

University of Ottawa

Aquinas, Prudence, and Proactive Parenting:
the Treatise Applied
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055 928

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of
the degree Doctor of Philosophy (Philosophy)
at the University of Ottawa
October 2, 1996

Joseph F. McCabe/ University of Ottawa/ October 2, 1996



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ISBN 0-612-19991-6

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UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

Abstract

This dissertation is on prudence and its role in child-rearing. More specifically, it is on how Thomas Aquinas's Treatise on Prudence (S.T. IIa IIae QQ 47-56) can with profit be used to help parents today in the task of raising their children well. It is the author's conviction that Aquinas has a unique and important contribution to make to the contemporary debate on 'parenting', so-called, and the dissertation is a defense of that conviction. The paper is divided into three Parts, with each Part consisting of two chapters.

The overall logical structure of the paper is that of a chain argument which runs as follows. Employing the modern notion of 'proactivity' as a framework within which to speak of child-rearing practices, it is argued that:

If proactive parent, then practical, provident, and equitable
If practical, provident, and equitable, then prudent

If proactive parent, then prudent.

The thesis is that: It is not possible to be a proactive parent without the intellectual virtue of prudence.

Each Part of the paper is dedicated respectively to one of the three qualities mentioned: practicality, providence, and equitability. Within each Part, the first chapter is an explanation of one fundamental aspect of 'proactivity', or 'proactive behavior', taken generally. The second chapter of each Part has a double aim: first, to apply this aspect of proactivity to the domain of parenting, showing both its intuitive attractiveness and its support in the literature; and, second, to show how it is not possible to be a 'proactive parent' in the way described without the virtue of prudence.

Proactivity is a comprehensive theory of effective living; it is an approach to life and to problem-solving which has its origins in the fields of business and motivational psychology. Its principal proponent is the immensely popular author, lecturer, and leadership specialist, Dr. Stephen R. Covey. Dr. Covey provides the most cogent formulation today of what it means to 'be proactive'. The text used as the starting point for the study is Covey's best-selling book, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic.

The use made of the notion of proactivity in the paper is twofold. First, in particular, it is used to focus the discussion of prudence and its role in conscientious parenting. The author noticed several fundamental and undeniable similarities between the notions of proactivity and prudence and has sought to exploit these similarities as a way of better understanding what it means to be

an effective parent and to raise children well. Second, in general, the notion of proactivity is used to re-enter into the modern debate on child-rearing the figure of Thomas Aquinas.

Parallel to the debate concerning public education, there arose a debate as to the 'private education', the upbringing, that children receive from their parents at home. And this debate - about which parenting style is most effective in raising children of responsible character - while certainly more focussed and closer to resolution today, is by no means overwith. It is into this debate that the author attempts to re-enter Thomas Aquinas and his Treatise on Prudence: under the auspices, that is, of the theory of 'proactivity'. Proactivity is an idea which has already attained remarkable acceptance in the domain of business, but which is also gaining widespread acceptance in the general culture. The second use made of the notion of proactivity, then, is to attempt to render relevant again the moral theory of Thomas Aquinas, and especially his theory of the intellectual virtue of prudence. The author's reasoning is that: if so many people today find the notion of proactivity useful as an approach to life generally, then approximately the same number of people ought to subscribe to Aquinas's understanding of prudence because the two notions are remarkably similar. The author sets out to establish this similarity and then to apply both notions to the field of child-rearing.

The reason Aquinas's Treatise on Prudence was chosen as the context in which to speak of 'proactive parenting', is twofold. First, in many ways, prudence is the most important virtue that parents, as parents, can possess. By perfecting them both morally and intellectually, it supplies parents with a whole series of qualities which enable them to parent well. As is explained in detail in Part I, Aquinas characterizes prudence as an accident of quality, a good operative habit, and an intellectual virtue of the practical intellect. Its three principal acts are: deliberation, judgment, and command, and its component parts include such qualities as insight, perspicacity, docility, providence, circumspection, and caution, all qualities most necessary for effective parenting. Prudence is for Aquinas, as for Aristotle, 'right reason acting' ('recta ratio agibilium') and as such it guides parents in all of their choices regarding the right choice of means to their due end: the raising of children, or young adults, of virtuous character.

Second, regarding the text itself, there can be no doubt that Aquinas's Treatise is the most comprehensive treatment of the virtue to be found anywhere. Written shortly before his death in 1274, the Treatise on Prudence both represents Aquinas's mature thought on the subject and illustrates well his oft-praised ability to synthesize the two principal traditions on which he drew: the classical Greek and the Christian. Aquinas brings together masterfully Aristotle's understanding of prudence as 'phronesis', or practical wisdom, and the Christian tradition of 'discretio', as

expounded principally by William of Auxerre, Philip the Chancellor, and Albert the Great. The Treatise draws extensively on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, and Book VI in particular, and on Albert's Summa de Bono (1245).

The motivation to make the appropriate links between proactivity, prudence, and (authoritative) parenting came from a series of striking coincidences between what Covey was suggesting concerning effectiveness, what Aquinas was suggesting concerning human acting generally, and what several highly respected 'parenting authors' - Dr. James Dobson, among others - were suggesting about the way to raise children of strong character. On several fundamental points, these three notions share a remarkable congruence and the three Parts of the paper are dedicated to highlighting this fact.

In Part I, an attempt is made to demonstrate, first, that for parents to raise their children proactively they need to be practical. 'Proactivity', as its name suggests, is, in the first instance, concerned with human action, with human conduct, or doing. It means to be 'response-able' (able to choose our response) and to act in function of our decisions and not our conditions. Second, as Covey makes clear, "The essence of the proactive person is the ability to subordinate an impulse to a value".

The links drawn between these notions and parenting are two. First, conscientious parents act, they do specific things, and take an active role in their children's moral formation. They are not negligent, but diligent, precisely. Second, they decisively overcome any obstacles which would prevent them from acting according to reason in their dealings with their children, such as their temperament, laziness, or bad habits developed as a result of their own upbringing. They subordinate, that is, their impulse to negligence to the value of raising virtuous children.

It is not possible to parent proactively in this way without the intellectual virtue of prudence because, first, it is prudence which perfects the practical intellect and is "right reason in human deeds". And, second, because the decisiveness and subordination which Covey recommends are impossible without the perfected ability to command ourselves to do certain things and avoid doing certain other things. But command is, precisely, the principal act of the virtue of prudence. Mention is made as well of the correlation between the notion of 'subordinating impulses to values' and the notion - absolutely central to the virtue - that prudence "applies general moral principles to particular conclusions regarding human conduct".

The principal argument, then, in Part I takes the following form. It is not possible to be a proactive parent without being decisive and subordinating impulses to values. But it is not possible to be decisive and subordinate impulses to values without

the ability to command ourselves to act, which comes only with the practical intellectual virtue of prudence. Therefore, it is not possible to be a proactive parent without the practical intellectual virtue of prudence.

In Part II, the principal argument is simpler. It is shown that for parents to be proactive requires that they be provident, that they exercise foresight. Covey suggests, first, that to be proactive in general implies 'beginning with the end in mind', which means having one's goal clearly defined and present to one's 'mind's eye' as one begins and as one carries out one's undertakings. The application made to parenting is that: parents, if they would like to raise children of virtuous disposition, need both to have a clear idea of what they understand by 'virtuous' (i.e. what their values are) and to develop a deliberate plan of character formation for their children. They need to take counsel, among themselves and with older, more experienced, parents about what means they ought to employ to arrive at their appointed end.

None of this is possible without the virtue of prudence, which "properly speaking is concerned with things we do for the sake of an end". Aquinas distinguishes three types of parts: component, subjective, and potential parts. Of these, the most important are the component parts. And in the case of prudence the principal of its component parts is, precisely, providence, or foresight ('providentia'). Aquinas teaches that prudence even takes its name from 'providence', which implies "thinking about matters far ahead inasmuch as they serve to help or hinder what then and there is to be done". A whole series of subordinate qualities are also implied in the notion of providence, such as the ability to deliberate well and the ability to be receptive of teaching, or docile.

The principal argument of Part II, therefore, is as follows. It is not possible to be a proactive parent without 'beginning with the end in mind'. And it is not possible to 'begin with the end in mind' without being provident. But it is not possible to be provident without the virtue of prudence. Therefore, it is not possible to be a proactive parent without the virtue of prudence.

In Part III, an attempt is made to show that proactive parents must needs be equitable. Having explained what Covey means by his 'Production/Production Capability Balance' ("the definition and paradigm of effectiveness upon which the Seven Habits are based"), the author goes on to show how this balance is the foundation of what the parenting authors refer to as 'authoritative parenting'. Authoritative parenting is based on a balance that parents strike in their dealings with their children between discipline and affection. The argument of Part III revolves around the fact that this very balance is based on an act of judgment. Parents must judge constantly whether their children's behavior is in accord with right reason and can therefore be praised, or if it is not in accord with right reason and must therefore be corrected by discipline of some kind. Many highly respected parenting authors

agree with this idea that the key to effective child-rearing lies in the parents' ability to balance their discipline and affection.

It is then demonstrated that the very judgment upon which authoritative parenting rests is not possible without the virtue of prudence. The second of the principal acts of prudence is, precisely, to judge ('iudicare'). Prudence, aided by the 'allied' virtues of sound judgment ('synesis') and wit ('gnome') allows an individual to judge aright, respectively, in normal circumstances and in circumstances where the normal rules do not apply. Without these virtues perfecting their intellects therefore, parents could not judge equitably concerning the amount of discipline or affection to show their children, and, therefore, could not parent authoritatively or proactively.

The principal argument of Part III, then, runs as follows. It is not possible to be a proactive parent without respecting the all-important P/PC Balance. And it is not possible to respect the P/PC Balance without the ability to judge well. But it is not possible to judge well without the intellectual virtue of prudence. Therefore, it is not possible to be a proactive parent without the intellectual virtue of prudence.

The key ideas in the three principal arguments proposed in the text are summarized as follows. In Part I, the key idea is that of prudence's command. The very essence of proactivity is 'the ability to subordinate an impulse to a value', and this is not possible without the principal act of prudence, command. In Part II, the key idea is that of prudence's providence. Being proactive requires 'beginning with the end in mind', and this is not possible without the principal of the integral parts of prudence, providence. Finally, in Part III, the key idea is prudence's judgment. The 'very paradigm of effectiveness upon which proactivity rests' is the Production/Production Capability Balance, and this is not possible without prudence's judgment.

For reasons of practicality, providence, and equitability, then, it is not possible to be a proactive parent without the intellectual virtue of prudence. As well, Thomas Aquinas - by reason of his unmatched and comprehensive treatment of this virtue - has a significant contribution to make to the modern debate on child-rearing.

For my Mom and Dad...
the best parents
in the whole world

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Introduction

This is a dissertation on prudence and its role in child-rearing. More specifically, it is a dissertation on how Thomas Aquinas's Treatise on Prudence (S.T. IIa IIae QQ 47-56) can with profit be used to help parents today in the task of raising their children well. It is our conviction that Aquinas has a unique and important contribution to make to the contemporary debate on 'parenting', so-called, and this dissertation is a defense of that conviction. The paper is divided into three Parts, with each Part consisting of two chapters. We shall outline here the general argument structure of the paper and then go on to speak of the specific arguments made in each Part.

The overall logical structure of the paper is that of a chain argument which runs as follows. Employing the modern notion of 'proactivity' (which we shall explain presently) as a framework within which to speak of child-rearing practices, we argue:

If proactive parent, then practical, provident, and equitable
If practical, provident, and equitable, then prudent

If proactive parent, then prudent.

Our thesis is that: It is not possible to be a proactive parent without the intellectual virtue of prudence. And the manner in which we set out to prove this thesis is quite straightforward. Each Part of the paper is dedicated respectively to one of the three qualities mentioned above: practicality, providence, and equitability. Within each Part, the first chapter is an explanation of one fundamental aspect of 'proactivity', or

'proactive behavior', taken generally. The second chapter of each Part has a double aim: first, to apply this aspect of proactivity to the domain of parenting, showing both its intuitive attractiveness and its support in the literature; and, second, to show how it is not possible to be a 'proactive parent' in the way described without the virtue of prudence. Before we go on, then, to discuss the specific arguments of each Part, let us make some general observations concerning both the notion of 'proactivity' and Aquinas's Treatise on Prudence.

First, then, what is 'proactivity' and to what use have we put the notion here? We will see the specific characteristics of proactivity below; so here let it suffice for us to speak generically. Proactivity is a comprehensive theory of effective living; it is an approach to life and to problem-solving which has its origins in the fields of business and motivational psychology. Its principal proponent is the immensely popular author, lecturer, and leadership specialist, Dr. Stephen R. Covey. Dr. Covey has a Harvard MBA and a doctorate from Brigham Young University, where he is presently a professor in the Marriott School of Management. He is as well the founder and chairman of both the multi-million dollar 'Covey Leadership Center' and the non-profit 'Institute for Principle-Centered Leadership' in Provo, Utah. Covey provides without question the most cogent formulation today of what it means to 'be proactive'. The text that we have used as the starting

point for the present study is his best-selling book, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic.¹

It is perhaps instructive at this point to describe the debate in which Covey himself is involved, both at the level of business management and personal development. With this we hope to provide the context for Covey's own ideas and for the use we have made of them in the present dissertation. The debate Covey is involved in can be characterized at two levels, as we suggest: first, at the level of business management properly so-called, and second, at the level of personal character development. During his years of research for his doctorate, Covey studied in depth the various paradigms operative in the field of business, especially as these manifested themselves in the so-called 'Success Literature'. What he found was that there are two principal ways of approaching the subject of 'how to be successful in business'. The first of these he labels the character ethic² and the second he labels the personality ethic. We shall have reason below to expand at greater

¹Stephen R. Covey The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989).

²We would like to acknowledge that the present dissertation - having the character of a monograph - has many presuppositions which are not dealt with at length in the text. Examples of such presuppositions are: that the human person is free and not determined, that moral values are objective, that the family is the principal social unit charged with giving moral formation to children, and that man has an innate understanding of the first principles of acting through what Aquinas calls 'synderesis'.

length on just what these two terms signify, so we shall keep our remarks here rather general.

Fundamentally, the character ethic says that: a person's character (her overall ensemble of virtues and vices as manifested in a particular personality) has a definite and pronounced effect on that person's business success or lack thereof. Moreover, it maintains that a good (i.e. a morally virtuous) character is conducive to success in business and that a 'bad', or morally vicious, character is not conducive to this same success. The reasoning is essentially that 'the truth will out': if you are a crooked business person or simply a person of low moral standards, then sooner or later this fact will become known by the persons with whom you deal. The result of this disillusionment will be a corresponding lessening of trust, the basis of all successful business dealings. Customers, or clients, must trust you and trust that you are dealing uprightly with them, before they transact business with you. If your character is such as not to inspire this trust, then people will simply take their business elsewhere. And the result of this, obviously, is that your business will fail.

The 'personality ethic' says essentially the opposite. Not that it is necessary to be morally vicious in order to succeed in business, but simply that one's character - virtuous or not - has little or no influence on one's business success. What is relevant, according to this tradition, is not the kind of person

one is, but the kind of person one appears. If one can appear trustworthy, then that is enough. One need not concern oneself with actually being virtuous; what matters is that one appear so. Of course, the homage that the personality ethic pays to the character ethic is that it does not go so far as to say that trust is not essential.³ It simply denies that it is impossible 'to fool all of the people all of the time', to use the popular aphorism.

Covey enters this debate squarely on the side of the character ethic and maintains that to concern oneself first with living virtuously (whence the necessary reference to personal character development) is the most proactive thing a business person can do. Covey himself speaks both to the question of business success narrowly interpreted and to the larger questions of character development and parenting. Other authors, very well-respected authorities in their own right, corroborate Covey's findings from their own fields of expertise. Since the present dissertation touches on several different fields, such as psychology, child development, parenting, and ethics, we have attempted to utilize the work of experts in these fields to strengthen our own case for the need parents have both of a proactive approach to their task and of the intellectual virtue of prudence. These authors are themselves involved (each according to the demands of his or her

³It is said that 'hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue'.

own specialty) in a broader debate about what is today commonly called 'virtue ethics'.

As our authority on ethics and the virtue of prudence, of course, we have taken Thomas Aquinas. In the domain of early childhood development, we have taken Dr. Diana Baumrind of the University of California at Berkeley. And for what concerns 'parenting' as such we have taken several authors⁴ and principally: Dr. James Dobson, President of the internationally recognized organization, 'Focus on the Family', Dr. Thomas Lickona of the State University of New York at Cortland, and Mr. James Stenson, internationally respected parenting expert and author. As well, throughout the text we refer frequently to the work of other recognized parenting experts, such as Mrs. Jeane Westin, Mr. and Mrs. Richard and Linda Eyre, Mr. Gary Smalley, and Mrs. Barbara Coloroso. Each of these authors is involved, as we say, in the debate concerning the relation between virtue and success (in this particular instance, the 'success' of conscientious parenting) from the perspective of their respective specialties. Our hope is that by approaching this debate on parenting from a broad range of

⁴It must be said that many of these popular authors have methodological weaknesses in their treatment of proactivity and parenting. The first and most important of these is that often they do not give the theoretical/scientific foundations of what they are asserting (one of the principal ends of the present thesis is, in fact, to remedy this particular defect). Second, they make certain sociological assumptions about the structure of the family and about parenting styles. And, third, their style is often more rhetorical than demonstrative and this causes them to use terms (such as 'value' and 'permissiveness') with vagueness and imprecision.

disciplines we will be able better to appreciate just what Covey means by the term 'proactive' and, in turn, understand with more precision what we shall argue is a necessary relation between proactive parenting and the intellectual virtue of prudence.⁵

Now, the use that we have made of the notion of proactivity in the present dissertation is twofold. First, in particular, we have used it to focus our discussion of prudence and its role in conscientious parenting. From the beginning of our study we noticed several fundamental and undeniable similarities between the notions of proactivity and prudence and we have sought to exploit these similarities as a way of better understanding just what it means to be an effective parent and to raise children well. Second, in general, as these latter remarks suggest, we have used the notion of proactivity to re-enter into the modern debate on child-rearing the long-since forgotten figure of Thomas Aquinas. And this latter use needs to be explained at greater length.

As a result of the marked decline in public morality among young people in the twenty or thirty years preceeding, there arose in the 1980's a spirited debate as to whether public schools should

⁵A word of explanation is perhaps in order as to why we use the above-mentioned popular authors. There are two reasons. First, as Aristotle points out in Book I of the Ethics, the starting point of moral philosophy is the opinions of wise men. These individuals are a source of practical wisdom on the topic. And, second, they are strictly required by the thesis project as such, which hoped to open a dialogue between Aquinas and contemporary theories of parenting.

'teach values', as it is usually formulated. As Dr. Thomas Lickona makes abundantly clear in his superbly documented book, Educating For Character⁶, this debate has all but come to a close. Few people familiar with youth statistics today or with student comportment in the average North American public school question any longer the need for some such education. But parallel to the debate concerning public education - which is decidedly (and thankfully) not our concern here - there arose a debate as to the 'private education', so to speak, the upbringing, that children receive from their parents at home. And this debate - about which parenting style is most effective in raising children of responsible character - while certainly more focussed and closer to resolution today, is by no means overwith.

And it is precisely into this debate that we have attempted to re-enter Thomas Aquinas and his Treatise on Prudence: under the auspices, that is, of the theory of 'proactivity'. Proactivity is an idea which has already attained remarkable acceptance in the domain of business, but which is also gaining widespread acceptance in the general culture. If it has not done so already, it will surely soon find its way into our dictionaries. The second use we have made of the notion of proactivity, then, is to attempt to render relevant again the moral theory of Thomas Aquinas, and especially his theory of the intellectual virtue of prudence. Our

⁶Thomas Lickona Educating For Character (New York: Bantam Books, 1991).

reasoning is that: if so many people today find the notion of proactivity useful as an approach to life generally, then approximately the same number of people ought to subscribe to Aquinas's understanding of prudence because the two notions are remarkably similar. We thus set out to establish this similarity and then to apply both notions to the field of child-rearing.

Now, the reason we have chosen Aquinas's Treatise on Prudence as the context in which to speak of 'proactive parenting', as we have called it, is twofold. First, we are convinced that in many ways, as we hope to make manifest in the body of the paper, prudence is the most important virtue that parents, as parents, can possess. By perfecting them both morally and intellectually, it supplies parents with a whole series of qualities which enable them to parent⁷ well. As we shall explain in more detail in Part I, Aquinas characterizes prudence as an accident of quality, a good operative habit, and an intellectual virtue of the practical intellect. Its three principal acts are: deliberation, judgment, and command, and its component parts include such qualities as insight, perspicacity, docility, providence, circumspection, and caution, all qualities most necessary for effective parenting. Prudence is for Aquinas, as for Aristotle, 'right reason acting' ('recta ratio agibilium') and as such it guides parents in all of

⁷The reader will forgive the use of this decidedly ugly neologism.

their choices regarding the right choice of means to their due end: the raising of children, or young adults, of virtuous character.

Second, regarding the text itself, there can be no doubt that Aquinas's Treatise is the most comprehensive treatment of the virtue to be found anywhere. Written shortly before his death in 1274, the Treatise on Prudence both represents Aquinas's mature thought on the subject and illustrates well his oft-praised ability to synthesize the two principal traditions on which he drew: the classical Greek and the Christian. As we have explained at length in our previous thesis⁸, Aquinas brings together masterfully Aristotle's understanding of prudence as 'phronesis', or practical wisdom, and the Christian tradition of 'discretio', as expounded principally by William of Auxerre, Philip the Chancellor, and Albert the Great. The Treatise draws extensively on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, and Book VI in particular, and on Albert's Summa de Bono (1245). Let us turn now to a summary of the principal arguments proffered respectively in each of the present paper's three Parts.

Again, what motivated us to make the appropriate links between proactivity, prudence, and (authoritative) parenting was a series of striking coincidences between what Covey was suggesting concerning effectiveness, what Aquinas was suggesting concerning

⁸Prudence in St. Thomas Aquinas, MA thesis, University of Ottawa, 1993.

human acting generally, and what several highly respected 'parenting authors' were suggesting about the way to raise children of strong character. On several fundamental points, these three notions share a remarkable congruence and the three Parts of the paper are dedicated to highlighting this fact.

In Part I, we attempt to demonstrate, first, that for parents to raise their children proactively they need to be practical. We remind the reader that 'proactivity', as its name suggests, is, in the first instance, concerned with human action, with human conduct, or doing. It means to be 'response-able' (able to choose our response) and to act in function of our decisions and not our conditions. Second, as Covey makes clear, "The essence of the proactive person is the ability to subordinate an impulse to a value".⁹ And the links that we make between these notions and parenting are quite straightforward.

First, conscientious parents act, they do specific things, and take an active role in their children's moral formation. They are not negligent, but diligent, precisely. Second, they decisively overcome any obstacles which would prevent them from acting according to reason in their dealings with their children, such as their temperament, laziness, or bad habits developed as a result of

⁹Covey, p. 72.

their own upbringing. They subordinate, that is, their impulse to negligence to the value of raising virtuous children.

Having explained an aspect of proactivity (in this case its very essence) and shown how this idea might be applied to the domain of child-rearing, we then conclude by showing that it is not possible to parent proactively in this way without the intellectual virtue of prudence. And this because, first, it is prudence which perfects the practical intellect and is "right reason in human deeds".¹⁰ And, second, because the decisiveness and subordination which Covey recommends are impossible without the perfected ability to command ourselves to do certain things and avoid doing certain other things. But command is, precisely, the principal act of the virtue of prudence. We speak as well of the interesting correlation between the notion of 'subordinating impulses to values' and the notion - absolutely central to the virtue - that prudence "applies general moral principles to particular conclusions regarding human conduct".¹¹

The principal argument, then, in Part I takes the following form. It is not possible to be a proactive parent without being decisive and subordinating impulses to values. But it is not

¹⁰S.T. IIa IIae, Q.49, a.2, resp: "prudentia est recta ratio agibilium".

