom in Book VI of the *NE* Aristotle lays out the argument for the importance of prudence. It includes an understanding of all the parts of the situation. The object of prudence is not theoretical knowledge, but action. This characterization has some parallels to the approach Noddings takes to care. There appears to be a strong connection between care and prudence in her work.

Noddings expresses concerns with relying on theoretical knowledge in dealing with ethical issues. In discussing her ethical ideal, she clearly points out that it is a practical notion, not a theoretical exercise. In dealing with ethical issues, a person must resist the temptation to "soar into clouds of abstraction – where everything but gross contradiction can be set right."[1] Noddings's ethical ideal is not made up of "artificial solutions contrived in a parallel world of abstraction."[2] If an ethical theory is going to be universally attainable, it must be useful to any individual. Prudence is the virtue which combines reason and charity in Aquinas's theory. This same relationship is found between care and prudence. However, it is possible that care would connect more directly with prudence than charity does. Charity must go to God to be grounded. God is an abstract notion. Care is a naturalistic notion. Noddings provides some insightful comments on this topic, as it relates to ethical action.

Noddings refers to the biblical story of Abraham and his son Isaac. Abraham is told by God to offer his son as a sacrifice to God. She points to the explanation of this act by Kierkegaard, who describes Abraham's action as "justified by his connection to God, the absolute."[3] Abraham is asked by God to kill in the name of this same God who says 'thou shalt not kill'. Abraham was planning to commit this forbidden action because he believed he heard the voice of God. Abraham was acting based on the abstract, universal idea of God, the absolute. He chose this path, rather than following a practical principle, from the same God. This leads to a paradox in his action. Out of a "duty to

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[1] Noddings, *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education,* 109.

[2] Ibid., 109.

[3] Ibid., 43.

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God, we may be required to do to our neighbor what is ethically forbidden."[1] God is the first principle in Aquinas's theory. What appears as a direct command from God must be measured through prudence, which focuses on earthly human goods.

Care in place of charity brings a more naturalistic approach to this problem. As Noddings explains it, this is a place where intuition goes wrong and Abraham has gone into the clouds of abstraction. According to Noddings a mother responds to her child, the human cry, not the abstract voice. This seems more consistent with the functioning of prudence. As Aristotle describes it, prudence is a virtue concerned with the human goods. The virtue of care moves the will toward human goods, the most important of which is human life, which has priority over the abstract. The virtue of care is primary in CVE theory. Moral action starts with caring about human existence, both an individual's existence and the existence of others in the caring relationship. Prudence is then engaged by care. Aristotle's intellectual reason is the human connection to the world of abstract thought and ideas. Aquinas's notion of charity connects a person to the abstract of God. Care connects a person to her own concrete existence and the concrete existence of others. In this capacity care functions as a virtue more fundamental than prudence and more practical than charity.

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[1] Noddings, *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education,* 43.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

My thesis is intended to be a starting point for further work on the subject of placing care in a central role in virtue ethics. A fully developed virtue ethics theory based on care and structured like the theories of Aristotle ad Aquinas seems feasible. There are many unanswered questions and ideas to continue to explore. The notion of care which I have developed herein has many similarities to charity. In particular, I wanted to stress the strength of the notion, its naturalistic origin, the need to care about one's own existence, and the care found in relations with others. One of the most important aspects of care-based virtue ethics theory is imparting the virtue of care to each subsequent generation.

Instilling care in children is not simply a matter of teaching and developing it as a virtue. From the very beginning of human life a person must be cared for and cared about. In pregnancy the mother must care about the child in order to bring it into the world. During pregnancy the mother and child share everything. Being cared for is the source of the special bond between a mother and a child, of which Noddings speaks about and which is at the core of care. Through childhood someone must care for a person, until he reaches a point where he can care for himself. Noddings captures in her discussion the remembrance of the early care a person receives in life and how important that is to his morality. As she developed her notions of relational care, it is the early care a child receives which establishes the basis for a person to care for others. The effort to

raise a child is substantial. The acknowledgement and remembrance of this part of a person's life, and the care received from others, is a very powerful human sentiment. It represents a tremendous opportunity to establish a proper ethical sentiment in children. The opportunity caregivers have to instill care is a powerful starting place for an ethical theory.