¹¹S.T. IIa IIae, Q.47, a.6, resp: "Et horum est prudentia, applicans universalia principia ad particulares conclusiones operabilium".

possible to be decisive and subordinate impulses to values without the ability to command ourselves to act, which comes only with the practical intellectual virtue of prudence. Therefore, it is not possible to be a proactive parent without the practical intellectual virtue of prudence. Moreover, as a further conclusion, we might add: "And, therefore, Thomas Aquinas's moral theory is not irrelevant, but represents in fact a significant contribution to the modern debate on child-rearing". We will see that the general conclusion of the paper taken as a whole is reflected in this way in each of its Parts.

In Part II, the principal argument is simpler. What we want to show is that for parents to be proactive requires that they be provident, that they exercise foresight. Covey suggests, first, that to be proactive in general implies 'beginning with the end in mind', which means having our goal clearly defined and present to our 'mind's eye' as we begin and as we carry out our undertakings. And the application we should want to make to parenting, then, is clear. Parents, if they would like to raise children of virtuous disposition, need both to have a clear idea of what they understand by 'virtuous' (i.e. what their values are) and to develop a deliberate plan of character formation for their children. They need to take counsel, among themselves and with older, more experienced, parents about what means they ought to employ to arrive at their appointed end.

None of this is possible, of course, without the virtue of prudence, which "properly speaking is concerned with things we do for the sake of an end".¹² Aquinas distinguishes three types of parts: component, subjective, and potential parts. Of these, the most important are the component parts. And in the case of prudence the principal of its component parts is, precisely, providence, or foresight ('providentia'). Aquinas reminds us that prudence even takes its name from 'providence', which implies "thinking about matters far ahead inasmuch as they serve to help or hinder what then and there is to be done".¹³ A whole series of subordinate qualities are also implied in the notion of providence, such as the ability to deliberate well and the ability to be receptive of teaching, or docile.

The principal argument of Part II, therefore, is as follows. It is not possible to be a proactive parent without 'beginning with the end in mind'. And it is not possible to 'begin with the end in mind' without being provident. But it is not possible to be provident without the virtue of prudence. Therefore, it is not possible to be a proactive parent without the virtue of prudence.

¹²S.T. IIa IIae, Q.49, a.6, resp: "Prudentia proprie est circa ea quae sunt ad finem".

¹³S.T. IIa IIae, Q.47, a.1, ad 2: "...prudens considerat ea quae sunt procul inquantum ordinantur ad adiuvandam vel impediendum ea quae sunt praesentialiter agenda".

Part III, in which we attempt to show that proactive parents must needs be equitable, has as its principal argument the following. Having explained what Covey means by his 'Production/Production Capability Balance' ("the definition and paradigm of effectiveness upon which the Seven Habits are based"¹⁴), we then go on to show how this balance is the foundation of what the parenting authors refer to as 'authoritative parenting'. Authoritative parenting is based on a balance that parents strike in their dealings with their children between discipline and affection. The argument of Part III revolves around the fact that this very balance is based on an act of judgment. Parents must judge constantly whether their children's behavior is in accord with right reason and can therefore be praised, or if it is not in accord with right reason and must therefore be corrected by discipline of some kind. Many highly respected parenting authors agree with this idea that the key to effective child-rearing lies in the parents' ability to balance their discipline and affection.

What we then go on to demonstrate is that the very judgment upon which authoritative parenting rests is not possible without the virtue of prudence. The second of the principal acts of prudence is, precisely, to judge ('iudicare'). Prudence, aided by the 'allied' virtues of sound judgment ('synesis') and wit ('gnome') allows an individual to judge aright, respectively, in normal circumstances and in circumstances where the normal rules do

¹⁴Covey, p. 59.

not apply. Without these virtues perfecting their intellects therefore, parents could not judge equitably concerning the amount of discipline or affection to show their children, and, therefore, could not parent authoritatively or proactively.

The principal argument of Part III, then, runs as follows. It is not possible to be a proactive parent without respecting the all-important P/PC Balance. And it is not possible to respect the P/PC Balance without the ability to judge well. But it is not possible to judge well without the intellectual virtue of prudence. Therefore, it is not possible to be a proactive parent without the intellectual virtue of prudence.

To conclude, therefore, this brief introduction, let us distill from the foregoing pages the key ideas in the three principal arguments proposed in the text and state them here. In Part I, the key idea is that of prudence's command. The very essence of proactivity is 'the ability to subordinate an impulse to a value', and this is not possible without the principal act of prudence, command. In Part II, the key idea is that of prudence's providence. Being proactive requires 'beginning with the end in mind', and this is not possible without the principal of the integral parts of prudence, providence. Finally, in Part III, the key idea is prudence's judgment. The 'very paradigm of effectiveness upon which proactivity rests' is the

Production/Production Capability Balance, and this is not possible without prudence's judgment.

We see, then, that for reasons of practicality, providence, and equitability it is not possible to be a proactive parent without the intellectual virtue of prudence. We see, as well, that Thomas Aquinas - by reason of his unmatched and comprehensive treatment of this virtue - has a significant contribution to make to the modern debate on child-rearing.

Part I

The Proactive Parent is Practical

Chapter One

Proactivity Proper

In this first chapter, then, we shall attempt to explain what it means to 'be proactive', an idea which is central to Covey's project and essential to personal and interpersonal effectiveness. To explain the idea of proactivity, we need first to explain the notions of self-awareness and responsibility.

In addition to being able to think, human beings are also able to think about themselves in the act of thinking. This reflexive capacity, self-awareness, "enables us to stand apart from and examine even the way we 'see' ourselves - our self-paradigm" (67).¹⁵ What we attempt to do when we make such an intimate self-examination is to determine whether or not our beliefs about ourselves, our self-paradigms, correspond to what we are as individuals. As a consequence of this ability to reappraise our personal situation, we are not prisoners of our way of being at any given moment of time; we have the capacity to change. Self-awareness allows us, therefore, to determine whether our ways of thinking at any particular moment are a function of the facts of

¹⁵N.B. All parenthetical page references in the first Chapter of each Part refer to the Covey text, unless otherwise indicated.

our personal situation or a function merely of our social conditioning.

By 'social conditioning', is meant principally the attitudes and behaviors which others demonstrate towards us. These are practically infinite in number and often quite subtle in kind. We are 'conditioned' socially, for example, whenever someone listens to us or ignores us. The former conditions us towards a positive self-image, as someone at least 'worth listening to', while the latter, obviously, has the opposite effect. Now, given the constant barrage of input we receive from others about ourselves, it behooves us to exercise our ability of self-awareness frequently, to ask ourselves whether what Covey calls "the social mirror" (67) is reflecting what we truly are as persons.

The 'social mirror' is a metaphor for social conditioning. It is simply the body of opinions others communicate to us about ourselves. For example, the person for whom we work might repeatedly describe us - to ourselves and perhaps to our other superiors - as 'lazy', 'self-indulgent', and 'dishonest'. Now, if these epithets reflect how we actually behave, we might use them as a goad to change ourselves and begin working hard and being honest. If, however, they do not correctly describe our attitudes and behavior, then we might just as well ignore them. The point is that what matters is not what others say about us, but what we are in fact. Covey makes the point, moreover, that the negative things

people say about us are "often more projections than reflections, projecting the concerns and character weaknesses of the people giving the input rather than accurately reflecting what we are".¹⁶ But, if this is the case, then we would be well-advised to sift everything communicated to us by others about ourselves. We may indeed be lazy, self-indulgent, and dishonest. But that is a judgment that ought to be made only upon examination of the facts of our behavior and not simply on the basis of what others think.

One example (the example that Covey himself uses) of a paradigm - a way of thinking - which is frequently reflected by the social mirror is that: our temperament, our upbringing, and how people presently treat us so condition us that we henceforth are incapable of acting except as we have been conditioned to act. We have said, for instance, that someone might describe us as 'lazy' or 'self-indulgent'. But they might also make the further claim that we are not capable of changing ourselves: that although we have these character flaws, we must simply acquiesce in them and not hope to overcome them through personal effort. In this way of seeing things, of course, an individual is entirely limited by the environmental factors which condition him and to speak of 'breaking habits' would be oxymoronic.

¹⁶Covey, p.67. This is a common notion which says, in effect, 'what bothers us in others is a defect in ourselves'.

Fortunately, according to Covey, we can (precisely, using our self-awareness) dispense with this latter judgment as swiftly as with the first if we feel that it does not correctly describe us as we are in fact. That is, we might reject the conclusion as an incorrect appraisal of our personal situation precisely because we are convinced that we do have the ability to renew ourselves and affirm values that we have not previously affirmed. The lazy person, then, might describe us as lazy because he projects his own laziness onto us. And we reject the judgment (if we reject the judgment) as simply not corresponding to the facts of how we behave. In like manner, we can reject the claim that we cannot change ourselves if we are convinced that this too is a misrepresentation of our personal capacities. Let us look briefly at a concrete example.

Suppose someone were to say to a woman: 'It doesn't surprise me that you are miserable and depressed. In fact, I don't see how you could be otherwise with such a husband as you have; he drinks too much and he is paranoid, possessive, and abusive'. Now, even supposing that these terms correctly describe the personality of the husband, this woman would have to ask herself the following question. Does my husband's lack of respect - for himself and for me - oblige me to respond by being miserable and depressed? That is: Must I be a prisoner of my husband's emotional immaturity or am I able to respond differently? What Covey's analysis suggests is that this woman - even should she decide to remain in the

relationship - has the ability to respond in a way different from that suggested to her by the reflection of the (largely superficial) social mirror (which says, again, 'you have to be miserable because you have a miserable husband'). What Covey suggests, then, against the current social paradigm (which insists on the woman's lack of response-ability) is that she is able to respond differently if she chooses; that it depends on her personal choice. And this brings us to our second topic: responsibility.

Covey broaches the subject of responsibility by recounting the story of the heroic life of Viktor Frankl, the Jewish psychiatrist who had been imprisoned in a Nazi death camp during the Second World War. He tells of how Frankl, although completely deprived of his liberty of movement, gradually increased his internal liberty, the power of his will, by concentrating on doing things which were within his power. These activities consisted mainly of remembering and imagining, which - being internal acts - were not subject to the power of his Nazi torturers.

What Frankl came to realize by so acting was that he possessed a power, an internal ability, which was (and could be) in no way diminished by the will of other people. As Covey puts it:

One day, naked and alone in a small room, he began to become aware of what he later called 'the last of the human freedoms' - the freedom his Nazi captors could not take away. They could control his entire environment, they could do what they wanted to his body, but Viktor Frankl himself was a self-aware being who could look as an observer at his very involvement. His basic identity

was intact. He could decide within himself how all of this was going to affect him. Between what happened to him, or the stimulus, and his response to it, was his freedom or power to choose that response (69).

Covey then goes on to relate how Frankl became an inspiration to other prisoners, how "he helped others find meaning in their suffering and dignity in their prison existence" (69). But for present purposes what is germane is not this personal influence which Frankl exercised over the other inmates, but rather his discovery as such; namely, that he had - at a level completely beyond the reach of anyone, including the prison guards - the power to choose his response to what was objectively happening to him. He recognized, that is, that he was 'response-able': able to choose his response. And this is what Covey means when he uses the word 'responsible'.¹⁷

¹⁷Let us at least acknowledge the debate we are so deftly trying to side-step. It is, of course, the debate of free-will versus determinism. Frankl, and Covey with him, wants to maintain that human beings have free will, that they are ultimately masters of their own attitudes and behaviors and not slaves. The present author would agree with this opinion. But he must acknowledge that no demonstration strictly speaking has been made for this claim. It is simply asserted that individuals do in fact have the subjective experience and certainty that they are ultimately free and not determined. As a defense for this assertion (in addition, of course, to the evidence proffered), we would simply say that it is not possible to solve the problem of free will and determinism in a paper of the present sort. That is, one has to begin somewhere, one must begin with some propositions taken as given. For Frankl, for Covey, and for purposes of the present paper, then, it is taken as axiomatic that the human person is ultimately free and not determined. Sheer space limitations limit us from saying more on the subject.

Now, if we return for a moment to our above example and to the woman whose husband was paranoid, possessive, and abusive, the parallels are easily enough drawn. She is, objectively speaking, experiencing unpleasant and unfair treatment at the hands of her husband. However, she is not obliged - as Frankl was not obliged - to empower the emotional and moral immaturity of the other person and allow herself to be made miserable. She could, using her power of self-awareness, 'step outside' herself, evaluate her situation objectively, even dispassionately,¹⁸ and choose how she was going to allow the stimuli to affect her. She could choose, that is, how she was going to respond to the external stimuli; she is response-able. In Covey's understanding of human acting, then, there is actually a good deal more hope available to the individual than in other, less intuitively attractive, views. We are self-aware and our self-awareness, coupled with what Covey calls our "independent will"¹⁹, gives us the capacity to choose our response. As Covey puts it: "between stimulus and response is our greatest power - the freedom to choose" (70). And with this second notion, responsibility, explained, we are now in a position to speak directly about what it means to be 'proactive'.

¹⁸To suggest that this woman, or anyone in like circumstances, could act 'dispassionately' is not to suggest that such a feat is easily accomplished. The point is that it is possible.

¹⁹Covey, p.70. Covey also speaks of both the imagination and the conscience, but his emphasis is clearly on self-awareness and independent will as prerequisites of responsibility.

The first point to be made in regard to proactivity²⁰ is that Covey refers to it as a habit. It is, in fact, the first of the so-called 'seven habits of highly effective people'. Covey uses the term, 'habit' - although hardly with Scholastic precision - in the same general sense that Aquinas uses it; i.e. as referring to a 'settled disposition' to act in a certain manner. Now, the manner in which the habit of proactivity leads us to act is, precisely, with response-ability. In many ways, as we shall see, proactivity, the "most basic" (70) of the seven habits, is equivalent to this most fundamental of its characteristics. Covey states at one point that:

[Proactivity] means that as human beings we are responsible for our own lives. Our behavior is a function of our decisions, not our conditions. We can subordinate feelings to values. We have the initiative and the responsibility to make things happen (71).

And this citation is dense with significance. Let us explain the various ideas which it contains.

First, what does it mean to suggest that 'our behavior is a function of our decisions, not our conditions'? This means, essentially, that proactive people have priorities in their life;

²⁰Given the current importance accorded to the notion of proactivity and its real potential for having a transforming influence on the lives of individuals and society, we shall spend some pages now explaining this notion in more detail. As well, we shall see below that 'response-ability' as we will have described it, instead of being a particular trait of 'proactive' parents, is rather a predisposition which acts as the principle of their other characteristics. Our principal claim - that proactive parenting is impossible without the virtue of prudence - itself presupposes this general understanding of responsibility.

that they are not 'just living', but have a consciously decided upon 'plan of life' and that they are striving, inasmuch as in their capacity lies, to live with integrity according to this plan. Proactive people do not wait for life to act on them. They are decisive, they take charge, and they act on life. And that is the etymology of the term. It is one thing to be active, and that is already a positive value because active people at least have the possibility of doing something worthwhile with their life.²¹ But to be pro-active means much more than this. It means that, as a result of our own conscious planning and effective decision-taking, we have a high degree of control over our lives and live habitually as we choose to live and not how others would like us to live. This is no doubt why Covey insists that:

The difference between [proactive people and non-proactive people] is literally the difference between night and day. I am not talking about a 25 to 50 percent difference in effectiveness; I am talking about a 5000-plus percent difference, particularly if they are smart, aware, and sensitive to others (76).

To be pro-active is to take acting one level higher and choose to act only on consciously decided-upon values.²² We might say that

²¹By definition, the woman who chooses not to act (but to be acted upon) will accomplish less than the woman who chooses to act. And the little that she does accomplish will not be of her own doing, but largely despite her.

²²There are, obviously, psychological limits to how much we can make every single one of our acts the result of an individual and conscious choice. In fact, the very notion of 'habit' presupposes a measure of thoughtlessness; i.e. what we do 'by habit' is done, to a certain degree, 'automatically', without thinking. We can reconcile these two intuitions, by simply acknowledging the fact that the awareness and control we have over our acts, while never perfect, is capable of increasing according to the effort we exert.

there are two choices to be made in regard to acting. First: to act or not to act; and, second: to act or to 'proact'. And the point is that in both cases the choice is ours.

First, we can choose to act or not to act. This means that we can choose to do something with our life by acting: for example, by going to school to receive an education, by getting a job and doing it to the best of our ability, by raising a family, etc., or we can choose not to do something with our life and simply 'take things as they come'. In this latter case, what is lacking is the choice. A person who chooses not to act does not decide to do anything; he simply follows the path of least resistance. If it pleases him to go to school, he goes to school; if it does not, he does not. If it pleases him to get a job and work hard at it, then he does; if it does not please him, then he leaves the job for someone else to do. In effect, all of this person's decisions are made for him, mostly by his appetites and circumstances. He will live his life largely at the animal level, attending to his various bodily functions and his personal preferences. And his life will be of little use either to himself or to society. These are all reasons

In the case of habits, moreover, the later virtual intention is clearly the result of many previous actual intentions on the part of the agent. The very notion of 'acquired virtue' presupposes as much. Anticipating the objection that such a degree of control is not even healthy psychologically or desirable (following the maxim that the crazy person is not he who has lost contact with reality but he who has too firm a grip on it), let us distinguish between perfect self-awareness/self-control and a high degree of same. Surely the baneful effects of a middling to low degree of these abilities argue in favor of the reasonableness of such a distinction.

why so few people choose 'not to act'; in the long run, life acts on them and they finish by being rather discontent. This is the opposite of the proactive approach to life; it is to behave entirely in function not of our decisions, but of our conditions.

Second, if we choose to act, we are faced with the further question about whether we are going simply to act or to proact. To act without being proactive is what many people choose to do. To choose not to act, as we have seen (given a naturally competitive environment) is counter-productive; in the end, the reward for sloth is failure and discontent in the various domains of our life: personal, family, professional, etc. On the other hand, to think before we act (which is a neat, although not complete, summary of the proactive attitude) requires a degree of effort beyond that which, seemingly, some people are willing to expend. As a result, they settle for mediocrity: acting without thinking, with all of its attendant difficulties, for example: dependent behaviors, loss of job, divorce, problem children, etc.²³

Here (as an addendum to our above remarks about acting only on conscious choices) an observation needs to be made about the

²³Let us not, however, be too judgmental or settle for a simplistic understanding of matters. The particular difficulties we mention here are by no means always the result of individuals opting for mediocrity. Would that life were so simple. Every one of the problems we mention: dependent behaviors, loss of job, divorce, and problem children can be and very often are caused by circumstances entirely beyond the control of the individual involved. We return to the whole free-will/determinism debate.

possibility of not acting. It must be admitted that at one level; i.e. the level of being, it is impossible for a thing which exists not to act. According to Thomistic metaphysics, a thing acts in function of what it is ('agitur sequitur esse'). Moreover, inasmuch as a man exists at all, he is constantly 'acting' in one way or another. First, as a 'first substance', or individual existent, he exercises his act of being; second, he exercises unconsciously various vegetative functions, such as nutrition and growth; third, he exercises sensitive functions, such as sense perception and locomotion; and, fourth, he is in fact - qua rational - constantly performing the three principal acts of a rational being: apprehension, judgment, and reasoning. So in what possible sense can we say that someone chooses not to act? There would seem to be a contradiction.

This would-be contradiction is resolved by recalling the distinction Aquinas draws between human acts (actus humani) and what he calls 'acts of man' (actus homini). Human acts, or 'moral acts', are acts which we choose to perform; i.e. acts performed with knowledge and consent; while acts of man, or 'non-moral acts', are acts which we perform unconsciously and without consent, such as digestion. To say that someone 'chooses not to act', as we use the phrase here, is, then, obviously not to say either that he neglects to perform any 'acts of man' or even that he neglects entirely to perform human acts (for this too would be practically speaking impossible). What it means, concretely, is that he

reduces to a minimum the number of human acts he performs (whence our insistence that he is living 'at the animal level').²⁴

Now, we said above that to act without being proactive was equivalent to acting without thinking. And by this we meant simply that the person does not think sufficiently. In addition to the above qualification about the acts of a rational being, however, we need to add the following distinction, which will, in turn, help us better to understand the nature of proactivity. This is that: the thinking that proactive people concern themselves with is different in kind from that of non-proactive, or "reactive" people, as Covey calls them (71).

At one level, a reactive person certainly thinks (minimally) before she acts. For example, if she decides that she would like to own a forty-thousand dollar automobile, she will no doubt begin thinking of ways she might set about acquiring one: working overtime, spending less money for a certain period, etc. The difference between this kind of thinking and that of the proactive person, however, is that the former is concerned, ex hypothesi, merely with the facts of the situation, while the latter is

²⁴These qualifications do not change the sense in which the reader no doubt took the common-language meaning of 'choosing not to act', but they are necessary for the sake of precision and clarity. We must affirm, however, that in fact man is not capable of 'acting at the animal level', as we have put it here. As a rational creature, precisely, this avenue is not open to him: he inevitably acts as a human person and cannot renounce his humanity at will.

concerned also - and primarily - with the values to be affirmed or denied by the given actions. And this brings us to the next significant idea contained in the above citation about our being responsible for our own lives; namely: that we can subordinate feelings to values.

Covey states that the behavior of proactive people "is a product of their own conscious choice, based on values, rather than a product of their conditions, based on feeling" (71). And this is an essential aspect of proactivity. The proactive person considers above all before he acts what values he will affirm or deny by his action. And this requires three previous acts on his part. First, the act of deliberation, whereby he compares and contrasts different values; second, the act of judgment, whereby he decides which values he wants to affirm and which he wants not to affirm; and, third, the act of command, whereby he takes the effective decision to incorporate, as it were, the decided-upon values into his character. As Covey says:

Reactive people are driven by feelings, by circumstances, by conditions, by their environment. Proactive people are driven by values - carefully thought about, selected, and internalized values (72).

Once these values have been so selected, the proactive person is enabled to act with suppleness and peace of mind. Her priorities are clear in her mind and firmly decided upon. As a result, her sense of freedom and flexibility is increased because she does not have to worry constantly that she might be acting in ways which

undermine the values which are most important to her. Let us state briefly what Covey means by 'values' and then look at an example of this kind of value-driven behavior so as better to understand what he means on this central point.

We said above that, according to Covey, proactive people have a consciously decided upon 'plan of life' and that they try to live with integrity according to this plan. 'Values', then, are the unchanging principles upon which this plan of life is based.²⁵ They are the facts concerning human acting which must govern our behavior, if we intend to be effective in life. To illustrate, Covey recounts the following anecdote.

Two battleships assigned to the training squadron had been at sea on maneuvers in heavy weather for several days. I was serving on the lead battleship and was on watch on the bridge as night fell. The visibility was poor with patchy fog, so the captain remained on the bridge keeping an eye on all activities. Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing of the bridge reported, "Light bearing on the starboard bow". "Is it steady or moving astern?" the captain called out. Lookout replied, "Steady, Captain", which meant we were on a dangerous collision course with that ship. The captain then called to the signalman, "Signal that ship: 'We are on a collision course, advise you change course 20 degrees'".

²⁵We shall include below, when speaking of the goal of proactive parenting, an entire section on the notion of values, so we shall limit ourselves here to giving but the broadest outline of Covey's thought. We might simply acknowledge here the somewhat controversial nature of Covey's claim. He certainly believes that values are 'objective'; i.e. that they are the same for all people of all times. And there is a sense in which, for certain fundamental values, this is true, as we hope to show more clearly below. However, there is also a sense in which values are relative to the time period and culture which espouses them. The matter is perhaps less black and white than Covey would allow.

Back came the signal, "Advisable for you to change course 20 degrees".

The captain said, "Send, 'I'm a captain, change course 20 degrees'".

"I'm a seaman second class", came the reply, "you had better change course 20 degrees".

By that time, the captain was furious. He spat out, "Send, 'I'm a battleship. Change course 20 degrees'".

Back came the flashing light, "I'm a lighthouse".

We changed course (33).

Covey then goes on to maintain that human relationships too are governed by 'lighthouse principles', or 'values', and that we ignore these principles only to our own peril. He gives as examples: "the principle of fairness, out of which our whole concept of equity and justice is developed....integrity and honesty [which] create the foundation of trust which is essential to cooperation and long-term personal and interpersonal growth... [and] service, or the idea of making a contribution" (34). These and other principles are the foundation upon which the proactive person's 'plan of life' is constructed. What, then, might such a plan look like in practice?

The mother of a family, for example, is someone in genuine need of values and a plan of life. And here let us look at just one aspect of her role as parent: the relationship between her professional work and her family obligations. As a mother and as an employee, this woman has responsibilities respectively towards her children and towards her employer. Now, if she is effectively to balance these [equally legitimate, though] competing claims on her time - and to do so with a minimum of peace of mind - she will

need certain principles upon which to base her decisions. These principles, as we have seen, are values; but we can also see how they consist in the more general decisions the woman takes based on these values. For example, a mother might have as one of her personal values, the principle of sociability, which says that, other factors being equal, it is better to be considerate and respect the preferences of others than to be inconsiderate and offensive. Based on this principle, she then takes the general decision that she needs to spend as much time with her children as her job will allow. She reasons thus: if my children are to know what it means to be sociable, they will need, among other things, my example, my instruction, and my encouragement. But I cannot provide them with these if I am absent from their lives overmuch. Therefore, being home from work at a reasonable hour and not working on weekends are priorities for me.

Now, with this principle and this general decision in hand, this mother can then make further decisions and act with assurance and peace of mind.²⁶ For example, she can make the specific

²⁶We speak here of the relationship which exists between a parent and her 'values', or principles. But we must emphasize the fact that parenting is above all and primarily a relationship between persons: the person of the parent and the person of the child. That is, the very highest value any parent should have is not some abstract principle, however noble, but the individual persons who are her children. For various reasons, the decided tendency of the present dissertation will be to speak of principles and the fact that parents need to have their principles clear as they deal with their children. But we must always come back to this fundamental truth about parenting: that parenting is a relation of persons and that the highest value a parent can have is found

decision that when her boss - without any particularly pressing need - asks her if she can stay at the office for an extra hour, she will promptly respond that she cannot. This decision, it is true, as well as being based on her affirmation of the value of sociability, might also be based on her affirmation of the values of hard work and fairness. If she, that is, consistently works nine hours a day and produces quality work, she might say to herself: 'As well as being good for my children's moral formation, it is only fair that my employer recognize the hard work that I already do for the company and not encroach on time which, effectively, is not mine to give'. Her values - in this instance, conscientious parenting, fairness, and hard work - act as guideposts in the particular moral choices she makes; they are operative.

On the other hand, of course, should this woman's husband begin to complain that she is not spending enough time with the children, she will be able with equal assurance to tell him that he is mistaken and that she is doing all she can within the limits of her legitimate obligations to her employer. In this way, by having her values clearly established and present to her mind, this woman can act decisively and without worrying that she is not living

precisely in the personhood of her children. She must respect values, it is true. But she must above all respect her children as persons. And this, finally, is the best justification for her 'respecting' values in the first place. We hope this important point is not lost in all that we have to say in favor of parents acting on clearly defined values.

according to the principles she has decided upon. We shall see below how devising what Covey calls a 'Personal Mission Statement' can help in this task of proactive, value-driven behavior.

It is evident from this example, as well, how a person without such clearly defined principles might err in his behavior and unconsciously deny values which he would consciously affirm. This happens all too frequently. The father of a family might, for instance, upon reflection, affirm values similar to those affirmed by the woman above. However, if he neglects to keep these values present to his mind, he runs the risk of acting as if they were not values to him at all. The typical scenario is that of the father who wants so much to succeed professionally that he does so at the cost of his family. He works so much and is gone so often that he is unable to give his wife and children the minimum of love and affection needed to keep his relationship with them alive. One day, although a complete success professionally, he comes to the unhappy conclusion that he has failed as a husband and father. His children have grown up without his supervision (and none too well: they have a whole series of bad habits and emotional dependencies) and his wife is filing for a divorce. What has happened in this instance is that someone has been active without being proactive. He has been very busy acting, doing, but he has not taken the time or made the effort consciously to settle upon values by which to direct his action. And, as a result, he has been ineffective at

what in the end was most important to him. Covey quotes one such case:

I've set and met my career goals and I'm having tremendous professional success. But it's cost me my personal and family life. I don't know my wife and children any more. I'm not even sure I know myself and what's really important to me. I've had to ask myself: 'Is it worth it?' (15)..

And so we can come, with Covey, to the same pithy conclusion that: "the ability to subordinate an impulse to a value is the essence of the proactive person" (emphasis added, 72).

Now, having said as much, there remains to us as yet one idea on which we need to elaborate before we close our discussion of proactivity proper. This is the notion that, as Covey puts it, "It is not what happens to us, but our response to what happens to us that hurts us" (73). Since we are, on this view, naturally proactive, it is only by allowing ourselves, whether consciously or not, to be controlled by our circumstances that we become 'reactive'. In fact, this is the distinguishing characteristic of reactive people: they empower things outside themselves to control how they feel and how they behave.

Covey talks at one point about what he calls 'social weather'; i.e. the way in which people treat us, and states that reactive people are overly affected by it.

When people treat them well, they feel well; when people don't, they become defensive or protective. Reactive people build their emotional lives around the behavior of

others, empowering the weaknesses of other people to control them (72).

And here we are reminded of our earlier discussion of the 'social mirror'. We might say that reactive people accept uncritically the reflection they are given from the social mirror; they accept at face value what others - by their words and actions - say about them. Proactive people, on the other hand, while still influenced by the stimuli they receive from their environment, refuse to let an external force control their feelings or behavior. They are in control of their life and free to choose their response. And the point is that this response, "unconscious or conscious, is a value-based choice" (72) and not merely a 'reaction'.²⁷

Covey tells the story of a woman who worked as a "full-time nurse to the most miserable, ungrateful man you can possibly imagine". After having explained to her the concept of proactivity and the idea that, no matter what the stimuli, we are 'response-able', she reacted at first quite defensively, blaming her

²⁷As an addendum to our above comments about parenting being primarily a relation of persons, let us suggest one way in which Covey's thought might be clarified, not to say raised to a higher level. Briefly, we might consider the following schema: reactive people are those who relate principally with the social mirror, proactive people are those who relate principally with their own values, and (what we might call) 'inter-active' people are those who relate principally with persons. In fairness to Covey, we must admit, on the one hand, that his understanding of truly proactive behavior definitely includes the important nuance we have introduced concerning a relation of persons. And, on the other hand, that what we have coined 'interactive people' is akin to what Covey elsewhere refers to as 'interdependent people'. Covey is not unaware, that is, that, as he suggests, 'interdependence is a higher value than independence' (51).

unhappiness on the unfair treatment she received from this man. But as she thought about it further, she realized that perhaps Covey was right. As she put it:

I really went inside myself and began to ask, 'Do I have the power to choose my response?' When I finally realized that I do have that power, when I swallowed that bitter pill and realized that I had chosen to be miserable, I also realized that I could choose not to be miserable (73).

And from that moment on she began proactively to choose her own response to the bad treatment she received. Again, "it is not what happens to us, but our response to what happens to us that hurts us" (73).

We see, then, that 'proactivity' is actually an all-encompassing attitude to life and not just a technique to be applied or not applied in particular circumstances. This fact, in turn, will prove to be important below when we make the connection between proactivity, parenting, and prudence because, although we shall speak of the particular virtues of proactive parents, these virtues themselves are grounded in and get their impetus from the broader attitude.

Finally, we have, until now, kept fairly close to the text of Covey in describing the notion of proactivity. Let us conclude this first chapter by making some rather more summary statements and generalizations on the notion as a way of focussing our upcoming treatment of parenting.

First, it would seem that to 'be proactive' means to be demanding on oneself and on others. It means being impatient with the way things are and having a healthy dislike of conformity for conformity's sake. The proactive person is a self-creator. She acknowledges that circumstances - her 'environment' or 'conditions' - play a part in affecting how she acts. But she refuses absolutely to allow them to be determining. Above all, the proactive person is disdainful of limits. Her motto could easily be: "Where there is a will, there is a way" or "I can do anything I set my mind to". As a self-creator, she says: "I am what I choose to be, what I make myself, and not what others want me to be or what my temperament wants to make me".

Second, the proactive person believes in personal responsibility. Her motto might just as well be: "The buck stops here". She does not try to pass off responsibility for her behavior on circumstances or the behavior of other people. She stands squarely behind each one of her acts and says resolutely: "I did this act because I chose to do it, not because I have a certain personality type or because my parents treated me in a certain way, or any other such nonsense. I did it because I wanted to do it and I accept full responsibility for it". And while this attitude might strike us as self-deprecating and counter-productive, in fact just the opposite is true. By saying "I am responsible", the proactive person is saying, recall, "I am response-able. I am not the pawn of my emotions, I am not the pawn of my upbringing, I am

not the pawn of the treatment I receive from other people. I am free and able to choose my own response to anything" (as the response of Viktor Frankl to the unmentionable experiments performed on him demonstrates so well).

We shall see in the next chapter how essential such a 'take charge', 'bottom line' attitude is to conscientious parenting. Probably in no other realm, in fact, is there such a plethora of good-sounding excuses for failure than in the realm of parenting. "I didn't have enough time", "We never had enough money", "Each child is so unique", "She was always such a wilfull child", "The Church let us down", "The schools let us down", "It's my husband's fault, he's always been so...", "It's my wife's fault, she's always been so...", etc. etc. In other words, raising children well is probably the most difficult thing in the world to do. And the reason is because there are so many variables to factor in, so many delicate balances, which if not respected bring problems, and quite often very serious problems.²⁸ But the point is that these problems are avoidable. There is such a thing as 'successful' parenting because there are objective principles - values - upon which parenting ought to be based. The proactive person says 'no' to his conditions - his impulses - and 'yes' to these values. Again, "the essence of the proactive person is the ability to subordinate an impulse to a value" (72).

²⁸Which is why it is so incumbent upon us never to judge persons, but only actions; not parents, but ways of parenting.

Chapter Two

Prudence's Command

We saw in the previous chapter that to be proactive is to take acting one level higher, to behave habitually with a high degree of control over our particular actions. As the term suggests, to be 'pro-active' is to concern oneself in the first instance with action, with doing things. We saw as well, of course, that the proactive person, although concerned with action, is not concerned with action for action's sake, but is concerned, rather, with what we might call intentional action, or action directed towards the affirmation of particular values. But what is true of the proactive person generally, we maintain, is true as well of the proactive parent. The argument we would like to make, therefore, in the present chapter can be characterized as follows. Just as proactive people in general are doers and not mere theorizers, so proactive (i.e. conscientious) parents in particular are individuals who act, who take matters into their own hands and do specific things to influence the character development of their children.²⁹ As well, just as proactive people in general are value-oriented, so proactive parents in particular are concerned to elicit from their children habitual "value-reflecting behavior", as one couple puts it.³⁰ Given these two claims, we shall attempt to

²⁹We shall elaborate below in Part II on the specific methods parents might wish to employ in the character formation of their children. Here we simply witness to the need for such action.

³⁰Richard and Linda Eyre. Teaching Your Children Values (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 23.

show that such proactive behavior on the part of parents is impossible without the intellectual virtue of prudence.

If one of the distinguishing characteristics of proactive parents is that they take an active role in their children's character formation, then they are in need of a virtue to perfect them in this activity. Just as a scholar, as a scholar, needs the virtues of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge to perfect his intellect - according to Aquinas - the acting person needs a virtue to perfect him in his conduct.³¹ That is, just as the human person is capable of perfecting his reason as it is concerned with purely speculative matters, so he can perfect his reason as it concerns practical matters. And this is precisely the domain of prudence.³² Let us, then, locate prudence in Aquinas's overall scheme of the virtues.

Aquinas characterizes prudence most generally as an accident of quality, a good operative habit, a natural virtue, and an intellectual virtue of the practical intellect. First, prudence, as a habit, is a species of the accident quality.³³ Aquinas follows

³¹In fact, not only man's intellect, but his entire person is in need of the perfecting influence of the virtues. As Aquinas suggests: "Oportet enim circa omnia humana perfici per virtutes: et non solum circa actus rationis, inter quos est consilium; sed etiam circa passiones appetitus sensitivi, quae adhuc sunt multo imperfectiores" (S.T. IIa IIae q. 51, a. 1, ad 2).

³²And of art, as we shall see below.

³³S.T. Ia IIae, q.49, a.1. The reference here is directly to habits, but indirectly to prudence, a species of habit; cf. Arist. Categ. 9a 14-28.

Aristotle in his general division of reality into those modes of being which exist 'of themselves', and those which exist 'in another'. The first are called, 'substances', and the second, 'accidents'. As prudence most fundamentally is something which exists not 'of itself', but 'in another', it is first and foremost an accident. Accidents are those modes of being which determine or modify substance. Prudence resides only in rational beings; it modifies the substance, 'rational animal', or man.

Now, Aquinas maintains that there are some accidents which determine substance intrinsically, and others which do so only extrinsically. Among the nine accidents, those which determine substance intrinsically are three: quantity, quality, and relation; and those which do so only extrinsically are four: place, position, possession, and time.³⁴ Moreover, among those accidents which determine substance intrinsically, or 'in itself', some do so absolutely and others only relatively.³⁵ The accident 'quality', with which we are here concerned, belongs to that group of accidents which modify substance both intrinsically and absolutely.

³⁴The last two accidents, 'action' and 'passion', determine substance both intrinsically and extrinsically. As well, the accident, 'relation' has an extrinsic aspect to it.

³⁵What Aquinas intends by this last distinction is simply that some accidents determine substance in all of its acts, and others do so only in certain of its acts. The former are said to modify substance absolutely; the latter only relatively.

Aquinas adopts Aristotle's enumeration of four kinds of quality³⁶: habit & disposition, operative powers, sense qualities, and figure & shape. 'Figure & shape' is self-explanatory. 'Sense qualities' are simply modifications of substance (other than figure or shape) which are sense-perceptible, such as texture, color, odor, taste, etc. 'Operative powers' are the various faculties of the soul, such as intellect, will, memory, etc. And, finally, 'habits', as Aquinas defines them, are: "dispositions whereby that which is disposed is disposed well or ill, and this in regard to itself or in regard to another".³⁷ Prudence is an accident, a quality, and a habit.

Now, habits, according to Aquinas, can be of two kinds: entitative or operative.³⁸ Entitative habits, as their name implies, modify a substance in its being; i.e. in how it is. Thus health is one species of entitative habit. Operative habits, on the other hand, modify a substance in its operations; i.e. in how it acts. Good operative habits (i.e. habits which facilitate the performance of acts which are in keeping with man's rational nature, and therefore in keeping with his end³⁹, are called virtues.

³⁶Aristoteles, Categoriae cap 8; 8b25-11a35.

³⁷S.T. Ia IIae, q.49, a.1, c: "habitus dicitur dispositio secundum quam bene vel male disponitur dispositum, et aut secundum se aut ad aliud..."

³⁸S.T. Ia IIae, q.51, aa. 1 & 2.

³⁹In general, Aquinas defines human acts, as we will see below, as those acts which are freely performed. He makes the general distinction that 'good' acts are those which lead a person to the

And bad operative habits; i.e. those habits which facilitate the performance of acts which are not in keeping with man's rational nature or his end, are called vices. In this way, we see, prudence is a good operative habit, or a virtue.

Aquinas classifies virtues in two ways: according to their origin and according to the faculty which they perfect. According to their origin, he distinguishes first those virtues which are infused into the soul by God.⁴⁰ And, thus, there are the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, which have God himself as their object, and the infused moral virtues. Second, there are those virtues which are not infused, but acquired through the repetition of acts. These are called the natural virtues (as opposed, precisely, to the 'supernatural' virtues we have just seen) and they are categorized according to the faculty which they perfect. Those natural virtues which perfect man's appetitive faculties are called moral virtues.⁴¹ And, thus, there are principally three: Justice (which perfects man's will, his 'intellectual appetite'), Temperance (which perfects man's concupiscible appetite), and Fortitude (which perfects his

attainment of his end: the fulfilment of his nature as a rational being; and 'bad' acts are those which lead a person to the non-attainment of this end.

⁴⁰S.T. Ia IIae, q.51, a.4.

⁴¹S.T. q.58, a.3, c: "Si autem sit perfectiva appetitivae partis, erit virtus moralis".

irascible appetite).⁴² Those virtues which perfect man's intellectual faculty are called, precisely, intellectual virtues; and these are further characterized by whether they perfect man's intellect in its speculative capacity or in its practical function.⁴³ The virtues of the so-called 'speculative intellect', or the intellect as it is concerned with necessary truths, are three in number: Understanding (intellectus), or the knowledge of first principles, Science (scientia), or the knowledge of things according to their proximate causes, and Wisdom (sapientia), or the knowledge of things according to their ultimate causes.⁴⁴ The virtues of the so-called 'practical intellect', or the intellect as it is concerned with contingent things, are two: Art (ars): right reason about things to be made, and Prudence (prudentia): right reason about things to be done.⁴⁵ And with this last distinction, we have located in Aquinas's classification the virtue of prudence itself. Prudence is an accident of quality, a good operative habit, and an intellectual virtue of the practical intellect. It is 'recta ratio agibilium', or right reason acting.

⁴²The 'intellectual appetite' is that appetite whereby a person chooses freely to perform an act or to refrain from performing it. The 'concupiscible appetite' is that appetite whereby a person is drawn to seek sensible goods, such as food, warmth, sexual pleasure, and rest. And the 'irascible appetite' is that appetite whereby a person either resists what is noxious to him or overcomes what is difficult in order to attain the good.

⁴³S.T. Ia IIae, q.58, a.3, c.

⁴⁴S.T. Ia IIae, q.57, a.2.

⁴⁵S.T. Ia IIae, q.57, a.4.

Now, as we have just seen, what distinguishes prudence - as a virtue of the practical intellect from the three virtues of the speculative intellect is the fact that it (along with art) is concerned not with necessary things, but with contingent things⁴⁶; i.e. with matters that could be otherwise. While we will have a good deal more to say about this below in Part II, let us mention here both the general point Aquinas is making and its link to proactive parenting.

The general point Aquinas is making is simply that in situations which allow of several possible ways of reaching an end, a virtue is needed to perfect the intellect in the right choice of means to the end. And this is of the very essence of prudence, as we hope to make clear below. But the only situations which allow of such latitude are, by definition, contingent matters, for what is necessarily one way cannot be otherwise. The argument thus far, then, is ostensibly: Prudence is required in all situations demanding a choice of means to an end; contingent matters of action are situations demanding such a choice; therefore, prudence is required for contingent matters of action. The particular application of this principle, of course, which we would like to make in regard to parenting is to show, precisely, that successful

⁴⁶S.T. IIa IIae, q.47, a.5, resp: "Sic igitur dicendum est quod cum prudentia sit in ratione, ut dictum est, diversificatur quidem ab aliis virtutibus intellectualibus secundum materiale diversitatem obiectorum. Nam sapientia, scientia et intellectus sunt circa necessaria; ars autem et prudentia circa contingentia".

parenting is a contingent matter. As many of the authors studied for the present dissertation maintain unequivocally, there is not one exclusive 'recipe' for effective child-rearing. Although there are obviously many characteristics which conscientious parents share⁴⁷, each family is unique, each child is unique, and the circumstances of each parent-child relationship are maximally diverse. Our argument then becomes: Prudence is required in all contingent matters of action; effective parenting is one such matter; therefore, prudence is required for effective parenting.

For the rest of this chapter, we shall attempt to show, from the text of Aquinas's Treatise as such, that prudence is the virtue most characteristic of proactive parents for the following reasons. First, it is a virtue of the practical intellect and is concerned with actions, or deeds to be done. Second, its principal act is to command (*praecipere*). Third, it resides in the reason and is, therefore, directive. And, fourth, it is of its very nature solicitous and not negligent. Let us examine each of these claims in turn, making the appropriate links to parenting.

⁴⁷In fact, it is precisely this common ground which makes a paper such as the present one possible. To speak of 'proactive parents' or 'conscientious parents' is to presuppose at least enough shared characteristics and methods to justify speaking generically. This is not to contradict our present point about the contingency of child-rearing as much as to place it in its proper context. The need for prudence is thus doubly underlined: as a virtue directing the right choice of means to an end and as the application of general moral principles to particular cases. It is this latter notion which is highlighted by our speaking of the characteristics common to effective parents.

First, then, Prudence is a virtue of the practical intellect and is concerned with human acting, or doing. Aquinas states in the opening question to the Treatise that: "The value of prudence consists not in merely thinking about a matter, but also in applying itself to do something, which is what the practical reason is for".⁴⁸ He repeats further on that "the reason as engaged with...matters for the sake of an end is the practical reason" and that "doing things...is the business of the practical reason alone...and that is where prudence lies".⁴⁹

Now, the link we would like to make with proactive parenting is simply that in so far as persons are proactive, as we have seen, they are concerned with doing things, with involving themselves actively in the projects, large or small, that they undertake. Proactive parents - conscientious parents - as we shall examine at

⁴⁸Unless otherwise indicated, all English translations found in the present text are taken from the Blackfriars translation. (Cambridge: Eyre and Spottiswoode, Ltd., 1974) Vol.36. This particular citation is from p.7 / S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.1, ad 3: "laus prudentiae non consistit in sola consideratione, sed in applicatione ad opus, quod est finis practicae rationis". Cf. q.47, a.3, resp: "ad prudentiam pertinet non solum consideratio rationis, sed etiam applicatio ad opus, quae est finis practicae rationis". Cf. q.53, a.2, resp: "prudence...is about specialized activities, namely those of the practical reason" Blackfriars, p.125 ("sicut nec prudentia generalis virtus: cum sint circa actus speciales, scilicet circa ipsos actus rationis")..

⁴⁹ S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.2, resp: "his quae sunt per nos agenda in ordine ad finem aliquem. Ratio autem eorum quae sunt agenda propter finem est ratio practica. Unde manifestum est quod prudentia non consistit nisi in ratione practica".

And, sed contra: "prudentia est recta ratio agibilium. Sed hoc non pertinet nisi ad rationem practica. Ergo prudentia non est nisi in ratione practica".

greater length in Part II below, typically take an active role in their children's character formation. They are solicitous for their moral welfare and vigilant concerning their habitual conduct. In Covey's terms, conscientious parents tend to 'act on life' rather than to allow life to act on them...or their children. Now, the difficulty any parent, conscientious or otherwise, faces when she sets out to educate her children, to give them moral guidance, is that there are certain real obstacles to her so doing. She may see clearly the need to intervene, to play an active part in her children's moral development, but she will have nonetheless to overcome several obstacles which will immediately present themselves. These obstacles, for lack of a more helpful distinction, are internal and external. The principal internal obstacle (although it is hardly only an 'obstacle') is her own temperament. And the principal external obstacles are: her upbringing and the present treatment she receives from others. In either case, it is not the particular cause or stimulus as such which concerns us, but the habits a person develops in response to this stimulus.

It is for this reason, in fact, that the distinction, 'internal/external' is less than perfect. In one sense, all three possible stimuli mentioned are 'external' to the free agent as such; i.e. they are not identical with the agent's will. This holds even for our temperament. They are, rather, factors which influence our will and influence the way we behave both

episodically and habitually. But they are not our will as such and are therefore to this extent external to us.⁵⁰ On the other hand, insofar as these various stimuli have a positive impact on our behavior, they continuously condition our will and can therefore be said to be 'internal'; they are always present, affecting the way we think and behave. Keeping in mind, therefore, the ambivalence of this internal/external distinction let us look at some concrete examples of what Covey calls our 'conditions'.