Imagine the loving care which can be imparted on a child during his development. A person can be given the virtue of care, which then can be developed by that individual into an appreciation for the care received. This instilled care can then be extended to others. Of equal importance is the caring appreciation for one's own worth. Consider the opposite, a person who does not have appropriate care and is abused. Statistics aren't necessary to show that a child who is abandoned, abused, neglected, or given no care other than cold callous delivery of sustenance, will very likely struggle to develop a proper morality. Similarly, an adult treated very poorly (who never gains a sense that his life has any worth and who never cares for his own life in a proper sense) may develop problems with his morality. An individual must care for himself and his own existence. A person must also learn to care for his neighbors, as if his very existence depended on others, because it does.

A person's existence is dependent on someone else existing before him, his parents and the others who cared for him. Once he comes into existence, he is dependent on others for his continued existence, which is based on the notion of relational care. He should act based on this sense of the virtue of care. Every moral decision and action should be taken in light of the value of his existence and the equal importance of others for the maintenance of his existence. The importance of others is not to be construed to

indicate that others should be considered as means to an individual's own end. The care

for others must be taken in the context of an interrelated need to co-exist. Each person's

life has an equal value based on the mutual need for others. However, it obviously starts

with a person caring for his own existence. If an individual does not value his own life, it

is virtually impossible for him to find value in others lives. This is the enabling

sentiment for CVE theory.

There are many aspects of Aquinas's work which need exploration. The

discussion of caring for existence has some parallels to things found in the ideas of

natural law. The notion of law tends to focus on the idea of justice and a connection to

the laws of nature. A second area to explore would be to understand how care relates to

the locus of natural laws within humans. Aspects of CVE theory could parallel

Aquinas's natural law theory. His work could be addressed from the perspective of a

similarly construed natural caring theory. Placing care in the position of charity would

then require a discussion of s*ynderesis* which "is the disposition containing the precepts

of the natural law, which are the first principles of human acts."[1] It may be possible to

argue that care is a part of *synderesis,* or that care contains the precepts of natural law, or

that they can be derived from it. A proper review of Aquinas's overall works in relation

to care would be a next step in this argument for the primacy of care.

The main sentiment I want to capture in this analysis is the idea of grounding and

unifying the virtues in respect to Aquinas's comment that charity is the form, moving

cause and root of the virtues. I have spoken at some length about ethical theories and

what is special about the virtue ethics that Aristotle and Aquinas describe. Modern

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[1] Williams, *Thomas Aquinas Disputed Questions on Virtues*, xii, (Ia2ae 94.I ad 2).

ethical theories such as Utilitarianism or Kantianism seem to place the focus of ethics on some type of measurement or rule based system. Noddings's work on care was done in part as a response to problems which come from these modern types of theories. These two other types of theories can provide any answer so long as the math works, or there is some logical non-contradictory argument, or abstract rule or principle to support a course of action. Noddings argues that the modern focus on these types of theories gives ethics not only a "mathematical appearance, but it also moves discussions beyond the sphere of actual human activity and the feeling that pervades such activity."[1] In a sense, these other two approaches to ethics seem to move the foundation of ethics away from people. Noddings's care ethics has its foundation in "human caring and the memory of caring and being cared for."[2] The CVE theory I am proposing can be built upon the three sentiments of maternal, instinctive and relational care. This is a very promising future avenue for rich development. Care-based virtue ethics can be learned through habituation which, as Noddings puts it is "just the repetition of feelings and events in ordinary life" and the celebration of the "ordinary, human-animal life."[3]

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[1] Noddings, *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education,* 1.

[2] Ibid., 1.

[3] Ibid., 124-125.

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