Not all 'conditions' are obstacles, of course, but the obstacles here spoken of are all ex hypothesi 'conditions' in the sense that they affect our will and cause us to form habits. One example of a 'condition', as we say, is a person's temperament. Specifically, let us consider the father who has an impatient and angry temperament. On the one hand, this man's choleric temperament will lead him often to lose his temper, perhaps bully weaker members of the household, and in general be a cause of tension and hurt feelings. The danger, if we may so speak, is that he becomes a thoroughly unpleasant person with whom to live. But on the other hand, it is this same high-spirited, energetic personality which (perhaps) pushes him to take such an active role in the character formation of his children. This choleric temperament, which can certainly be a burden at times to himself

⁵⁰We speak here in a manner which is perhaps overly voluntaristic; nothing more than the surface connotation is implied. We certainly do not consider the person as identical with his or her will alone.

and to those with whom he lives, is the impetus which causes him not to sit back and allow life to act on him or his children. It pushes him to respond energetically against what he perceives as dangers to his children's moral welfare. And as such it is actually a cause of right action. The point here is simply that in and of itself temperament is morally neutral; it can influence us at once either for good or for evil.

Again, what is pertinent for present purposes is not the condition (in this case an angry temperament) as such, but the specific habits the person develops as a result of this condition. The father with a choleric temperament will usually develop habits which betray this temperament, such as: the habit of giving in to critical judgments about his wife or children, the habit of exploding in a fit of anger when his children misbehave or embarrass him publicly, the habit of not controlling his tongue and using harsh or biting words with his wife, the habit of being generally overbearing and creating tension in the home. The father with a phlegmatic temperament, on the other hand, will tend perhaps to develop habits of irresponsibility. Since he is not easily moved by his emotions, he is less likely to become passionate about matters, including the upbringing of his children. As a result, he might lack solicitude and vigilance concerning his children's moral formation. He might develop habits of negligence: habits of thinking only of his own affairs and not thinking about and making a plan for his children's character development. In each of these

instances, in the case of the choleric temperament and in the case of the phlegmatic temperament, the individual will have to exert considerable effort to overcome her natural inclination if she would develop habits of acting in accord with reason and not merely in accord with emotion. This 'golden mean', this middle ground between excess and defect, is precisely moral virtue, and it is the universal experience that it is not something attained without ascetic struggle.

Another condition influencing our behavior - and this one more properly external in character - is our upbringing.⁵¹ As we shall see in more detail below in Part III, there are typically said to be two principal defective ways of parenting: to parent in an authoritarian manner or to parent in a permissive manner. The authoritarian parent tends herself to have a strong personality and to impose herself on others. She is strong-willed and sure of herself. As a result, it is easier for her to commit the mistake authoritarian parents tend to commit: to dictate to their children how they ought to behave without giving them the reasons for doing so. The authoritarian parent just does not bother to explain the

⁵¹It must be said that none of these conditions exists in complete isolation from the others. They are rather a rich mosaic of highly interconnected factors influencing our habitual behavior. For example, two children (the instance of twins is perhaps most instructive) can be raised by the same parents, at the same time, together, and receive nearly identical treatment and yet turn out with very different characters simply because they began life with such different temperaments. The combination of their respective temperaments with the upbringing they receive can lead to their developing attitudes and behaviors which vary considerably.

reasons for her commands. She simply commands and insists on obedience, without giving reasons. Being quite sure of herself, the authoritarian parent thinks (however unconsciously) to herself: "Well, I am older and more experienced; I am right. I am their parent - a legitimate authority over them; they ought to trust my judgment and obey me. Therefore, I will simply command them and if they do not obey, I will punish them and give them good reason to obey". What she lacks, obviously, is a sense of friendship and fair-mindedness with her children. As a result, she is 'high on' rules and 'low on' explanations and understanding.⁵²

The person raised by authoritarian parents - parents, again, whose forte was discipline and not reason-giving or affection - will develop certain attitudes towards parenting, as will the person raised in the opposite (permissive) defective environment. In both instances, of course, the persons will take away from their respective upbringings not only the negative attitudes, but also many of the positive attitudes and behaviors. As we have seen, each temperament and its corresponding parenting style (although there is probably never such an easily recognized correspondence)

⁵²This is a point which cannot, in the present author's opinion, be repeated enough. That is: if parents hope truly to educate their children and inspire in them a love for goodness, they will have, in the first instance, to become their friends. No one listens to or willingly obeys someone whom they perceive misunderstands them or judges them unfairly or is disrespectful towards them. This is the essence of what we will have to say in the latter part of Part III below. Truly effective parents know how to win over their children's hearts by understanding them and by being their friend.

brings with it certain qualities, as well as defects. To oversimplify, if the choleric/authoritarian parent could be overbearing, he could be at the same time solicitous and responsible and if the phlegmatic/permissive parent could be negligent, he could be at the same time understanding and affectionate. Both of these (admittedly defective) parenting styles come with their respective shortcomings and qualities and the children raised under them will no doubt acquire a mixture of positive and negative attitudes and behaviors as a result. What we would like to draw the reader's attention to here is simply the fact that one way or the other a person's upbringing (again, in conjunction with her personal temperament) has a strong influence on the way she herself later approaches parenting. Upbringing is the second crucial 'condition' we need to examine.

By 'upbringing' is meant, of course, the treatment a child receives from her parents and other significant adults from birth through late adolescence. These are the years when a child's basic attitudes towards life and authority are formed and surely the younger years are more formative than the later years because the child is more impressionable. And although it is difficult to say just how a child learns specific attitudes from her parents, the fact that to some degree she does so would seem apparent.

Individuals raised by authoritarian parents tend to resent the way they were brought up. And with good reason. The authoritarian

parent seeks overmuch to control the lives of his children. He often has high standards of personal comportment and insists rigidly that his children conform to these standards. He is rule-oriented and has little patience for any behavior which does not conform to the rules set by him. As a result, when his children do the kinds of things all normal children do - and break the rules - his normal reaction is one of anger and resentment. He may even resort to physical violence as a means of redressing the situation. In any case, what matters is that he has a certain set of rules (which have never really been sufficiently explained and therefore appear quite arbitrary) and he reacts angrily and abusively when these rules are not obeyed. The fundamental problem with the authoritarian parent is his inability to communicate effectively with his children. As we will see below in Part III, children do not mind (in fact they insist on) rules which are explained and reasonable. What they do mind, what they resent, are rules and punishments which they perceive as arbitrary. Whence their understandable resentment towards their authoritarian upbringing.

If, however, authoritarian parenting is defective and resented by children, it would seem that permissive parenting does not escape these same criticisms. Where the authoritarian parent is overbearing and unreasonable in her discipline, the permissive parent tends rather to avoid discipline at all costs. And while on the surface this might have a certain attractiveness - given its apparent respect for the freedom of the children - in the end it

too is resented by children when they are old enough to know better. We will develop these ideas at greater length below in Part III, so here we will limit ourselves to the broadest remarks. What can happen when children are left habitually to 'do as they please' and are not confronted with their legitimate responsibilities or with the consequences of their actions, is that they fail to develop the internal ability to judge right from wrong for themselves. They lack self-control for the simple reason that they have never been asked by anyone with genuine authority (at least not asked consistently) to control themselves. As a result, these children often lack the ability to delay gratification until a later time for the sake of a higher good. Their habitual focus is on the immediate satisfaction of their own will and senses. This, in turn, is problematical for the obvious reason that most worthwhile goods in life are decidedly not attained over short periods of time and without effort. As a result, children raised by permissive parents - and therefore unused to doing anything they prefer not to do - often fail in their long-term commitments.⁵³

This dichotomy between authoritarian and permissive parenting, while well-documented, is presented here in oversimplified form simply to highlight the fact that different parenting styles have

⁵³One example which might be brought up here is that of marriage. Whereas for the previous generation (the present generation of young grandparents) marital fidelity for the whole of life was the rule, for the present generation (of young parents) this is simply not the case, as modern divorce rates readily attest.

different consequences in the lives of the children brought up under them. And specifically as regards their own attitudes and habits towards parenting. That is, the way we are raised (our 'upbringing') plays an important role in - among other things - how we ourselves approach parenting. For every action there is an equal or proportionate reaction. Often what happens is that a person brought up under one of these two defective parenting styles will react by overcompensating in the other direction. The person raised by authoritarian parents, who recalls all those arbitrary fits of anger and smugness, might react by resolving - however unconsciously - not to discipline his children and fall into the opposite vice of permissiveness. And, likewise, the person raised by permissive parents, who finds in himself real weakness of character and destructive habits of self-indulgence, might react by resolving to discipline his children constantly and become authoritarian. In this way, the former becomes a parent who, for example, does not know his childrens' friends, who allows his children to eat at any hour, who allows his children to come in at any hour without an explanation, who allows behavior which is self-destructive, such as alcohol or drug abuse, who permits poor study habits to develop, who presents comfort as the highest good, who allows commitments to be avoided, who protects his children from the consequences of their actions, who gives his children money indiscriminately, who allows disrespect and a dishevelled appearance, who never gives his children chores to carry out responsibly, etc., etc., etc.. And the latter becomes a parent who

is rule-crazy and oppressive, who imposes unreasonable curfews and visiting rights, who gives in to anger and rages when his children misbehave, who insists on having a neurotic control over his childrens' personal lives, who does not trust his children and who shows this mistrust openly, who perhaps abuses his children verbally, psychologically, or even physically, who places unreasonable pressures on his children to do well in school, who overloads his children with work to be done around the house, etc., etc.. Each of these individuals is reacting to the way they were brought up and not taking a proactive, response-able approach to their role as parent.

Faced, therefore, with these two conditions, our temperament and our upbringing, there are two possible scenarios which present themselves. We can either allow these conditions to determine our behavior or we can proactively choose our own response to them. The proactive parent will know how to respond as Viktor Frankl did before his own very difficult 'conditions'. Frankl could have allowed himself to give in to despair, thus effectively empowering the cruelty of his torturers. But he chose another response instead. He was free to do so, and so he did. The Nazis could not touch that very deepest part of his personality, his ability to choose his response to what was happening to him. His behavior was a function not of his conditions, but of his decisions. Parents, we would contend, if they want to raise their children effectively to responsible adulthood, must make a choice similar to that of

Frankl's. They must 'rescript' themselves, to use Covey's term, giving themselves a part that they would be proud to play and not merely accepting the role in which their temperament and upbringing have cast them. The individual raised by authoritarian parents has to face that reality: that his parents were too rigid and strict with him and not affectionate enough. He will have to acknowledge as well that as a result of his upbringing he will have a tendency to treat his own children in ways which are not expedient. The same holds true, of course, for the individual raised by permissive parents. In this respect, at least, proactive parenting - conscientious parenting - is like farming: one has first to clear the ground before one can plant the seed. Just as trees and undergrowth are obstacles to effective sowing, so our personal circumstances: our temperament, our upbringing, our bad habits, and the sheer 'busyness' of our lives are obstacles to effective parenting.

Now, for these obstacles to be overcome, the individual concerned must act decisively. She must vigorously reject the temptation to cede to her conditions and simply 'react' to life. But to be able to do so, she will need a certain power; namely, the power to command herself to act in certain ways and not to act in certain other ways. For example, when a mother realizes that she is about to indulge the whim of one of her children simply because the child is throwing a tantrum and she would prefer not to discipline him, she will need the acquired ability to command herself in the

opposite direction if she would do what she ought and not simply what she would prefer. The 'reactive' thing to do in this situation is clear: avoid confrontation at all costs (confrontation first with our own weakness and second with the child) and indulge the child regardless of the probable negative consequences for his moral formation (for he learns thereby that the way to get what we want in life is to act unreasonably). This power to command oneself to behave in a certain way, however, is precisely the principal act of the virtue of prudence⁵⁴, and, so it is not possible to be a proactive parent without this virtue.

Aquinas states in the Treatise that "the chief act of prudence will be the chief act of reason as engaged with conduct".⁵⁵ Here, of course, 'reason as engaged with conduct' is just what we saw above when speaking of the location of prudence in Aquinas's overall scheme, namely, the 'practical intellect' or 'practical reason' (ratio practica). And so he makes explicit further on that command (praecipere) is the chief act not only of prudence, but of the practical reason as well.⁵⁶ What distinguishes prudence, precisely, from the various acts which compose it is its decidedly imperative character. If deliberation and judgment stay at the

⁵⁴S.T. IIa IIae q.48, resp: "Prudentia vero est circa principalem actum, qui est praecipere".

⁵⁵S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.8, resp: "Oportet quod ille sit praecipuus actus prudentiae qui est praecipuus actus rationis agibilium."

⁵⁶S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.8, resp: "principalis actus rationis practicae".

level of theory, prudence has to go further. It effectively orders the actual performance of an act, the carrying out of a particular deed. And this is in fact the context in which Aquinas speaks of prudence as imperative; i.e. as the third of the principal acts of the virtue. Every act, according to Aquinas, if it is to be carried out prudently, must begin with a proper deliberation as to the means required to reach the given end. Once this deliberation has taken place, the mind must then make a judgment and decide on the particular means to be chosen. But the order issuing from the intellect to the will actually to choose these means comes only in the third and (most) principal act of the virtue, which, as we have seen, is to command. Deliberation and judgment are necessary but rather informative.⁵⁷ Prudence is imperative.⁵⁸

It is worth noting here the careful distinction Aquinas draws between the role of prudence on the one hand and the role of the will on the other. The distinction founds itself on the fact that the will is a faculty⁵⁹ and prudence is merely a habit of a faculty.

⁵⁷As to deliberation: S.T. IIa IIae q.51, a.2, resp: "Et ideo oportet aliam esse virtutem eubuliam, per quam homo est bene consiliativus; et aliam prudentiam, per quam homo est bene praeceptivus".

As to judgment: S.T. IIa IIae q.51, a.3, ad 3: "...contingit quandoque id quod bene iudicatum est differri, vel negligenter agi aut inordinate. Et ideo post virtutem quae est bene iudicativa necessaria est finalis virtus principalis quae sit bene praeceptiva, scilicet prudentia".

⁵⁸S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.8, sed: "prudentia praeceptiva est".

⁵⁹Aquinas Questions on the Soul, trans. by James H. Robb. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1984. Q.13, ad 12: "The will exists in the reason inasmuch as the will follows the

Whereas prudence, which is in the intellective part of the soul, is only the modification of a power, the will is a power as such; namely, the rational appetite.⁶⁰ Now, while it is the role of the will actually to set in motion⁶¹ (by issuing its own order to a limb, for example), this movement presupposes a directive order from the intellect, whose proper activity it is precisely to rule and govern.⁶² The chief act of prudence is to command the execution of what has been deliberated about and decided upon.⁶³ But the actual execution of the deed corresponds to the will. The distinction Aquinas draws, therefore, can be summarized thus: command is an act of the reason,⁶⁴ motion is an act of the will, and the latter is not possible without the former.

This distinction helps us, in turn, better to understand why it is impossible for someone who lacks the virtue of prudence to be proactive in her approach to parenting. This is so because to be

apprehension of the reason. However, the operation of the will belongs to the same level of a soul's powers, but not to the same genus of powers" (p.171). Cf. S.T. I, q.77, a.5, resp; a.8, resp; q.78, a.1, resp; q.80, a.2, resp; q.82, a.2,, ad 3; q.82, a.5; q.84, a.4.. Cf. De Veritate q.22, a.4, resp. and ad 4; a.10, ad 2.

⁶⁰S.T. Ia IIae, q.66, a.4, resp.

⁶¹S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.8, ad 3: "...movere absolute pertinet ad voluntatem".

⁶²S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.12, resp: "Regere autem et gubernare proprie rationis est".

⁶³S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.9, resp: "Hoc autem pertinet ad prudentiam, cuius praecipuus actus est circa agenda praecipere de praeconsiliatis et iudicatis".

⁶⁴S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.8, ad 3.

proactive requires that we be able to command ourselves towards the performance of certain acts and away from the performance of others, and it is only by prudence that we are enabled to do so.⁶⁵ It also helps us to understand and even sympathize with parents who want to do the 'right thing' for their children, but somehow do not quite succeed. It is possible, that is, on Aquinas's account, that a parent have the will (colloquially: the 'good intention') to raise her children well, but to lack the ability to do so for want of the intellectual virtue of prudence. And this raises a further question concerning Aquinas's understanding of the relation between prudence and the moral virtues to which we turn now.⁶⁶

In the all-important eighth article of question 47, Aquinas suggests that the person who is imprudent by reason of a failure of command is more imprudent than she who is so by reason of a failure of either deliberation or judgment because command is the principal act of the virtue.⁶⁷ We bring this point up here, in the context

⁶⁵On the one hand: S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.12, ad 3: "...per prudentiam homo non solum praecipit aliis, sed etiam sibi ipsi: prout scilicet ratio dicitur praecipere inferioribus viribus".

And on the other: S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.8, ad 1: "...actus praecipendi se extendit et ad bona prosequenda et ad mala cavenda".

⁶⁶In Part III we shall examine in more detail this question of the relation between prudence and the moral virtues. It is in that Part, where we treat of the role of parental example, that this discussion finds its most appropriate setting. Here we shall do little more than lay out the problem.

⁶⁷S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.8, resp: "...imprudentior enim est qui volens peccat, quasi deficiens in principali actu prudentiae, qui est praecipere, quam qui peccat nolens".

of understanding parental imprudence, because this claim would seem to mitigate the responsibility of parents who are of fundamentally good will, but who make imprudent decisions concerning their children's moral welfare. The justification would be that: they are basically good people who make mistakes in reasoning, either at the level of deliberation or of judgment. And there is certainly a case which can be made for such an argument, besides our instinctive judgment that it is something like this which occurs in many parental 'mistakes'. But, there is other evidence in Aquinas - we would even suggest a preponderance - which would suggest the opposite: that it is simply not possible to be imprudent without moral culpability at some level.

Aquinas dedicates an entire question of the Treatise precisely to the topic of imprudence.⁶⁸ In the first article, moreover, he asks whether imprudence is a sin; i.e. whether it necessarily implies moral culpability. He answers that in itself imprudence is morally blameworthy when by it is meant either the privation of prudence (and not its 'mere absence') due to negligence or the contrary of prudence "when the mind moves or acts in a way counter to prudence; for example, when the right reason of prudence bids counsel, but imprudence scorns to take it".⁶⁹ He goes on to specify, in regard to the particular vice of precipitation: "a rash

⁶⁸S.T. IIa IIae q.53.

⁶⁹S.T. IIa IIae q.53, a.1, resp.

person who is wilfully headlong wills the act of imprudence".⁷⁰ So, in regard to parents who are imprudent in the way they raise their children, it would seem that at some level there is moral blame which can be levelled against them. And this agrees, surely, with other of our intuitions concerning the vigilance that parents ought to exercise over their children's welfare. What Aquinas certainly affirms in regard to imprudence is that the person who is imprudent by reason of a failure to command aright is properly speaking more imprudent than the person who is imprudent for want of deliberation or judgment.

Before concluding this short section on the notion of command, in which we have seen that command, the principal act of the virtue of prudence, is a prerequisite for proactive parenting, we might note that Aquinas's reasoning on the subject is not always consistent, or at least not obviously so. There is, for example, the problem of the relation between command and providence ('providentia'). It is unclear in the text which of the two is logically prior to the other. In question 48, Aquinas states: "This to be rightly preceptive or imperative requires the following three, first, the ordering of something adapted to the end, and this is for foresight, or providence..."⁷¹ In this citation, it

⁷⁰S.T. IIa IIae q.53, a.1, resp.

⁷¹S.T. IIa IIae q.48, resp: "Ratio autem, ad hoc quod recte praecipiat, tria debet habere. Primo quidem, ut ordinet aliquid accommodum ad finem: et hoc pertinet ad providentiam".

would seem that command is the principal and providence the ancillary; i.e. the sense is that it is necessary to be provident if one wishes to command well. But in the very next question, number 49, Aquinas states: "The right adaptation to an end, which is of the very meaning of providence, implies rightness of counsel, and of judgment, and of command, without which it would not be possible".⁷² Here, the opposite claim seems to be made; i.e. that providence is primary and that it is necessary to command well if one wishes to be provident. These and other textual difficulties regarding the act of command are perhaps with more profit studied in the light of the two vices opposed to command; namely, negligence and inconstancy, and so we need to turn our attention to these. Before we do so, however, let us first underline a second highly significant sense in which the virtue of prudence is required for proactive parenting.

Aquinas states in question 47 that "the role of prudence...is to charge our conduct with rightful desire".⁷³ By this he means that it is by prudence that the individual acts morally. As he says elsewhere: "prudence is the right idea in our doing things" and "prudence is preceptive of good deeds".⁷⁴ Now, the specific way

⁷²Emphasis added. S.T. IIa IIae q.49, 6, ad 3: "in recta ordinatione ad finem, quae includitur in ratione providentiae, importatur rectitudo consilii et iudicii et praecepti sine quibus recta ordinatio ad finem esse non potest".

⁷³S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.4, resp.

⁷⁴Respectively: S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.2, sed contra: "prudentia est recta ratio agibilium"; S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.13, ad 2:

in which prudence enables the individual to behave in accord with the moral law is by applying general moral principles to particular situations. This occurs, according to Aquinas, in the following manner. Each person endowed with the use of reason is aware of certain principles of acting which he cannot contravene without incurring moral guilt. These Aquinas calls the 'first principles of acting' and they are the ends towards which all moral behavior naturally tends. So, for example, when a woman gives birth to a child, she knows instinctively, as it were, that she is bound by the fact of her motherhood to care for the needs of that child: to feed her, to clean her, to clothe her, and keep her out of harm's way. She would know by means of conscience, which is, precisely, the (as yet non-imperative) act of judgment contained within every prudently done action, that not to care for the child would be morally evil.⁷⁵ She thus has, by means of these first principles of acting, a way of knowing (at least most generally) what are her positive and negative duties towards the child.

"prudentia est praeceptiva rectorum operum".

⁷⁵She would know this by what Pieper refers to as her 'situation conscience'. Josef Pieper Prudence (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959) p.21. Pieper comes very close to equating prudence and conscience: "the word 'conscience' is intimately related to and well-nigh interchangeable with the word 'prudence'" (p.21). This is an opinion which Ralph McInerny, among others, does not share: "...it is necessary to keep the judgment of conscience and the prudential judgment distinct". Ralph McInerny "Prudence and Conscience" The Thomist 38 (1974) p.303.

By what Aquinas calls 'synderesis'⁷⁶ (an innate knowledge of first principles) this woman knows, first, that good is to be done and evil is to be avoided; second, that to care for the child is good and to neglect to care for the child is evil; and, third, therefore, as the conclusion to this moral syllogism, that she ought to care for the child and ought not to neglect her. In this way, her natural knowledge of the first principles of acting is applied (by means of prudence) to the particular situation in which she finds herself. And her behavior - assuming her will follows suit and carries out the order of her intellect, of right reason - is consequently morally upright and prudent. In like manner, Aquinas wants to argue, by 'synderesis' all human persons have an innate sense of acts which they ought to perform and acts which they ought not to perform. Taking this theoretical knowledge, they then either apply it (in the sense of obeying its dictates) or not. In the former instance, they act prudently and in the latter they act imprudently. Aquinas, cognizant of the fact that prudence is concerned not so much with the ends of human acting (the first principles which we have just seen) as with the means required to attain those ends⁷⁷, states at one point:

There are also judgments by way of conclusions about the things to be done for the sake of ends, arrived at in the light of those ends. It is about them that prudence is

⁷⁶S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.6, ad 1.

⁷⁷S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.6, resp.

concerned, by applying general moral principles to particular conclusions regarding human conduct.⁷⁸

We see, therefore, that it is by prudence - and only by prudence - that individuals are enabled to act in accord with the moral law. We will elaborate on this idea below in Part III when we speak of the relation between prudence and the moral virtues. In keeping with the conclusion to which we have just arrived, Aquinas will there maintain that moral virtue is not possible without prudence.

Now, let us note the striking similarity between Aquinas's notion here that "prudence does not consist mainly in knowing general moral truths, but in applying them to our deeds"⁷⁹ and Covey's understanding of the essence of proactivity. As we saw in Chapter One, Covey considers that "the ability to subordinate an impulse to a value is the essence of the proactive person".⁸⁰ But is this latter notion not essentially the same as that which we have just discussed? For, what happens when an individual 'subordinates an impulse to a value'? In effect, what happens is that she realizes, at some level, that there is a difference between what she would prefer to do and what she knows she ought to

⁷⁸Emphasis added. S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.6, resp: "...et quaedam sunt in ratione practica ut conclusiones, huiusmodi sunt ea quae sunt ad finem, in quae pervenimus ex ipsis finibus. Et horum est prudentia, applicans universalia principia ad particulares conclusiones operabilium".

⁷⁹S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.16, ad 3: "...prudentia principaliter consistit non in cognitione universalium, sed in applicatione ad opera".

⁸⁰Covey, p.72.

do. There is a conflict of sorts between what she wishes were the case and what she knows is in fact the case. And she has to make a decision, a choice, between the two ways of acting.

Now, rather than return to our above example of the mother who has just given birth, let us depict a less dramatic scenario and apply the respective principles of prudence and proactivity to see if there are not the moral parallels which we suspect. Take, for example, the following typical family situation. The father of a family has made plans with some of his colleagues at work to spend a given Saturday golfing from mid-morning to late afternoon. He has planned the outing for some weeks before and his presence is expected, although not absolutely necessary. He could, with the appropriate excuses and without too much difficulty, get out of it. And, in fact, it looks as though he may have to do just that, for he has forgotten that that same Saturday is the birthday of his youngest daughter, age 7, and that he had promised her he would take her and the whole family to an amusement park to celebrate. Having been out of town on business for the four days immediately preceeding the Saturday in question, the father has not been party to the excitement which has built up at home in anticipation of the big day. Finally, on Friday evening, relishing the thought of a relaxing day on the links with his colleagues, he arrives home for supper and is abruptly reminded of his former promise to his daughter and the rest of his family. Now, this man, this husband and father, has a moral choice to make. He can choose to break the

promise he made to his daughter and go golfing with his colleagues (which he might prefer to do) or he can excuse himself with his colleagues - however minimally upset they might be with his lack of organization - and spend the day at the park with his family. Being a man of reasonable sensibilities, he is not unaware of how much the day out means to his daughter and his other children and he knows, somehow⁸¹ that the right thing to do is to cancel his golf outing and be with his family. Now, for him so to act, given the rightness of the choice, requires that he possess the virtue of prudence. It is prudent of him to spend the day with his family because doing so is the morally right thing to do, and prudence is, as we have seen 'right reason in our deeds'. The man is prudent insofar, precisely, as he applies the general moral principle (whatever it might be in this instance; "Thou shalt not break birthday promises to small children when the probable outcome is prolonged sadness", or some such) to his particular action. That is, he is prudent insofar as he conforms his action to the dictates of right reason.

But we can see immediately the parallels with proactivity. The man's impulse (what Aquinas would call his 'lower nature' or

⁸¹Aquinas would certainly argue here for the first principles of acting and the moral law. How, in fact, does this man, or any man in like circumstances, know that the right thing to do is to keep his promise to his daughter and, effectively, break the other promise to his colleagues? It is certainly by no means evident just how we come upon such knowledge. What is clear, however, is that no amount of self-deception would convince us that this knowledge comes to us by means of formal instruction.

the sensitive part of his soul) might be to go golfing because, for a variety reasons, this might be more pleasurable to him. While golfing with his colleagues, for example, he is responsible for the safety and enjoyment of really no one but himself, whereas with his family he is responsible for the safety and, to some extent, the enjoyment of his children. So golfing might be more pleasurable, if for no other reason, because it involves less worry. But even though the man might prefer to go golfing, the proactive thing to do in this situation is to get out of the golfing excursion and go with his family to the amusement park. And the reason for this is that he values his family and his daughter's respect and affection (as he plainly should) more than he values a day of pleasure for himself.⁸² This is the proactive thing to do because the man has subordinated an impulse to a value, in this case a value which is a person, his daughter. He knows what he might have preferred to do, but he also knows - given his values, one of which is the happiness of his family - what he ought to do.

We see, then, that just as prudence requires that we choose the good made known to us by our reason and not the evil suggested to us by our passions, so proactivity requires that we follow the values we know by our reason and not the impulses we feel by our

⁸²This presupposes, obviously, that there are not other circumstances - such as the loss of his job or an imminent nervous breakdown due to lack of relaxation - which would militate against his choosing as we suggest. It presupposes, that is, that other factors are equal.

emotions. To be prudent means to subordinate our action to the good, to right reason. And to be proactive, similarly, means to subordinate our impulses, what we are moved to do, to our values, what we think we ought to do. In this way, given that proactivity is rather an effect and prudence - being a quality, an accident - is a cause, we can conclude that the habit of behaving proactively is not possible without the virtue of prudence.

As a way of underlining the seriousness of the parents' role in the upbringing of their children, let us cite Aquinas as he speaks of negligence and inconstancy. He states: "...past events obtain a sort of necessity, for what has been done cannot be undone".⁸³ The same idea is repeated frequently among the parenting authors we have studied for the present paper. The idea is simply that parents ought to be solicitous for the moral well-being of their children, for their upbringing, that is, because as parents they only get one chance to raise their children well.⁸⁴ By the time a child has reached the age of eleven or twelve years old, it is very late to begin instructing her in moral virtue. She will already have developed, as we hope to show in more detail in Part III below, many habits which will need to be corrected. And the point is that correcting habits which are so deeply ingrained in a person's character is a very difficult task, not to say an

⁸³S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.6, resp: "Praeterita autem in necessitatem quandam transeunt: quia impossibile est non esse quod factum est".

⁸⁴Stenson, p.15.

impossible one. And what is true of an eleven or twelve year old is all the more true in the case of a seventeen or eighteen year old. That is a point on which all the authors agree unreservedly: the younger the child, the more pliable and impressionable he or she will be, and the older the child, the less pliable and impressionable he or she will be. To try to correct years of neglect when a child has already reached the teen years borders on the pathetic. Very often, the best that one can hope for in such a situation is to control the damage the adolescent will invariably do to herself and to others as a result of her lack of virtue.

Now, this warning that Aquinas throws out to the negligent is especially pertinent in the context of modern parenting, as one further citation will show. And with this we enter into our discussion proper of that trait of prudence we call 'solicitude', which is about the act of command⁸⁵, and its opposing vices: negligence and inconstancy. Aquinas states: "Solicitude implies a studied effort to gain something. Clearly, a greater effort is made when there is fear of failure".⁸⁶ It is no secret today that many young people, and certainly some would say the vast majority, are growing up without sufficient character formation. They lack the virtues necessary to take life in stride, as it were, and to excel because they are not being educated in these virtues either

⁸⁵S.T. IIa IIae q.54, a.2, ad 3.

⁸⁶S.T. IIa IIae q.55, a.6, resp: "...sollicitudo importat studium quoddam adhibitum ad aliquid consequendum. Manifestum est autem quod maius studium adhibetur ubi est timor deficiendi".

by their parents (whence the present paper) or by the schools. As a result, and not surprisingly, the statistics on our young people are deplorable.

Dr. Thomas Lickona, internationally respected authority on moral development and values education, in his recent and superbly documented book, Educating for Character⁸⁷, provides us with a useful insight into the difficult situation of young people today.

Should the schools teach values? Just a few years ago, if you put that question to a group of people, it was sure to start an argument. If anyone said yes, schools should teach values, somebody else would immediately retort, "Whose values?" In a society where people held different values, it seemed impossible to get agreement on which ones should be taught in our public schools. Pluralism produced paralysis; schools for the most part ended up trying to stay officially neutral on the subject of values.

With remarkable swiftness, that has changed. Escalating moral problems in society - ranging from greed and dishonesty to violent crime to self-destructive behaviors, such as drug abuse and suicide - are bringing about a new consensus.

Now, from all across the country, from private citizens and public organizations, from liberals and conservatives alike, comes a summons to the schools: "Take up the role of moral teachers of our children".⁸⁸

This passage is significant because it presupposes; i.e. it takes as given, a moral situation among the young which is highly unacceptable.⁸⁹

⁸⁷Thomas Lickona Educating for Character (New York: Bantam Books, 1991).

⁸⁸Emphasis added, Lickona, pp.3-4.

⁸⁹William Kilpatrick, professor of Education at Boston College, urges us to "Compare what classroom teachers identified as the greatest threats to the educational process in 1940 and today.

This presupposition is further reflected in the support parents invariably give today to the idea of so-called 'values education' in the schools. After reminding us of the oft-cited and sombre statistic that "the suicide rate of children has risen 300 percent over the past three decades"⁹⁰, Lickona goes on to state:

Perhaps most significantly, support for school-based values education comes from parents who are looking for help in a world where it's harder than ever to raise good children. For more than a decade, every Gallup poll that has asked parents whether schools should teach morals has come up with an unequivocal yes. Typical is the finding that 84 percent of parents with school-age children say they want the public schools to provide 'instruction that would deal with morals and moral behavior'.⁹¹

First on the list in 1940 was talking out of turn; today it is drug abuse. The number two concern in 1940 was chewing gum; today it is alcohol abuse. Number three in 1940 was making noise; number three today is pregnancy. The fourth most pressing problem in 1940 was running in the halls; today it is suicide. Fifth, sixth, and seventh on the list in 1940 were getting out of line, wearing improper clothing, and not putting paper in the wastebasket. Today they are rape, robbery, and assault". Source: Fullerton California Police Department. Based on interview data compiled for 1988 Conference of Educators and Law Enforcement Officers; San Francisco, California; Sponsored by the California State Department of Education. Cited in Kilpatrick Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p.100.

⁹⁰National Center for Health Statistics, Lickona p.19.

⁹¹Emphasis added; Lickona, p.21. Also: "A 1976 Gallup poll (Reported in the New York Times, April 18, 1976) found that 79 percent of all respondents and 84 percent of parents with school-age children endorsed 'instruction in the schools that would deal with morals and moral behavior'. Four years later, Gallup found the same percentage of parents in support of moral education in the schools. In 1984 Gallup asked the public to rate the relative importance of various goals for the public schools. Of 25 possible goals, 'To develop standards of what is right and wrong' came in second, only barely behind the school's classic academic mission - 'To develop the ability to speak and write correctly' (Emphasis added, Lickona, pp.427/428).

Now, the reason we raise these harbingers of what another author refers to as our society's "horrendous social statistics"⁹² is simply to underline the fact that parents today, perhaps more than ever before, need to have a healthy mistrust of leaving their children's moral formation to chance. Aquinas, while he is cognizant of the fact that "Too much fear and distrust make for excessive solicitude"⁹³, does still maintain that "Solicitude implies a studied effort to gain something. [And] clearly a greater effort is made when there is fear of failure".⁹⁴ Our global point, therefore, is that given the precariousness of raising children today, parents have good reason to fear for their children's upbringing and should, consequently, be that much more solicitous in their regard. As we will see presently, solicitude, in turn, is one of the central features of prudence and, thus, again, we see the necessity of this virtue for parents who would raise their children proactively and conscientiously.

Aquinas speaks of solicitude in the context of both vigilance and diligence. And there are here any number of considerations which we might make in regard to parenting. First, Aquinas links

⁹²Lewis Lebaron "Teaching Virtues is Back in Fashion" Perspective, Feb. 1995, p.6.

⁹³S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.9, ad 3: "Superfluitas enim timoris et diffidentiae facit superfluitatem sollicitudinis..."

⁹⁴S.T. IIa IIae q.55, a.6, resp. The tone of the phrase is certainly, we might add, one of commendation; i.e. when there is more reason to fear failure, it is only normal and intelligent to be more solicitous.

solicitude to the act of command."⁵ And this is especially significant because, as we have seen, command is the principal act of prudence. "'Sollicitus' (from 'solers', shrewd)", Aquinas reminds us, means "someone who is quick-witted and swift to perform what has to be done. This is a trait of prudence, of which the chief act is to command the execution of what has been deliberated about and decided upon".⁶ The solicitous person commands well; she performs her duties swiftly, not leaving time for indecision or laziness to creep in. We are reminded again of the proactive person, who acts on life before life has a chance to act on her. This is no doubt why Aquinas identifies solicitude with vigilance. As eagles are especially solicitous over their young offspring, so proactive parents set up a guard, as it were, with their constant concern for the moral formation of their children. They are vigilant in their regard. As Aquinas puts it: "St. Peter bids us be prudent and [vigilant] in prayer. But vigilance and solicitude are the same. Therefore, being solicitous enters into being prudent".⁷

⁵S.T. IIa IIae q.54, a.2, ad 3.

⁶S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.9, resp: "sollicitus dicitur quasi solers citus: inquantum scilicet aliquis ex quadam solertia animi velox est ad prosequendum ea quae sunt agenda. Hoc autem pertinet ad prudentiam, cuius praecipuus actus est circa agenda praecipere de praeconsiliatis et iudicatis".

⁷S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.9, sed: "...dicitur I Pet. iv: estote prudentes, et vigilate in orationibus. Sed vigilantia est idem sollicitudini. Ergo sollicitudo pertinet ad prudentiam".

Next, Aquinas links prudence with diligence. He defines 'diligence' as: "providing for oneself and others in respect of whatever relates to human living".⁹⁸ Then he goes on to identify diligence as well with solicitude: "Diligence would seem to be the same as solicitude; [for] we are more careful with the things we esteem [more]".⁹⁹ And, of course, the diligence parents ought to exercise in caring for their children, both materially and morally, has its foundation precisely here: in the fact that they love them. To be solicitous over our children, to be vigilant in their regard, is a sign of our diligence as parents and, consequently, of our love for them.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, it is perhaps instructive to see the entire work of prudence, especially as it relates to the upbringing of children, in terms of the love which parents ought to have for their children. We will return to this point as well in Part III. Here let it suffice to recall that love is decidedly not principally a feeling, but an act of the will. As Covey puts it: "Love is a verb".¹⁰¹ That is, unlike the case of our 'likes', or preferences, we choose to love or not to love and we prove our love not with our emotions, but with our actions. Diligence in another's behalf is

⁹⁸S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.14, resp: "Est autem alia industria plenior, per quam aliquis sibi et aliis potest providere...de quibuscumque pertinentibus ad humanam vitam".

⁹⁹S.T. IIa IIae q.54, a.1, ad 1: "...diligentia videtur esse idem sollicitudini; quia in his quae diligimus maiorem sollicitudinem adhibemus".

¹⁰⁰Gilby points out that 'diligentia' derives from 'diligo', which means 'to choose from among others', and is related to 'dilectio', which is the chief act of charity. Blackfriars, 141.

¹⁰¹Covey, p.80.

a sign of love for that person as much as negligence is a sign of a lack of love, or indifference. And it is to negligence and inconstancy, the two vices opposed to solicitude, command, and ultimately, therefore, to prudence itself, that we turn now.

After having listed the vices opposed to deliberation and judgment¹⁰², the first two acts of prudence, Aquinas states, in regard to command, the third and principal act: "...and with respect to a defect of effective decision and command, we have fickleness and negligence".¹⁰³ First, in regard to negligence, he says both that "negligence conveys the meaning of a lack of due solicitude" and that "To be negligent is the direct opposite of being solicitous, which is a function of the practical reason, and, when rightly exercised, of prudence".¹⁰⁴ As well, just to set our present comments in the context of what we have said above about solicitude, let us note that for Aquinas: "Negligence, like solicitude, is about the act of command".¹⁰⁵ Given the importance of the act of command, therefore, we are appraised of the centrality of negligence as well for Aquinas. The same goes, as we

¹⁰²Precipitation and thoughtlessness.

¹⁰³S.T. IIa IIae q.53, a.2, resp: "Quantum vero ad ipsum praeceptum, quod est proprius actus prudentiae, est inconstantia et negligentia".

¹⁰⁴Respectively: S.T. IIa IIae q.54, a.1 and a.2, resp: "negligentia importat defectum debitae sollicitudinis" and "negligentia directe opponitur sollicitudini".

¹⁰⁵S.T. IIa IIae q.54, a.2, ad 3: "...negligentia est circa actum praeciendi, ad quem etiam pertinet sollicitudo".

shall see, for inconstancy. These two vices are 'imprudence proper' because they oppose themselves directly, although in different ways, to the principal act of the virtue. And it is interesting to note that just as negligence holds the place of honor, if we can so speak, among the vices opposed to prudence, so negligence is perceived as "the only irremediable mistake" parents can make in raising their children, according to many parenting authors.¹⁰⁶

Now, that negligence¹⁰⁷ is so directly opposed to prudence can be devined from its etymology. The term 'negligens' comes from 'nec eligens', which means not to choose. "But [recall, precisely]

¹⁰⁶For example: James Stenson: "the one serious and irremediable defect is neglect"; p.110.

¹⁰⁷Aquinas is somewhat ambivalent, frankly, as to the nature of negligence. He says at one point that: "The inconstant man fails to come to an effective decision because he is baulked from the outside, whereas the negligent man fails because his will is not ready" (S.T. IIa IIae q.54, a.2, ad 3). It is not at all clear why Aquinas brings in the will here, if as he himself maintains, command is an act of the reason (S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.8, ad 3) and negligence is about the act of command (S.T. IIa IIae q.54, a.2, ad 3). A possible out for Aquinas is his statement elsewhere that: "negligence comes from a certain slackness of will which results in the reason not being solicitous..." (S.T. IIa IIae q.54, a.3, resp). But this lands him in another difficulty concerning the cause of negligence and inconstancy. He says at one point that they are caused by a failure in the act of command (S.T. IIa IIae q.53, a.5, resp). But if it is the act of commanding which is vitiated by these two defects, then it would appear that the causality has been reversed. In any case, Aquinas's meaning is certainly less than obvious, for we are left wondering: Are negligence and inconstancy from a failure in the act of command or do they cause such a failure. Which comes first? The solution to the first difficulty concerning negligence is perhaps most efficiently found in S.T. Ia IIae QQ 16 & 17, where Aquinas treats of 'usus' and the role of the will in the act of choice.

a right choice of means to an end is the role of prudence".¹⁰⁸ The negligent parent simply fails to make a choice in regard to her children's moral development. Instead of being solicitous and commanding the choice of certain means intended to develop virtue in her children, the negligent parent, the reactive, or non-proactive parent, simply refuses to make such a choice. It is in this sense that Aquinas speaks of negligence as an omission, which he defines as "leaving undone what one is bound to do".¹⁰⁹ Precisely, "The good deeds which a person ought to do are the proper subject matter of negligence, not that they are good when done negligently, but that through carelessness they incur a lack of goodness".¹¹⁰ And we are reminded here of our earlier debate as to whether the imprudence of parents in raising their children can be imputed to them as a moral fault. Insofar as their carelessness

¹⁰⁸S.T. IIa IIae q.54, a.2, resp: "...negligens dicitur quasi nec eligens. Electio autem recta eorum quae sunt ad finem ad prudentiam pertinet".

¹⁰⁹S.T. IIa IIae q.54, a.2, ad 2: "...est enim omissio quando praetermittitur aliquis actus debitis".

¹¹⁰S.T. IIa IIae q.54, a.1, ad 3: "...materia negligentiae proprie sunt bona quae quis agere debet: non quod ipsa sunt bona cum negligenter aguntur; sed quia per negligentiam accidit defectus bonitatis in eis...".

represents, as Aquinas says here, a 'lack of goodness', it would seem that they are culpable,¹¹¹ at least to some degree.¹¹²

Next, as to inconstancy, Aquinas maintains that it "comes about owing to a fault of reason" and that it "implies turning back from a good definitely resolved on".¹¹³ In the case of parenting, it is easy enough to imagine possible sources of inconstancy. For example, the desire for wealth, which pushes some parents to work too much and not spend the time they know they should spend with their family; an inordinate desire to seek pleasure, which pushes some parents, again, to spend too much time away from their family in a search of ever more exciting pleasures; or just plain laziness

¹¹¹MacIntyre reminds us of Augustine's penchant for supposing that "all intellectual error is rooted in moral defect". Alasdair MacIntyre Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990) p.110.

¹¹²Aquinas maintains that the principal cause of imprudence is intemperance and that the principal intemperance involved is that of lust. "Lust causes inconstancy, completely eclipsing the judgment of reason" and "[Imprudences] spring above all from unchastity" (respectively: S.T. IIa IIae q.53, a.6, ad 1 and resp). We are, therefore, forced to ask ourselves whether it is a mere coincidence that the parental blindness and lack of vigilance deplored by so many parenting authors (Stenson says parents were "taken entirely by surprize" by the changes that came upon modern society (Peer Pressure, p.12); and Dobson pleads with parents: "Where in God's name have we been!?" (Dare to Discipline, p.206)) accompany the so-called 'sexual revolution' and the advent of 'the age of comfort'. If intemperance and especially unchastity are the principal causes of imprudence, that is, should we be surprized to learn that our age is an imprudent age, that in our day parents find themselves overwhelmed by the temptations to negligence and inconstancy? Perhaps not.

¹¹³Both S.T. IIa IIae q.53, a.5, resp: "...pertinet ad defectum rationis" and "inconstantia importat recessum quendam a bono proposito definito".

and comfort-seeking, which tempt parents with the thought that training the children in virtue just requires too much effort and that it is not worth it (It is more comfortable to do nothing than to exert oneself, devising and carrying out a plan for the moral formation of our children¹¹⁴). For Aquinas, the key notion in inconstancy is that of knowledge: the inconstant man knows what he ought to do (or at least he knows what he believes he ought to do) and he has decided to do it, but yet he does not do it. Which is why inconstancy is culpable: because it prefers a lesser to a greater good. As Aquinas puts it: "It is the role of prudence to prefer a greater to a lesser good. And to surrender the greater good is the role of imprudence. But this is what inconstancy does. Therefore it belongs to imprudence".¹¹⁵ Finally, inconstancy, like negligence, is about the act of command. It is "from a failure in the act of command. For a man is called inconstant when his reason fails to carry out effectively what he has thought out and decided upon".¹¹⁶

Given, therefore, the very close rapport we have established between the habit of proactivity and the principal act of prudence,

¹¹⁴In the absence of such a clear plan of moral formation, one risks reducing one's help to parents to odd-sounding advice such as: "Keep your screaming and yelling to a minimum". In: Alvin N. Eden Positive Parenting (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1980) p.56.

¹¹⁵S.T. IIa IIae q.53, a.5, sed.

¹¹⁶S.T. IIa IIae q.53, a.5, resp: "ex hoc enim dicitur aliquis esse inconstans quod ratio deficit in praecipiendo ea quae sunt consiliata et iudicata".

to command, our hypothesis is here given support negatively. That is, if to be proactive requires that parents command well and be prudent, then whatever works against command or prudence works against proactivity. But we see that this is precisely what negligence and inconstancy - the two principal vices opposed to prudence - do. Therefore, to be negligent or inconstant in the fulfillment of our responsibilities as parents is a thoroughly non-proactive approach.

We see, then, for a variety of reasons, that to be proactive in their approach to raising their children, parents need the virtue of prudence. Prudence, a good operative habit of the practical intellect, is 'right reason acting' and it inclines its possessor, first, to act; second, to excel in the ability to command; and, third, to behave in accord with the first principles of acting. It is solicitous and diligent and not either negligent or inconstant.

Part II

The Proactive Parent is Provident

Chapter One

Beginning with the End in Mind

As a way of helping us better to understand the concept of 'beginning with the end in mind', Covey suggests that we carry out the following thought experiment. We are to imagine ourselves driving to a nearby funeral home to attend the wake¹¹⁷ of a loved one. We try to imagine how we would feel, the thoughts that would be passing through our mind, etc. As we walk into the funeral salon, we hear all the usual sounds: people weeping quietly, others whispering, and organ music playing softly. We sit down and try to recollect ourselves a bit. Finally, we decide to get up, walk across the room, and kneel before the corpse. As we gaze into the coffin, however, we are struck dumbfounded...the person in the casket is ourselves. We have imagined attending our own wake several years hence. As part of the service, four people will be asked to get up and say a few words about us and our life. They will represent, respectively, our family (our spouse and children, our brothers and sisters, our relatives, etc.), our colleagues at work, our personal friends, and fellow members of a church or community organization to which we belonged. Each of them will be asked to describe what kind of person we were: what were our personal

¹¹⁷We have modified the example somewhat for present purposes; Covey himself speaks of a funeral service.

character strengths and character weaknesses, as exhibited in the various milieux in which they knew us.¹¹⁸

The focal point of this experiment is precisely the four short speeches that these individuals will make about us. Contained therein, presumably, is a well-rounded and objective statement of what kind of person we actually were. "Now think deeply. What would you like each of these speakers to say about you and your life?" (97). By thinking seriously in this way about the things we would want these people to say, Covey suggests, we come to know what are our most basic values, the things which are most important to us. This experiment, in turn, is highly proactive first, because it is a way of acting on life before life acts on us; we foresee future events with the aim of adapting our present behavior to prepare for them. And, second, because it is a sure way of arriving at the values which proactive behavior presupposes.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸For purposes of the experiment, we shall have to assume that all four of these speakers will ignore polite custom and speak quite frankly about what you were really like, and not simply give the typical eulogy.

¹¹⁹In response to the possible objection that what Covey suggests here contradicts what he has elsewhere recommended about ignoring the 'social mirror', let us say the following. It is not the social mirror itself which is the focus here, but the experimentee's hypothetical formulation of same. And this difference is important. The experimentee is sincerely not concerned ultimately with what people think or say about her, precisely, except insofar as what they say is true. That is, because the experiment is a construction of her own mind, it is truly not what other people think or say which is the focus (which would be the case were she to concern herself with the actual social mirror), but her own values. The experimentee merely instrumentalizes her own conception of what people might truly say

We must note, as well, that this experiment provides "the most fundamental application" (98) of the habit of 'beginning with the end in mind'. It provides us, that is, with the very broadest principles which we would want to govern our life. By then keeping these values ever before our mind's eye, we can be sure not to act on a regular basis in ways which contradict them. "Each part of [our] life - today's behavior, tomorrow's behavior, next week's behavior, next month's behavior - can be examined in the context of the whole, of what really matters most to [us]" (98).

Now, the most immediate danger to such value-centered behavior is the simple fact that most people are far too busy in the normal course of a day or week to think about anything but the most pressing needs. If this is true for the average working person, it is all the more true for parents, who have not only their own needs to attend to, but also, obviously, the needs of their children. To recognize, however, that leading such a principle-directed life is not easy is not at all to say that it is not possible or worth the effort. On the contrary, it would seem, this effort is all-important. If we do not have clear in our mind the destination towards which we want to work, we will be at a loss as to what steps we should take to get there. Having a clear goal in mind is useful, among other reasons, because it gives us a standard against which to judge the usefulness of different courses of action.

about her in order to clarify her own values, not to give ultimate importance to what others think or say about her.

It is in this context that Covey speaks of what he calls 'the activity trap'. The activity trap is a way of describing the usual manner in which we work; i.e. focussed almost entirely on short-term, goals: what needs to be done this morning, what needs to be done this week, etc. It is a trap precisely because we can easily fool ourselves into thinking that we are accomplishing a lot just because we are very busy with activity. This, we know, is far from the case. As Covey puts it, "It is possible to be busy - very busy - without being very effective" (98). It is a question here of setting priorities and following them as closely as possible. What is more urgent, that is, or more immediate, is not necessarily what is more important. In fact, usually the most important matters are those which require more planning and cannot be quickly tended to.

If we recall for a moment the above example of the father who worked too much and lost his family as a result, we can understand why Covey introduces the two metaphors which are salient here. The first is the metaphor of the ladder. Typically we speak of 'climbing the ladder of success', and this is legitimate as far as it goes. The point Covey makes, however, is that what is most important is not whether we are climbing the ladder well or rapidly, but that the ladder be positioned under the point to which we need or wish to climb. As he puts it, "It is incredibly easy to get caught in an activity trap, in the busy-ness of life, to work harder and harder at climbing the ladder of success, only to discover that it is leaning against the wrong wall" (emphasis

added, 98). But this is exactly what happened in the case of the father in question. He was climbing rapidly, but his ladder was leaning against the wall of professional success, while his most cherished values were another wall entirely, the wall of 'success' with his family. The 'success', then, which he actually does achieve turns out to be rather empty because it was at the expense of something which was more valuable to him. Covey remarks, "We may be very busy, we may be very efficient, but we will also be truly effective only when we begin with the end in mind" (98).

Now, as the habit of proactivity was founded on the principle of 'response-ability', so the habit of 'beginning with the end in mind' is founded on a principle which is more fundamental than itself; namely, "the principle that all things are created twice" (99). Here the essential idea is that before a thing is created in fact, in reality, it is created beforehand in the mind of the person creating it. And this idea is not foreign to the thought of Aquinas or the other medievals, who referred to a similar notion by the term 'exemplary cause'. The exemplary cause of a thing was for them the perfected idea of the thing as it exists in the mind of its designer. The person who creates something has in his mind - however vague and for however short a time - an idea of the thing which he intends to create. The example that Covey uses is that of a house. To build a house, you need a blueprint, an idea of what the finished product will look like, before you set to work building it. Otherwise, you risk that halfway through the actual

construction you will have to begin again and undo work which was already completed. This is both costly and time-consuming. As Covey reminds us:

The carpenter's rule is 'measure twice, cut once'. You have to make sure that the blueprint, the first creation, is really what you want, that you've thought everything through. Then you put it into bricks and mortar. Each day you go to the construction shed and pull out the blueprint to get your marching orders for the day. You begin with the end in mind (99).

The idea of 'two creations', therefore, is the basis of the habit of 'beginning with the end in mind' because we cannot take effective steps to reach an end which is unknown to us.

Covey maintains that beginning with the end in mind gives us a different perspective on whatever projects we undertake (99). And we can see the reasonableness of this claim if we think for a moment of the difference in perspective between a manager and the people whom he manages. The role of a manager is broader, it includes more responsibility, than the role of a plain worker. A manager must be attentive not only to his own work, but also to the work of those under him. As a result, he must be forward-looking and concerned with long-term goals. This is what is meant, precisely, by the term 'oversee'. A manager must 'oversee' the day-to-day work of his department, not only in the sense of directing its actual performance, but also in the sense of looking over it, beyond it, to the general objective to be attained. And, consequently, his perspective is quite different from that of a worker. The worker can afford to follow, to take merely the

perspective of the present moment - this product, this sales-pitch, etc. He is on the front line, as it were, with his head down and working. The manager, on the other hand, must lead; he must have his head up and be attentive to his department's more general needs. The worker, it must be said, is not a mere tool, a machine that is simply used by the manager to accomplish some end. This is a point we shall have occasion to return to below when we discuss the 'subjects' of the virtue of prudence. As a rational being, a worker too must exercise his own degree of foresight and planning in the function he fulfills. The point is that qua worker he can allow himself to focus more exclusively on the task at hand than can a manager.

Now, although we have said that to manage means to lead, this is not the sense in which Covey uses these terms. In fact, he considers management and leadership to be quite different. And in this way we are brought to our second useful metaphor, the metaphor of the jungle.

That we might better understand the difference between managing and leading, Covey asks us to imagine a group of people "cutting their way through the jungle with machetes" (101). The people at the very front, doing the actual cutting, are the 'producers', the workers, and the people behind them, giving instructions and sharpening their machetes, are the managers. But, "The leader is the one who climbs the tallest tree, surveys the

entire situation, and yells, 'Wrong jungle!'" (101). We could say that leadership is one level up from management and that it begins with the most general end in mind. In the typical corporation, it would be represented by the president and vice-presidents of the company. What management is to actual production, then, leadership is to management: a directing vision which 'begins with the end in mind'. And, Covey concludes, "The extent to which you begin with the end in mind often determines whether or not you are able to create a successful enterprise" (99).

We said above that the idea of 'beginning with the end in mind' is based on the prior notion that 'all things are created twice'. Now, however, with the help of our two metaphors, we are in a position to link this idea of 'two creations' with that of 'leadership versus management'. Covey maintains that there is a direct relationship between the two concepts and that, simply put, "leadership is the first creation [and]...management is the second creation" (101). Leadership is concerned, that is, with the global planning and goal-setting, while management is concerned with the actual attaining of the desired end. Leadership is the first creation because it is concerned primarily with the values which direct an enterprise generally and management is the second creation because it is concerned with the production process which is guided by those values. One is the blueprint, the other the construction.

Covey makes the point that these principles - 'two creations' and 'beginning with the end in mind' - apply not only to businesses, but also to any group venture, including families. He states:

The same is true with parenting. If you want to raise responsible, self-disciplined children, you have to keep that end clearly in mind as you interact with your children on a daily basis. You can't [allow yourself] to behave toward them in ways that undermine their self-discipline or self-esteem (100).

This is a foretaste of the kind of argumentation we shall examine below in the chapters which deal specifically with different aspects of child-rearing, but it is worthwhile for the moment to make these preliminary links between proactivity and parenting. We might note that we are interested in the second creation because it is practical and prudence is a virtue of the practical intellect, but that we are also interested in the first creation because it is directive and this too is an essential feature of prudence.

Several observations need to be made here, however, concerning the two metaphors and their relation to parenting. The first is that both derive from reflection on the problem of the 'activity trap'. This trap, as we have seen, is that we are typically so busy taking care of the details of our daily work that we fail to take the time necessary to consider the more important questions about our priorities in that work. In the case of the misplaced ladder, the person on the ladder is so concentrated on his climb that he neglects to ascertain whether or not the ladder is leaning against the right wall. In the case of the workers in the jungle,

everyone is so busy cutting their way through that no one stops to think whether or not they are working in the right jungle. And the link with parenting - which we shall simply mention here - is evident. Parents ought to be concerned both with leading their families and with managing them. The temptation to get caught up in activity and forget this fact is ever present, but, as Covey insists:

Effectiveness - often even survival - does not depend solely on how much effort we expend, but on whether or not the effort we expend is in the right jungle (101).

We are perhaps reminded of so many families today which in fact could not be busier, but, at the same time, could hardly be more unhappy. This is a result very often of the kind of non-directed 'activity for activity's sake' to which Covey makes frequent reference.

I am convinced that too often parents also are trapped in the management paradigm, thinking of control, efficiency, and rules, instead of direction, purpose, and family feeling (103).

The second observation in this regard is that, given the pace at which change occurs in the modern world, the need for the kind of foresight and planning enjoined by the metaphors is that much more acute. This is to say, essentially, that the time-frames within which the important decisions have to be made have been reduced considerably. Whereas in the past, one might have been able to neglect these decisions even for some years without any dire consequences, today such an attitude is a sure recipe for failure. And, again, this is as true - perhaps even more so - in

the case of parenting as in the case of business. Indeed, "the rapidly changing environment in which we live makes effective leadership more critical than it has ever been" (101).

We need now to return to the notion of 'two creations' in order to clarify an important point. We said that the 'first creation' of anything (for example, a house or a garden) represents the values and principles - the blueprint - of the thing to be created. With these principles in hand, these plans, one can set to work building the 'second creation', which is the finished product.¹²⁰ In our own lives, however, the relation which holds between the first and second creations is often difficult to discern. What is simple to see in the building of a house, that is, is much more obscure in the case of an individual's life. What we need to do, again using our capacity of self-awareness, is to examine our ways of thinking, our paradigms, to see whether we have chosen our first creation or if it has rather been foisted unto us by our circumstances. Let us examine these different possibilities.

Covey, after reminding us that 'all things are created twice', then goes on to suggest that if we don't set out consciously (i.e. proactively) to design our own first creation, then we will have it designed for us by others. As he says: "It is a principle that all

¹²⁰Let us at least acknowledge the (largely unavoidable) ambiguity between the process of building and the thing built. We will confront a similar ambiguity below when we speak of the 'end' of parenting as: 1. the process of character formation and 2. the character strength of the child herself.

things are created twice, but not all first creations are by conscious design" (100). His point is that, whether we want to or not, we will have a first creation, we will have principles and values directing our life. The question is: Are these the values that we ourselves have chosen and with which we are in agreement or have we (reactively) allowed our environment - the people around us and the society in which we live - to decide for us what it is that we consider important and non-important? Are our values operative principles that we embrace wholeheartedly because we believe in them and because we have consciously chosen them, or are they, rather, a loose mixture of attitudes and beliefs which we have inherited from our temperament, our upbringing and family life, and the popular culture?

Covey speaks of this 'designing by default' by referring to a third and final useful metaphor: that of an actor's script. He says that reactively (i.e. uncritically) to accept what people say about us (the reflections of the social mirror), to adopt the values of the people around us, or our society generally, simply because we are too lazy or too busy to search out and affirm our own values, is like a movie actor blindly accepting to follow a script that he has never even read. In point of fact, this might land him in some enviable roles. But the point is that, first, he deserves little credit because he did not himself either create or choose these roles, and second, he might also frequently find himself playing characters for which he has no sympathy whatsoever.

In this case, of course, he would still be acting, but he would, presumably, not be authentic doing so.¹²¹

Following the metaphor, Covey suggests that we are handed many scripts throughout life. There is, for example, the script of our personal temperament. If we have an angry, choleric temperament, we have, effectively, been handed a certain script. Our physiology has written down certain scenes (eg. the repeated scenes where we lose our temper entirely and scream at our wife or beat our children¹²²) which we will have a tendency to enact, unless we make a concerted effort otherwise. There is as well the script which tells us that we should always conform to the ways of thinking and acting prevalent in our society. Finally, another script - which we saw above - might be the one which tells us that we cannot break our habits, that we are incapable of breaking with our conditioning and 'choosing our response'.

Now, faced with these various 'scripts' - handed to us, again, by our conditions and by other people - we have to make a choice. We have to choose whether we are going to accept these scripts. If we choose blindly to accept the scripts which we have been handed, then the only possible outcome is that we will lose effective

¹²¹Covey's analysis helps us to see the difference between, on the one hand, being an actor and playing a role and, on the other, being oneself and living one's life.

¹²²There are 7,300 cases of child abuse reported every day in the United States. Source: The Globe and Mail, September, 1992.

control of our life. We would have abdicated response-ability, as it were, for our life to external forces, whatever they might be. We would have allowed ourselves (because, recall, we are in fact free to act otherwise) to become 'reactive' and it would be truer to say that we are 'having our life lived' by circumstances than that we ourselves are living our life. The example of the house under construction can serve us here. Normally, it is the owner of the prospective house who gives instructions to the architect and the builders about the kind of house he is interested in building. And it is he who decides matters if there is a question about how to proceed. This is normal and as it should be. A person, however, who would unquestioningly accept all the scripts handed to him for his life would be like a homeowner who would abdicate his responsibility and allow someone else to make all the important decisions about the design of his house.

Now, if we choose to question the scripts handed to us by our environment, many possibilities open up before us. We can, using our self-awareness, decide which scripts need only to be revised and which need to be thrown out entirely. We might, for example, agree that we have a highly choleric temperament; we might examine ourselves and examine the script which casts us as angry and abusive and agree that there are aspects of this character in ourselves. At this point, however, we can accept those aspects of the script which are true, reject those aspects which are false or exaggerated, and effectively rewrite our script according to our

own values and goals; not rewriting our temperament, but rewriting our response to it. In this way, we are responsible both for our 'first creation' (the principles guiding construction, our values) and for our 'second creation' (the constructed thing itself, our life). Thus, both 'creations' come about by design and not by default. As Covey puts it: "We are either the second creation of our own proactive design, or we are the second creation of other people's agendas, of circumstances, or of past habits" (100).

'Rescripting', then, for Covey, is the process by which we "become our own first creator" (103). We can be responsible, according to him, not only for our second creation, our attitudes and behaviors, but also for our first creation, the principles which underlie these attitudes and behaviors. He gives as an example of someone who 'rescripted' his life, the late president of Egypt, Anwar Sadat. We have neither the space nor the need here to recount the whole story, so we shall limit ourselves to the main points. Covey tells of how Sadat was, from his youth, "deeply scripted in a hatred for Israel" (103). He was so convinced of Israel's guilt that he rallied an entire nation to join him in his hatred. And he largely succeeded. But, with the passage of time, Sadat began to realize that this script of hatred towards Israel was wrongheaded and had to be changed. He, therefore, 'rescripted' himself. "He learned to withdraw from his own mind and look at it to see if the scripts were appropriate and wise" (104). Seeing, precisely, that in this case they were neither appropriate nor

wise, he decided to write for himself a new script towards Israel. This new script led him, as is well known, to begin the unprecedented peace talks with Israel which resulted in the Camp David Accord. And the parallels for our own lives are easily enough drawn. Covey himself provides us with an excellent example of one such parallel taken from ordinary family life. Let us turn to this example now and then go on explain what is meant by a 'Personal Mission Statement'.

As we have seen, the principal reason for 'beginning with the end in mind' is to assure that our daily behavior is congruent with the values we want to affirm and the goals we have set for ourselves. Unfortunately, very often we find ourselves behaving in ways which undermine these values and goals. We have perhaps developed habits which go in exactly the opposite direction from the one in which we want to go. And, as a result, we often feel the frustration of neither living according to our principles nor achieving what we set out to achieve. We know, however, that we do not have to continue to behave in this manner. We are, if we would only realize it, able to choose other responses, to 'rewrite our scripts', and 'become our own first creator'. Here, then, is Covey's example.

Suppose that I am highly overreactive towards my children. Suppose that whenever they begin to do something I feel is inappropriate, I sense an immediate tensing in the pit of my stomach. I feel defensive walls go up; I prepare for battle. My focus is not on the long-term growth and understanding, but on the short-term behavior. I am trying to win the battle, not the war.

I pull out my ammunition - my superior size, my position of authority - and I yell or intimidate or threaten or punish. And I win. I stand there victorious, in the middle of the debris of a shattered relationship while my children are outwardly submissive and inwardly rebellious, suppressing feelings that will come out later in uglier ways (104/5).¹²³

This example is (no doubt purposely) written in overdramatic terms. But it is useful precisely because it underlines the unconscious nature of much of our day-to-day behavior. We are constantly, as it were, 'acting without thinking'. No sane parent consciously envisages his relations with his children in terms of a military skirmish. But we often perhaps act as if we were so engaged: we treat the people around us like opponents in some unspoken contest. What is pertinent, however, is not the particular behavior - which is, presumably, "incongruent with the things we really value in life" (104) - but the fact that quite often our behavior is not a reasoned, proactive response to our environment, but rather a thoughtless reaction to it.

Covey asks us, then, to return momentarily to the thought experiment of our own funeral. He says that we have to stop sometime and ask ourselves just what it is we would want our children truthfully to be able to say about us as parents. This is highly instructive. Would we want them (again, setting aside the foolishness of the proposal) to stand up and describe us as self-

¹²³Dr. James Dobson, in his book, The New Dare To Discipline remarks that children know instinctively the wisdom of the adage: 'Don't mock the alligator until you are across the stream' (p.26).

centered, impatient, and abusive? Of course, no one would want such a thing. And the reason is that no one values selfishness, impatience, or abuse as ends in themselves. Someone might value the relative goods which are sometimes achieved by means of these character traits - such as peace and quiet, comfort, or efficiency - but no one values the traits themselves. And the reason for this, in turn, as we shall see below, is that what we value, ultimately, is goodness and none of these traits is in itself good.¹²⁴ What we would unquestionably want our children to be able to say is that we were kind and loving parents who always put their children's needs before their own preferences. We would want them to describe us as patient and forgiving, as well as responsible, demanding, respectful, and fair. But if, Covey suggests, we sincerely would want our children so to be able to describe us, then we should behave now with that end in mind.¹²⁵ Taking this possible future situation into account, we should alter our present behavior in such a way as to merit these words of praise.

One important reason why as parents we often do not act according to the values which are most important to us is simply

¹²⁴The inverse of 'On ne peut pas etre contre la vertu' is: 'On ne peut pas etre pour le vice'.

¹²⁵It is interesting to observe that the very fact that so few people actually organize their life with such a funeral in mind is evidence for the claim that to do so is to behave proactively. This is the case precisely because to be pro-active, as opposed to being merely active, means to take the initiative, to act before one is acted upon, to foresee how future contingent events will transpire, and then adjust our present behavior accordingly.

that there are so many other things calling for our immediate attention. We are reminded here again of the 'activity trap'. We want, at least theoretical - and with a listless wanting, to act with integrity and to behave towards our children as we ideally ought to behave. But under the pressures of daily life, our ideals either fail to get formulated or, if formulated, get pushed aside to make room for more urgent matters. As Covey says:

What matters most gets buried under pressing problems, immediate concerns, and outward behaviors. I become reactive. And the way I interact with my children every day often bears little resemblance to the way I deeply feel about them (105).

Let us look now at the role of the imagination in our overcoming habits of reactivity.

If we are truly proactive, then we know how to use our imagination to help us change our behavior. This we can do by picturing to ourselves possible future situations and planning the response we will make. Covey calls this "visualization and affirmation" (132) and gives an example which shows clearly why it is by nature proactive. He says that rather than allowing ourselves to react to the behavior of our children, we can plan in advance how we are going proactively to respond to it.

I can think about situations in which my children might misbehave. I can visualize them in rich detail...[I can imagine them doing] something which normally makes my heart pound and my temper start to flare. But instead of seeing my normal response, I can see myself handle the situation with all the love, the power, the self-control I have captured in my affirmation...I can write the program [and follow] the script [which] I have written from my own self-selected value system (133).

In so doing, of course, we free ourselves from the bonds of our conditions. We effectively increase our freedom of action because we refuse to allow external stimuli to determine how we behave. Consequently, our behavior is a function of our free choices and not of our bad habits; of our decisions, and not of our conditions.

Let us turn now to the subject of 'Personal Mission Statements', as these are an important cause of the kind of behavior we have just described. Covey calls them, strikingly, "the most effective way...to begin with the end in mind" (106). And, if we recall just how central in turn is this latter notion, we will be struck all the more by the significance of this claim. We might say that the principal characteristic of proactive people is the fact that they habitually begin with the end in mind; in many ways, the two terms are equivalent. Covey ably summarizes this reciprocity as follows.

Once you have that sense of mission, you have the essence of your own proactivity. You have the vision and the values which direct your life. You have the basic direction from which you set your long and short-term goals. You have the power of a written constitution based on correct principles, against which every decision concerning the most effective use of your time, your talents, and your energies can be effectively measured (108/109; emphasis added).

We need, therefore, an understanding, however elementary, of these Mission Statements and the function they perform.

A Personal Mission Statement, as its name implies, is a formal declaration of a person's values and goals. It need not - and

probably ought not - be a public document; but it is 'formal' in the sense that it has been written down precisely to underline its relative permanence.¹²⁶ Next, these Statements are based not on our feelings or on our whims, but on what we consider ultimately important in life: our values, what we choose to stand for. What, then, might such a Statement look like? Given the inevitable particularity of Mission Statements, the most efficient way of explaining what they are is simply to give an actual example. Covey supplies us with one woman's Statement which we present here.

I will seek to balance career and family as best I can since both are important to me. My home will be a place where I and my family, friends, and guests find joy, comfort, peace, and happiness. Still I will seek to create a clean and orderly environment, yet livable and comfortable. I will exercise wisdom in what we choose to eat, read, see, and do at home. I especially want to teach my children to love, to learn, and to laugh - and to work and develop their unique talents.

I value the rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of our democratic society. I will be a concerned and informed citizen, involved in the political process to ensure that my voice is heard and my vote is counted.

¹²⁶It has only 'relative' permanence simply because what has been agreed upon, the values that have been affirmed, for example, at one point in a person's life, need not remain absolutely unchanged for the rest of his or her life. As we learn new things and mature intellectually and emotionally, our values can change. Our Personal Mission Statement should, therefore, take into account this natural flexibility. With that said, let us make two qualifications of this claim. First, although our values change, this change is more often than not in matters which are non-essential to our moral life (For example, we one day come to the realization that television-watching is a complete waste of time (our values change) and we decide to cut our viewing-time in half). Second, precisely, once a serious effort has been made to devise a Personal Mission Statement, it would be surprising that a person's most fundamental values would change very much after that point. The whole purpose of the exercise, recall, is to discover, what are the values which we consider 'lighthouse principles'. That these should change with time is certainly possible, but should be, after the exercise, ex hypothesi, quite rare.

I will be a self-starting individual and exercise initiative in accomplishing my life's goals. I will act on situations and opportunities, rather than to be acted upon. I will always try to keep myself free from addictive and destructive habits. I will develop habits that free me from old labels and limits and expand my capabilities and choices.

My money will be my servant, not my master. I will seek financial independence over time. My wants will be subject to my needs and my means. Except for long-term home and car loans, I will seek to keep myself free from consumer debt. I will spend less than I earn and regularly save or invest part of my income.

Moreover, I will use what money and talents I have to make life more enjoyable for others through service and charitable giving (107).

Now, we need to remark two features of this Statement which are common to all well-thought-out Mission Statements.

First, the Statement touches on all of the major aspects of this woman's life: her personal and family life, her professional life, and her social/political life. This is a necessary characteristic of a well-conceived Statement for the simple reason that human beings are not normally uni-dimensional. It could happen that at one point in a person's life or for the whole of an individual's life, one aspect of life dominates entirely over the other aspects. For example, a person might for a short period be forced by extraordinary circumstances to devote very long and absorbing hours to her professional work, placing everything else temporarily in a position of secondary importance. Or, an individual, as a result of certain psychological needs which to him are unique, might tend to focus his entire life on one aspect to the neglect of the others. But the point is that these situations are not the norm. The vast majority of people have personal and

professional plans and goals, as well as regular family and social obligations which bind them to act in a variety of different roles. The vast majority of people are, that is, quite multi-dimensional. For this reason, a good Mission Statement must include resolutions taken by the individual which touch on each of these aspects of her life.

Second, the Statement includes decisions which vary in degree of specificity from the most general ("find joy, comfort, peace and happiness") to the very specific ("keep myself free from consumer debt"). While unquestionably the majority of Statements will tend to be more general than specific, it is important that this fact does not preclude an individual from making also very specific resolutions in his or her Statement. The general principles guide the overall movement of the Statement, but the specific resolutions are essential as well. Depending on the individual making the Mission Statement, and on the experience he or she has in writing them, the degree of specificity will vary considerably.

Now, a further remark we might make concerning this Mission Statement is the following; and this is related to the first point above. Although it is called a 'Personal Mission Statement', in fact in the case of someone who is a parent - and, therefore, called in some measure to lead others, as well as herself - such a Statement will inevitably exert an influence on all the other aspects of the person's life. In the particular case under

examination, for example, we see that this woman has taken firm decisions which influence not only her own comportment, but also, effectively, that of everyone in her home, especially the children ("in what we choose to eat, read, see, and do at home", for example). This necessary inter-relatedness of the different features of a Mission Statement can help us, in turn, to see the usefulness of devising not only personal Mission Statements, but also Mission Statements which are meant to focus on a particular aspect of a person's life, for example, his or her family. Covey is cognizant of this and in fact devotes an entire section to Family Mission Statements. Let us conclude, therefore, this opening chapter of Part II with a brief overview of what Covey has to say in this regard, as it is so pertinent to the present paper.

A Family Mission Statement, then, is simply the application of all that we have seen thus far about Personal Statements as it concerns the domain of family life. If an individual can set his or her own priorities and values, then parents can - and ought - to set similar priorities for their families. And the reasons and consequences of this are quite similar. We clarify our values, precisely, before (or at the very beginning) of the task of raising a family because we want to 'begin with the end in mind'. We decide, that is, to keep always before our mind's eye those values and principles which are most important to us and which we have chosen to direct our daily behavior. And we want this, in turn, because we want actually to achieve the goals we have set for

ourselves. We want, presumably, to be effective individuals; which is only rational. We see, then, that "Habit 2" (137), as Covey calls it, or 'beginning with the end in mind', can be applied not only to individuals, but to families as well. Touching on concepts to which we have alluded previously, Covey laments that:

Many families are managed on the basis of crises, moods, quick fixes, and instant gratification - not on sound principles. Symptoms surface whenever stress and pressure mount: people become cynical, critical, or silent or they start yelling and overreacting. Children who observe these kinds of behavior grow up thinking that the only way to solve problems is fight or flight (138).

Having a Family Mission Statement, however, precludes this unfortunate state of affairs because it unites the family under a "shared vision" and "values" (138). Instead of reacting, again, to the environment, proactive parents - parents who care enough about their family to set values and goals for it and devise a Family Mission Statement - respond, effectively, in advance of any particular home situation. They have acted on life before life has had a chance to act on them.

Now, to say as much would seem to suggest that these Family Mission Statements are very much the top-heavy initiative of the parents alone and that the children have little or no say in their creation. Two remarks need to be made in this regard. First, as many of the authors studied for the present dissertation point out, parenthood is not an elective office and parents, therefore, should not feel the need to justify to their children the fact of their authority or the fact that they have to make certain decisions

which will affect the whole family. The idea of a genuinely 'democratic' family, that is, is so much naive nonsense.¹²⁷

Second, Covey is sensitive, nonetheless, to the importance - in the degree possible - of having children participate in the formulation of these Family Mission Statements. As he puts it:

By getting input from every family member, drafting a statement, getting feedback, revising it, and using wording from different family members, you get the family talking, communicating, on things that really matter deeply. [In fact] the best mission statements are the result of family members coming together in a spirit of mutual respect, expressing their different views, and working together to create something greater than any one individual could do alone (138).

¹²⁷It might be objected that in a family which is not democratic, whatever a 'democratic' family might mean in real life, the children would be forced to follow the scripts handed to them by their parents and that they would, therefore, not be being educated to be proactive themselves. We would respond that this objection loses its force once the difference between authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative parenting is understood. The objection is aimed at and holds for an authoritarian approach to parenting: where rules and directives are given (as they indeed must be for children) but no effort is made to explain them to the children. Which is why authoritarian parenting is defective. Permissive parenting errs by simply not giving, or at least not enforcing, rules and directives in the first place. The truly authoritative parent, on the other hand, as we shall see more clearly in Part III, can give structure and discipline to her children's lives without disrespecting them as persons because she takes the time to explain (to the degree she deems necessary) the reasons for her rules. And this is the key. She 'gets behind the eyes' of her child, tries to understand him and see things from his perspective. By so doing, she has the possibility of truly communicating with her child and of making her discipline appear quite reasonable to him. As a result, the child is encouraged not merely to conform himself to his parent's values, but to see their inherent reasonableness and freely embrace them for himself. Precisely by taking the time to communicate with her child and to educate him, the authoritative parent enables her child to act freely, proactively. She educes from him a free decision to embrace the good towards which her rules point.

Thus is this particular concern equitably circumvented.

We have seen both that to be proactive is, in many respects, equivalent to beginning with the end in mind and that having a Personal Mission Statement is 'the most effective way' of so beginning. We can conclude, therefore, assuming a substantial similarity between Personal and Family Mission Statements, that the most proactive thing parents can do for their family is to devise such a statement of purpose. This Statement, in turn,...

...becomes the framework for thinking, for governing the family. When the problems and crises come, the constitution is there to remind family members of the things that matter most and to provide direction for problem solving and decision-making based on correct principles (138).

A Family Mission Statement acts, then, as a bulwark protecting the response-ability of the individual family members (and perhaps especially that of the parents themselves) because it foresees and precludes the possibility that important decisions be made on the basis of emotions or of circumstance. The principles which comprise them, that is, are clearly enough defined that family members would recognize immediately if and when these principles were in danger of being contradicted on account of some would-be 'need'. They are thus enabled to respond as reason suggests they ought to respond and are not forced to act as circumstances would dictate. Their Family Mission Statement, at once a product and precondition of their proactivity, has thus considerably enhanced the freedom with which they act in family life.

We see, then, that to 'begin with the end in mind' is, effectively, to plan, to think ahead about the goal we want to attain, and then set out to attain it. And this habit of foresight is as useful and as necessary in the realm of parenting as in the personal realm, perhaps even more so.¹²⁸ Having completed these preliminary considerations on what it means to 'begin with the end in mind' let us now look briefly at a particular application of this habit; namely, parental planning, and see how the virtue of prudence is essential for parents who want to 'begin with the end in mind' and effectively plan their children's growth in character.

¹²⁸Donagan points out that when we do something for another person - as conscientious parents are constantly doing things for their children - we treat that person as an end, and not merely a means. Parents act "out of concern" for their children. Alan Donagan Human Ends and Human Actions (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1985) p.3.

Chapter Two

Prudence's Providence

We saw in the previous chapter that an essential part of what it means to be proactive is to have the habit of, as Covey puts it, 'beginning with the end in mind'. The person who begins with the end in mind tries to envisage to herself, as she commences any new enterprise, just what is her aim, the goal towards which she is striving. Of course, doing so, having our end in mind as we begin an undertaking, helps us to make decisions about the direction we ought to take if we would arrive at that end. Not knowing where we would like to arrive is a sure way of never actually arriving there for the simple reason that if we are ignorant of the end, we will, by the force of things, be ignorant of the appropriate means that will lead us to that end. The end that we propose to ourselves affects all the decisions we subsequently make regarding the means we will employ to get there.

It is in this context that Covey speaks of the experiment of the funeral. We think first of the kind of person we would like people to be able to describe us as, then we set about thinking of what means we ought to take - what changes, that is, to our present behavior we need to implement - in order to make this end possible. The end is: the kind of person we want to be. The means are: any number of resolutions we might thereafter make regarding our

habitual behavior.¹²⁹ If we see that we are presently an impatient and angry person, we might make the resolution, for example, never to speak to others when we are angry over some fault that has been committed. We resolve to let some time pass before addressing ourselves to the situation as a way of gaining more control over our angry reactions. And this last word shows us precisely why it is proactive to begin with the end in mind. Instead of mindlessly reacting to our conditions (in this instance, the 'condition' of our choleric temperament), we are enabled thoughtfully, i.e. deliberately, to choose our own response. Having a clear idea of how we would like people to perceive us (as a gentle and patient person and not a foul-tempered person), we are enabled to be proactive, and not merely reactive. Beginning with the end in mind, looking to the future, that is, with the intention of modifying our present behavior in consequence, is an essential feature of what it means to be proactive. And, as such, it is central to Covey's overall project of effectiveness.

In the present chapter, then, our argument shall take the following form. It is not possible to be proactive (r) without 'beginning with the end in mind' (q), but it is not possible to begin with the end in mind without possessing the intellectual virtue of prudence (p). Therefore, it is not possible to be

¹²⁹Choice is always concerned with means and not ends. "...le choix ne se rapporte pas davantage a la fin, mais aux moyens: en un mot, le choix a pour objet ce qui est en notre pouvoir". Dom Odon Lottin Psychologie et Morale aux XIIe et XIIIe Siecles (Gembloux, Belgique: J. Duculot, 1954) p.525.

proactive without possessing the intellectual virtue of prudence (If no p, then no q; if no q, then no r; therefore, if no p, then no r). The reason why it is not possible to begin with the end in mind without prudence, as we shall see in more detail presently, is because it is precisely by means of foresight, or providence ('providentia'), the principal of the so-called 'integral parts' of prudence, that an individual is enabled to "think about matters far ahead inasmuch as they serve to help or hinder what then and there is to be done".¹³⁰ To be proactive requires that we look to the future, envisage our goal, and then so order our present actions as to achieve that goal. But this is precisely the work of providence and, thus, of prudence.

Now, before we embark on the task of making this argument from 'beginning with the end in mind' to 'providentia', it behooves us to ask whether such considerations are useful, or relevant, in light of our chosen subject matter: parenting. And it would seem that, yes, considerations of this kind are altogether pertinent and even timely. We made mention in Part I of a possible paradigm shift in parenting styles which has been taking place over the past thirty or forty years. This shift is, as we said, away from authoritarian and permissive parenting and towards what is called 'authoritative' parenting. This latter style includes as one of its central features an active concern for the moral formation of

¹³⁰S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.1, ad 2: "...considerat ea quae sunt procul inquantum ordinantur ad adiuvandum vel impediendum ea quae sunt praesentialiter agenda".

the children, seeking as it does a proper balance between discipline and affection. Now, this concern that authoritative parents have is manifested in, among other things, the long and short-term goals they set for their children's growth in character. And one author we have studied, James Stenson, is particularly lucid on this point. And so we turn to him now.

Stenson says unreservedly, and with great significance for the present dissertation, that the "biggest problem" in parenting is the fact that too often parents do not think ahead to the kinds of people they would like their children to be when they are adults. Caught up in the rush and bustle of daily life, they fail to do enough of what he calls "strategic planning". They neglect to take the time and effort necessary consciously to choose the kind of young adults they would like their children to become and to develop a clear plan of character formation which would lead them in this direction. They neglect, that is, as they raise their children, to have a clear end in mind. And, as a result, the means they choose are often less than propitious.

Now, given the modern obsession with freedom and for the so-called 'rights of children'¹³¹, a word needs to be said about

¹³¹This phrase, of course, does have a legitimate usage. Children are certainly owed all the rights proper to human persons, being themselves persons. The phrase is used illegitimately, however, in the present author's opinion, when it is used - as it is frequently used today - to depict the relations between parents and children in overly adversarial terms. The notion of a youngster litigiously insisting on his 'rights as a child' before

parents 'choosing the kind of young adults they would like their children to become', as we have deliberately put it. The relevant distinction which needs to be made and which resolves the difficulty for all but the most obtuse, is that between being and doing, between, for example, a person's character and her career. Parents have the right, and, according to the present paper, the duty to do their reasonable best to help their children grow up virtuously. We will have more to say specifically about this below; here let it suffice to say the following. While (by definition) there is no accounting ultimately for the action of a free agent (and children are obviously free to reject the values taught them by their parents), parents, we would argue, have the right and duty, by reason of their legitimate authority as progenitors and primary care-givers, to raise their children according to their own values, inasmuch as these values do not contradict right reason.

As a result, although 'choose' is a deliberately provocative term, when we say that parents need to choose the kinds of adults they want to children to become, it is in the sense of their character, in terms of their ensemble of virtues, and not, as the legitimate defenders of freedom might fear, in the sense of their career. While everyone would agree that it is wrong for parents to insist stubbornly that a particular child adopt a particular career

his parents, when taken as the normal state of affairs, borders on the grotesque and is an insult to the nobility of the institution of the family. And as such it should be rejected vigorously.

against his wishes, would anyone have the effrontery to suggest that it is wrong for parents to encourage their children to be prudent, just, brave, and temperate? This is what is meant by the above statement: that parents have a clear idea of the virtues they want to see develop in their children as they grow up. This is a legitimate concern for what their children are and will become and has nothing whatsoever to do with the heavy-handed meddling typical of authoritarian parenting. And if it is suggested that educating children in virtue involves a lack of respect for their freedom, we would respond that it is precisely the virtues, both individual and social, which enable a person to be truly free and to overcome that most subtle and suffocating of bondages: bad habit.¹³²

We have suggested above that it is the role of parents to educate¹³³ their children in virtue. And, while this is true, we would like to emphasize that this education always must take place in the context of mutual respect.¹³⁴ The children ought to respect their parents, it is true; but the parents ought themselves to

¹³²According to one author, "Virtue is simply health of the soul". Peter Kreeft Back to Virtue (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992) p.64.

¹³³We use the term 'educate' broadly here. Ostheimer prefers a stricter delineation of 'education' and 'discipline': "the former refers to the intellect, and the latter to the will. It is not enough to teach children what is right; the will must be trained to do the right". Anthony L. Ostheimer The Family: A Thomistic Study in Social Philosophy Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1939; p.82.

¹³⁴Cf. Anna W.M. Wolf The Parents' Manual (New York: Fred Ungar, 1962) p.237.

respect their children as persons. Parenting, again, is a relation of persons, wherein the otherness of the children must always be respected for what it is: unique. A good parent is a parent who loves her children. But to love is precisely to want to promote the good of the other. Parents must do this. They must respect the otherness of their children and not be pushy or authoritarian with them. The way that they can do this is by respecting the child's nature as an intelligent and free being and by trying to promote the intelligence and freedom of their children. After all, the goal of what we have called 'proactive parenting' is not to produce good little robots who never commit any mistakes and are morally perfect. If parents do not respect their children's freedom and intelligence, then the response of the children will not even be a moral response because a moral act is an act which is performed freely, and not under coercion. The role of the parents is to get their children to search out and affirm their own values, even if this means in practice encouraging them to try to see the reasonableness of the parents' values. But if the children embrace their parents' values, this embracing must be the result of a free choice on their part. The parents must make an effort, that is, to elicit a free response in their children.¹³⁵

¹³⁵Whence the need for parents truly to be the friends of their children. A friend respects the freedom of the other as other. We return to the question of authoritative parenting as opposed to authoritarian or permissive parenting. The authoritative parent has the possibility of being the friend of her children because she listens to them and makes a sincere effort to understand their unique perspective as individuals before charging in with a dozen rules and regulations. She allows her children, precisely, to

With that said, let us now examine in more detail Stenson's claim that parents need above all to have a clear idea of their end, of the kinds of people they would like their children to become. We need to distinguish first, then, the two levels on which parents need to make decisions of this kind. The first level is the level of what we can call the 'remote end', or the end as such. And the second level is the level of the 'proximate end', which is in effect equivalent to the means. The first level is that of the ultimate end and the second is that of the intermediate ends, which, again, can be seen as means to the final end. Now, in the case of parenting, the ultimate end is the virtuous young adult and the means is a series of resolutions which the parents make based on their values; it is a plan of character formation. Let us look at each of these in turn.

It would be instructive at this point to recall briefly the three metaphors with which Covey provides us: the metaphor of the ladder, the metaphor of the jungle, and the metaphor of the house under construction. All teach us essentially the same lesson: that one of the most prudent and proactive things we can do as we begin any undertaking is to set for ourselves a clear image of our goal. The person on the ladder was disappointed because when he got to the top of the ladder he realized that it was leaning against the wrong wall. So, he had gotten somewhere...but not to the place he

question her rules and she knows how to give patient responses to their legitimate questions. This is how she wins over their heart, in fact, and gains both their confidence and respect.

had intended. Likewise with the people making their way through the jungle with machetes. They were working very hard and making great progress, but since they had their heads down, and neglected to look up at their destination, they were disappointed later to find out that all their work had been done in the wrong jungle. In both of these cases, the end was not reached, and the people were ineffective and disappointed, because they neglected to begin with the end in mind and keep that end ever before them. The metaphor of the house under construction is more positive. It shows simply that to build a house you need a blueprint, that "all things are created twice": first on paper, then in fact.

Now, the lesson which these metaphors contain for the case of parenting is easily enough drawn. Parents too, as they set out to raise their children, need to have a clearly defined image of their goal, their end. And the obvious end which parents ought to seek is: to raise their children in such a way that they will become virtuous adults. Perhaps when the children are still growing up, it is not at all clear how they will one day be adult men and women of strong character, virtuous individuals who can be counted on to contribute positively to the building up of human society. But this will indeed occur if parents keep their goal, their blueprint, ever before their eyes and work to implement it consistently¹³⁶ over

¹³⁶William Damon maintains that it is precisely parents' consistent use of their authority "which makes them attractive role models for their children". William Damon The Moral Child (New York: The Free Press, 1988) p.58.

the years. Thus, we need to specify which wall parents want their ladder leaning against and which jungle they want to be working in (or, perhaps, ought to want to be working in). In a word, we need a blueprint for the virtuous adult parents want their children to become.

Let us begin the sketch of this blueprint by noting two things. First, this blueprint is universal; it cuts across every possible line dividing human beings. That is, it applies to all people regardless of their race, religion, nationality, or gender. We shall speak, for example, of the need for parents to encourage their children to live the virtue of justice; i.e. to be fair-minded and to respect the legitimate rights of others. Well, this is the type of behavior we would want to see exhibited as much by a man as by a woman and as much by a person of one race or religion as of another. A 'virtue' is by definition a good, something which benefits both the person who possesses it and those towards whom it is exercised. It only stands to reason, therefore, that we should be able to encourage all people universally to be virtuous. And this leads us to our second point; namely, that true virtue is not, contrary to its typical depiction in the mass media, a nay-saying and sombre affair. As we shall see presently, virtue implies the embracing of goodness. And, since contentment comes essentially from the possession of the good, it follows that virtue leads us, as many philosophers besides Aquinas have taught, to the only true

happiness. The life of virtue is above all an affirmation of the good and is, therefore, something very positive.¹³⁷

Covey provides us with a helpful way of viewing the nature of virtue; he distinguishes between what he calls "primary greatness" and "secondary greatness", saying that while the latter is the recognition we might receive for our good qualities, be they moral or otherwise, the former is our character, the ensemble of good qualities, virtues, that inhere in our personality and make secondary greatness possible. Thus, to have 'primary greatness' is to be a person of strong character, a person with a character full of virtues.¹³⁸ Virtues, in turn, are specific instantiations of values, a term much maligned, but not entirely without meaning, even when speaking in the context of Thomistic morality. Several

¹³⁷We make this second point to preclude the objection that it is unfair to 'force children to be virtuous' (itself a ludicrous contradiction in terms because virtue implies that the good is embraced freely) because it will make them dull and miserable. This objection carries weight only with those who accept the common depiction of the life of virtue as something worrisome and sad and the life of vice as something care-free and happy. In fact, quite the opposite is true. The objection holds, that is, only with people who accept the presuppositions behind the adage (no more true for its being oft-repeated): 'I'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints'. Again, it is not at all obvious, at least not to anyone with a modicum of experience dealing with people, that it is not precisely the opposite which is the case and that in fact 'sinners', so-called, spend a lot more time crying than do their repentant counterparts.

¹³⁸And we can see right away the link between strong character and virtue. The very word, 'virtue', derives from the Latin nouns: 'vis', which means, precisely, a strength, or force, or power; and 'vir', which means man; and 'virtus', which means manliness, or courage. To be a man in the full sense of the Latin term is to be, precisely, someone of strong character, a virtuous individual.

authors, in fact, make a helpful use of so-called 'values talk' as a way of better understanding just what we mean when we say that parents want (or, again, ought to want) their children to grow up into virtuous adults. In a word, to say that we want our young adults to possess certain virtues is another way of saying that we want them to affirm with their habitual behavior given values.

Richard and Linda Eyre, for example, begin their treatment of moral values by defining what they mean by 'values' and by 'morality'.¹³⁹ For them, values are "the standards of our actions and the attitudes of our hearts that shape who we are, how we live, and how we treat other people" and morality is "behavior that is inherently right and that helps rather than hurts other people".¹⁴⁰ As they see it, it is the role of parents to instruct their children in certain values, precisely so that the children will be able to lead moral lives. They recognize, with other authors, that "If children start from a 'values vacuum' - with none taught, none learned - they will float at the mercy of circumstance and situation and their own lives will never be their own".¹⁴¹ What parents need to do, then, is to think about which values they want

¹³⁹This defining of values is important, in turn, for the children, who need "a clear understanding of their values and goals". Ethel Kavin Parenthood in a Free Nation vol 1 (New York: MacMillan, 1963) pp.98-99.

¹⁴⁰Eyres, p.15.

¹⁴¹Ibid. p.14.

their children to learn and then find practical ways of teaching them.

The Eyres, agreeing with Aquinas that "individual and collective happiness is connected to (if not the direct product of) behavior that is governed by moral values",¹⁴² then set out to devise a list of twelve "universal values". They divide this list of values in half; into six "values of being" and six "values of giving". Before enumerating this list of values, however, let us elaborate on the Eyres' conception of what is a value and on the relation which holds between what they call "value-reflecting behavior"¹⁴³ and personal contentment. And here two remarks need to be made.

First, in addition to being, as they say, "other and self-benefitting qualities", values are also qualities which are "given as they are gained and gained as they are given".¹⁴⁴ By this, the Eyres mean that the more fully we live according to these values, the more likely we are to be treated by others according to them as well. This is not obvious, and so some explanation is needed. We have here two pieces of practical wisdom which are seemingly at odds. The first, what would contradict the Eyres' view, is summed

¹⁴²Eyres, p.20.

¹⁴³Ibid. p.22.

¹⁴⁴Ibid. p.28.

up in the aphorism, 'nice guys finish last'. This means, essentially, that if you are upright and honest in your dealings with others, dishonest men will take advantage of your goodwill and you will not succeed. The second piece of practical wisdom - what is more in line with what the Eyres are suggesting - is captured in the sayings, (positively) 'kindness is contagious' and (negatively) 'what goes around comes around'. These say, respectively: 'treat others well and others will treat you well' and 'treat others poorly and others will treat you poorly'. Both are, effectively, goads to good behavior and a challenge to the wisdom of 'nice guys finish last'. What the Eyres would respond to this would-be contradiction (if we have understood well their intention) is something Covey also would agree with wholeheartedly; namely: 'nice guys finish last' is only true (if it is true at all) in the short term and among given individuals. The contradiction, then, is only apparent. It may be true that in the short term and among certain kinds of people the upright individual will be taken advantage of and 'fail'. But - the Eyres, Covey, and every 'character ethic' author would contend - in the long term and among the vast majority of people, fundamental goodness will be respected, reciprocated, and, by and large, 'successful'.

The second point which needs to be made is simply that according to the Eyres (and, again, Aquinas), to live by the values we shall enumerate below is conducive to personal contentment. 'Value-reflecting behavior', they would argue, allows us to live

our life with a maximum of order, efficiency, and peace of mind. By leading a virtuous life, that is, we not only attract the admiration and goodwill of everyone who knows us, but we are able, with genuine peace of mind, to be 'highly effective' and thus succeed largely in the tasks and projects we undertake.¹⁴⁵

The Eyres' twelve 'universal values', therefore, are:

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Honesty | 1. Loyalty/Dependability |
| 2. Courage | 2. Respect |
| 3. Peaceability | 3. Love |
| 4. Self-reliance/Potential | 4. Unselfishness/Sensitivity |
| 5. Discipline/Moderation | 5. Kindness/Friendliness |
| 6. Fidelity/Chastity. | 6. Justice/Mercy. ¹⁴⁶ |

They then go on to define and describe each one of these values and to tell why it is important to teach them to young children. We are not going to take the space here to give the definitions, as the general sense of each one of these values is quite transparent. As Lickona puts it:

When it comes to the moral values we want our children to have, we can readily agree on the basics. We don't want them to lie, cheat on tests, take what is not theirs, call names, hit each other, or be cruel to animals; we do want them to tell the truth, play fair, be polite, respect their parents and teachers, do their schoolwork, and be kind to others.¹⁴⁷

The Eyres' purpose in listing these values is not by any means to suggest that there is only one 'recipe' for raising children

¹⁴⁵This notion is certainly consistent with what has been called variously 'the Puritan ethic' and 'the Protestant work ethic'.

¹⁴⁶Eyres, p.29.

¹⁴⁷Lickona, p.47.

well.¹⁴⁸ The methods employed by parents to instill these or other character strengths in their children are in fact, as is understandable, quite varied. The tenor of the Eyres' book agrees fully with these words of James Stenson:

[As for] clear-cut formulas or recipes for raising children well...It is my firm conviction that there are no such things; there are many different approaches to being a successful parent...¹⁴⁹

The Eyres' purpose is, rather, "to help parents clarify their own value system and to select basic values to teach their children".¹⁵⁰

James Stenson speaks of Covey's 'primary greatness' in the more classical terms of 'virtues' and 'vices'. Stenson uses these terms to speak of what for him is the primary task of conscientious parents: the character formation of their children. For Stenson, character is: "the sum total of certain virtues...that inhere within an individual's personality"¹⁵¹. The term, formation, has for Stenson a precise meaning which we shall outline below. It is roughly equivalent to - though broader than - what most other parenting authors refer to simply as 'discipline'. Stenson's concern is to show that parents ought to take an active role in the character formation of their children because a strong character,

¹⁴⁸The same could be said of the purpose of Dr. David Isaacs in his book, Character Building (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1984). Dr. Isaacs there gives a complete description of twenty-four distinct virtues ranging from generosity to patriotism.

¹⁴⁹James Stenson Upbringing (New Rochelle: Scepter, 1991) 7-8.

¹⁵⁰Eyres, p.13.

¹⁵¹Stenson, p.24.

i.e. a morally virtuous character is, according to him, what assures enduring happiness in life. Let us examine now Stenson's conception of strong character and the virtues which comprise it.

We need first to explain the fact that Stenson's conception of 'strong character' is equivalent to what would commonly be understood as goodness of character.¹⁵² This derives immediately from his understanding - which we shall attempt to outline here - of virtues, vices, and the moral life generally. In the Thomistic terms in which Stenson speaks (and as we saw in Part I), a virtue can be defined as: a good operative habit. Among the three predicaments cited by Aquinas which modify substance intrinsically, one is 'quality'.¹⁵³ And among qualities is the disposition 'habit'; a habit is a stable disposition. Habits, in turn, are either entitative or operative in kind. Entitative and operative habits, as their names imply, modify substance respectively in its being and in its acting. An operative habit, therefore, is a stable disposition to act in a certain manner.

¹⁵²This might seem like a truism, but if we think for a moment of a moral theory which allows (or even enjoins) the separation of goodness and strength - such as that espoused by Machiavelli - then the distinction is seen to be necessary. It is certainly possible, that is, to have what would normally be called a 'strong character' without being morally good; we have only to think of the typical tyrant. Stenson's point - and, we take it, Covey's, the Eyres', and Aquinas's as well - is that the evil man's 'power' is more of an appearance than a reality. The vicious man is, on this view, quite weak: he is not able to overcome his passions and bad habits.

¹⁵³The other two are quantity and relation, although relation also modifies substance extrinsically.

Now, the notion of the relative 'goodness' or 'badness' of habits derives from whether or not a given habit inclines its agent to perform acts which lead him to a due end. And this sentence, a three line summary of Thomistic moral philosophy, needs to be unpacked and explained. First, we can refer simply to 'habits' and not specifically 'operative' habits because only operative habits can be morally good or bad. This, in turn, derives from the fact that only operative habits are concerned with what we referred to above as 'human' acts (*actus humani*). A human act, again, is an act which is performed with knowledge and consent; i.e. deliberately. And this is the only kind of act for which we hold people morally accountable. No one gets angry, for example, with the fact that another person is ill or ugly (which are lacks, precisely, of the entitative habits of health and beauty).¹⁵⁴ But we do become angry with others for faults which we consider to be deliberate, as is the case in all personal insult, for example. Thus, an operative habit perfects us in the way we deliberately act.

Second, the notion of a 'due end' means simply an end which is in keeping with the nature of the agent performing the act.

¹⁵⁴In point of fact, of course, someone may become angry over another person's ill-health or ugliness. The point is that this anger would not be directed at the dispositions themselves, but at some inconvenience brought about by them, such as financial burdens or embarrassment. A person may hate, for example, the natural evil of someone else's illness, but she does so (if she does so) not because she holds the person responsible, but because, presumably, the illness is the occasion of personal inconvenience on her part.

According to Aquinas, each and every existent exercises what he calls its 'act of being' in a particular manner; whence his crucial distinction between the 'act of being' and 'essence'. There is, first, the perfection of being in act and then the particular mode in which it does so. This mode, the thing's essence or nature,¹⁵⁵ determines which acts are consistent with the end of the thing and which are not. If an existent is rational, for example, its nature requires that it increase in knowledge as time passes. The act of reading, taken in itself, therefore, would be consistent with the rational existent's nature and end because it builds up his store of knowledge. The rational existent, or 'person',¹⁵⁶ then, performs acts either in keeping with his nature or not.¹⁵⁷ The former lead him to attain his end and for this reason are called 'good'; the latter lead him to fail to attain his end and for this reason are called 'bad'. Let us look at another example.

In Aquinas's view, man's nature is such that it is right for him to render to others their due (the classical understanding of the virtue of justice).¹⁵⁸ Consequently, it is a morally upright, or 'good', act for an individual to refrain from maligning others

¹⁵⁵A 'nature' is the essence of a thing insofar as it is the principle of the thing's acts; S.T. Ia IIae q.58, a.1, ad 3.

¹⁵⁶A 'Person' is an individual substance of a rational nature; S.T. I, q.29, a.1, resp.

¹⁵⁷Non-rational existents, ex hypothesi, are not free to act except in ways in keeping with their nature.

¹⁵⁸S.T. IIa IIae q.58, a.11.

because everyone - other circumstances being equal - has the right to a good name. Now, suppose someone were to ignore this dictum and consistently speak evil of his colleagues at work. He would, on this account, in Aquinas's view, be acting wrongly because he would be acting in a way which led him away from his end and, therefore, against his nature. On the other hand, if someone consistently respects the reputation of others - speaking well of them when possible or saying nothing at all - he acts in accord with the virtue of justice and in accord with his nature's end.¹⁵⁹

Now, the reason why Stenson equates strength of character with moral virtue is as follows. 'Character' is the ensemble of virtues, good operative habits, which a person either possesses or fails to possess. A person of strong character is someone who possesses many virtues and each of them to a reasonably high degree. A person of weak character is the opposite. But virtues, precisely, are those operative habits which lead us to our end and are good. Therefore it is evident, on this view, that to be of strong character is equivalent to being morally virtuous, or good. And with these qualifications made, we can now speak directly of those character strengths which Stenson thinks conscientious parents would try to impart to their children. By referring to

¹⁵⁹We have neither shown nor attempted to show why Aquinas so believes this particular act to be consistent with man's end. We have simply used the fact of this conviction on his part to explain the notion that what makes an act good or bad on his view is its ordination or lack thereof to a due end.

virtues as character strengths,¹⁶⁰ Stenson underlines the fact that they capacitate us to perform certain acts. A person who possesses given virtues has the active abilities, that is, to behave in particular ways, while a person who lacks these virtues also lacks the corresponding abilities. What, then, are the particular virtues and acts to which our author refers?

Here again Stenson uses terminology which is decidedly classical. Having defined 'virtue' as "an inner-directed and habitual strength of mind and will",¹⁶¹ he refers to the four 'cardinal' virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.¹⁶² It is on these four virtues, or so the ancients and medievals held, that all the other acquired virtues depend.¹⁶³ And as his descriptions of these virtues are particularly lucid, we shall cite them here in full. Let us first, however, recall briefly the location of these virtues in Aquinas's overall psychological scheme.

¹⁶⁰Which, again, is consistent with the etymology of the term, for the root of the word 'virtue' is the latin 'vis', or 'power'.

¹⁶¹Stenson, Upbringing, p.24.

¹⁶²In the interests of accuracy, we must note that Stenson also refers to what are called the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. These are, of course, beyond the scope of the present [philosophical] project and as such will not be discussed here. We shall make similar excisions as necessary throughout our treatment of Stenson.

¹⁶³Whence, again, the name. 'Cardo' in latin means 'hinge'. These four cardinal virtues act as the hinges from which hang all the other natural, or acquired, virtues. As for these two latter terms, they designate the origin of these virtues; i.e. the repetition of acts (as opposed to divine infusion, for example).

According to Aquinas, virtues are of two kinds depending on the faculty they modify. Those which perfect the intellectual faculty as such are called intellectual virtues and those which perfect our appetites are called appetitive or, more commonly, 'moral' virtues. The intellectual virtues are further divided into those of the speculative intellect: wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, and those of the practical intellect: art and prudence. The three principal moral virtues, so-called (justice, fortitude, and temperance), modify, respectively, man's rational appetite, or will, his irascible appetite, and his concupiscible appetite. The four cardinal virtues are, therefore: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.¹⁶⁴

Stenson speaks first, then, of the intellectual virtue of prudence. Of course, we shall ourselves have much more to say below about the particular nature and exercise of this virtue, but Stenson's contribution is unique enough to merit mention here. For some reason he equates prudence with sound judgment. And while it is true that one of the three principal acts of prudence is, precisely, the act of practical judgment, it is equally true that judgment is not the most important of these three. The principal act of the virtue of prudence is that of command, as we have seen. Be that as it may, however, Stenson characterizes prudence and the other cardinal virtues as follows.

¹⁶⁴It must be noted that Aquinas considers prudence a 'special' virtue because it is at once both intellectual and moral.

Sound Judgment (Prudence): The acquired ability accurately to assess people, events, issues, ideas. The ability to evaluate human affairs in terms of causes and future implications. A commitment to truth. An ability to recognize hokum and lies when we see them. It is the power of discrimination, the ability to make the important distinctions in life - truth from falsehood, good from evil, fact from opinion, objective reality from subjective feelings, the important from the trivial, etc.

Responsibility (Justice): Giving others what is due to them as a matter of right. The habitual understanding that the existence of others' rights imposes obligations on us. An habitual understanding of the interplay between rights and duties - between authority and responsibility - in our dealings with family and society. It is respect for others' dignity, freedom, and feelings.

Toughness (Fortitude): Courage, persistence, perseverance, 'guts' - the ability to endure or overcome pain, inconvenience, disappointment, for the sake of some higher good. It is the habitual power either to solve problems or put up with them. The ability to override one's fears and ignore one's feelings.

Self-Control (Temperance): Related to personal toughness, this is the ability to dominate one's passions, appetites, and 'feelings' for the sake of a higher good. It is mastery over our lower inclinations. The habitual power of self-restraint, self-mastery.¹⁶⁵

If we were to look for a metaphor for Stenson's understanding of the four cardinal virtues in the authors we have studied thus far, probably the most useful would be that of Covey's lighthouse. The lighthouse stands for principles which are completely immovable; i.e. principles which define the legitimate limits of our behavior. Likewise, the so-called cardinal virtues (and really all the lesser virtues which derive from them) set certain boundaries¹⁶⁶ to our

¹⁶⁵Stenson, pp.28-30.

¹⁶⁶We will explain presently what we mean by speaking in this way. Since virtue is essentially something positive and freedom-enhancing, it may seem odd to speak of limits and boundaries in

actions. They provide us with a cadre within which to work, showing us the acts that we may licitly perform and those which it were better that we did not perform. Just as the captain of the ship knew after the lighthouse's final communication that the only reasonable course of action open to him was to change course (or crash and sink his vessel), so the cardinal virtues, modifying as they do our intellect and our appetites, incline us towards actions in keeping with reason. They tell us what we can and cannot do.

Now, although the cardinal virtues (and really, again, all virtues) are, in the sense just described, boundaries to our freedom of action, there is a paradox at work here which needs to be brought to light and explained. The paradox is that even as these operative habits limit our freedom¹⁶⁷, they enhance it. By this is meant the following. First, we have seen the manner in which virtues 'limit' our freedom: by indicating to us the reasonable course of action in various situations. So stated,

describing it. But, understood correctly, there is no problem in so speaking. Surely the virtue of temperance limits the number of acts we may legitimately perform: if drinking a whole bottle of wine would be intemperate, then we are bound by the virtue of temperance to drink less than a whole bottle. This is the sense in which we speak. See our reference to guard-rails below; not all boundaries or limits need be understood pejoratively.

¹⁶⁷Our use of the term 'freedom' here is equivocal, which is perhaps the cause of our above concern about speaking of virtues in terms of limits. It is only in the sense of freedom understood as license to do whatever we want that virtues 'limit' our freedom of action. But freedom as a perfection of our nature (free will) is not 'limited' at all by virtues, but perfected by them, and so to speak would be wrong and misleading.

however, they would be seen not to be a limit to our freedom at all, at least not in any reasonable understanding of the word, 'limit'. They would be seen, rather, as like unto the guard-rails on a highway which 'limit' the options of drivers to the point of not permitting them to leave the road and crash. Such 'limits' are anything but negative and constraining, the usual pejorative connotations attached to the term.

Second, insofar as virtues incline us to do what we ought to do; i.e. what is in accord with our nature, they actually increase our freedom because they prohibit us from acting in ways which are known to be counter-productive. For example, if we possess the virtue of fortitude, we know almost immediately upon being confronted with a fearful situation what course of action would be rash and which cowardly. Consequently, we are spared the unreasonable anguish and loss of time which often accompanies such a situation. We are unencumbered by unreasonable doubt, fear, and indecision and are truly free to act: to do what we ought to do and what is in our own best interests. And the same type of reasoning holds for all the other virtues as well: they give us certain capacities and actually increase our freedom. Thus, to speak of virtues as 'limits' to our freedom, as this phrase is normally used, is a misnomer properly.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸A similar difficulty presents itself in the relation which holds between children and discipline. Paradoxically, by disciplining children, by setting reasonable limits to their freedom when they are young, we free them from the tyranny they

And with this we finish our summary of the end-product of conscientious parenting: morally virtuous young adults, young adults of strong character. We had asked ourselves what character traits proactive parents would most likely want to see their children possess and we came up with the various conceptions: Covey's 'primary greatness', the Eyres' twelve universal values, and now Stenson's four cardinal virtues. Each of these conceptions is a different way of describing what we want to call with Stenson, 'strong character', and this is the end as such. Let us turn our attention next to the possible means parents might employ to attain this end.

We have seen that to take a proactive approach to our role as parents requires that we think ahead and plan, that we begin with the end in mind and try to keep a clear image of this end (the virtuous young adult¹⁶⁹) ever before our eyes as we raise our children. The suggestion is that if we begin with our goal clearly defined we will the more aptly adjust our present behavior in such a way as to attain that goal. Here, the end determines which means ought to be chosen because some means, clearly, are more propitious

would otherwise later have experienced as a result of peer pressure or their own unruly passions.

¹⁶⁹Stenson suggests that a handy way for parents to know what they ought to want their children to be like at the age of eighteen or twenty-one is to think of the ideal future spouse they would want a daughter or son of theirs to marry. To know what kind of person we should want our young sons to grow into, it can be very helpful to try to picture to ourselves the kind of young man we would like our daughter(s) one day to marry. And likewise for our young daughters.

than others. The operative idea is that of looking to the future with the intention of modifying our present behavior in light thereof.¹⁷⁰ But, if this is the case, if proactive parenting requires such foresight, then it is not possible to be a proactive parent without the virtue of prudence, for the principal of the so-called 'integral parts' of prudence is providence ('providentia').¹⁷¹

Aquinas begins his treatment of this central aspect of prudence by distinguishing between the three types of parts found in every virtue. There are, most importantly, integral parts, or components ('partes integrales'). Next, there are subjective parts, or species ('partes subiective'). And, finally, there are potential, or virtual parts ('partes potentiales').¹⁷² He then goes on to enumerate the eight integral parts of prudence, making the following distinctions. Among these parts, the first five are perceptive and theoretical and the last three are preceptive and practical. As well, among the perceptive/theoretical parts, the first four correspond to the first of the principal acts of

¹⁷⁰Farrell calls this pro-vision for the future "order in action" and "the fullness of maturity in action". Walter Farrell A Companion to the Summa vol. 3 (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1940) p.143.

¹⁷¹Sertillanges comments: La faculte providentielle de l'ame est donc ici le principal...en morale comme en politique: gouverner c'est 'prevoir'. R.P. Sertillanges La Philosophie Morale de S. Thomas d'Aquin (Paris: Aubier, Editions Montaignes, 1946) p.162. Cf. S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.6, ad 1.

¹⁷²S.T. IIa IIae q.48.

prudence, deliberation, and the fifth corresponds to the second of the principal acts of prudence, judgment. The three remaining (preceptive/practical) parts correspond to the third and most important of the principal acts of prudence, command.¹⁷³

And, thus, among the five theoretical parts, two refer to the knowledge acquired itself. Knowledge of the past requires memory ('memoria'), and knowledge of the present requires insight, or understanding ('intellectus'). Two of these five refer to how this knowledge is acquired. Knowledge acquired from others requires docility ('docilitas'), and knowledge 'acquired' from ourselves requires perspicacity ('solertia'). The last of the theoretical parts concerns the movement from what is known to what is not known and is therefore called reasoning ('ratio').¹⁷⁴

Since prudence, as we saw at length in Part I, is eminently practical and directed towards action, it stands to reason that the

¹⁷³As for the other two types of parts (subjective and potential), we shall have occasion to elaborate on them below. The subjective parts of prudence, or its species, are four: monastic, military, domestic, and political. And the potential parts of prudence are three: well-advisedness ('eubulia'), sound judgment ('synesis'), and wit ('gnome').

¹⁷⁴This part, which corresponds, as we say, to the act of judgment, refers as well to that specific act of judgment which we typically call conscience. And this, interestingly, is what distinguishes prudence from conscience: the fact that prudence's principal act, command, is imperative and practical, while conscience remains at the level of the theoretical. And this although both concern the application of general moral principles to particular instances of human action.

principal of its integral parts would be found among those last three which are preceptive and correspond to its principal act, to command. Among these last three integral parts, the first is our target: foresight ('providentia'), which concerns the ordering of things to an end. The second is circumspection ('circumspectio'), which takes account of relevant circumstances. And the third is caution ('cautio'), which helps us to avoid possible obstacles to our acting. Let us, then, prescind momentarily from any further consideration of those integral parts which do not concern the ordering of things to an end and focus on foresight, or providence.

Let us begin by underscoring the importance of providence in the work of prudence generally. Aquinas maintains, again, that there are three kinds of parts to prudence: integral, subjective, and potential; and that the most important of these are the integral parts, because they constitute the virtue in its very nature. And among the integral parts, of which there are eight, the most important, or principal, is providence. As Aquinas so succinctly puts it:

In every whole there must be one part which is significant and dominant and which gives unity to the whole. In this sense, prevision is principal among the components of prudence, for all the others are necessary in order that a deed be rightly directed to the end".¹⁷⁵

Thus, the notion of providence, which is part of the act of command, is absolutely central to the virtue of prudence. In fact,

¹⁷⁵S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.6, ad 1: "...providentia est principalior inter omnes partes prudentiae".

as Aquinas points out repeatedly, "Prudence takes its very name from providence, that being its main feature".¹⁷⁶

Now, the meaning of providence is exactly similar to what we have spoken of above as 'beginning with the end in mind'. Aquinas reminds us that "'prudens' comes from 'looking ahead'...for the prudent man is keen-sighted and foresees how uncertainties will fall"¹⁷⁷ and that "the prudent man thinks about matters far ahead inasmuch as they serve to help or hinder what then and there is to be done".¹⁷⁸ As well, taking into account the fact that the direction of prudence is needed whenever the means to a given end are variable, Aquinas states: "Both contingency and purpose are implied in the notion of human providence, which signifies looking ahead to something distant to which present occurrences are to be adapted".¹⁷⁹ If being a proactive parent requires foresight in the sense spoken of here, where a future goal determines present behavior, then it requires, ipso facto, the virtue of prudence.

¹⁷⁶S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.6, ad 1: "Et ideo nomen ipsius prudentiae sumitur a providentia, sicut a principaliori sua parte".

Also: S.T. IIa IIae q.55, a.1, ad 1: "Sed nomen prudentiae sumitur a providendo".

¹⁷⁷S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.1, resp: "...perspicax enim est, et incertorum videt casus".

¹⁷⁸S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.1, ad 2: "...prudens considerat ea quae sunt procul inquantum ordinantur ad adiuvandum vel impediendum ea quae sunt praesentialiter agenda".

¹⁷⁹S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.6, resp: "Utrumque autem horum importatur in nomine providentiae: importat enim providentia respectum quendam alicuius distantis, ad quod ea quae in praesenti occurrunt ordinanda sunt".

Before elaborating on the fact that providence is of its very nature concerned with the ordering of means to an end, let us mention a paradox which is at work in the text of the Treatise. Aquinas states at one point that "Prudence learns from the past and the present about the future".¹⁸⁰ And this accords with our usual understanding of prudence, which suggests, precisely, that the prudent individual is she who has built up a store, so to speak, of practical wisdom from experience. The prudent man, at least in common parlance, is the wise man who has lived long and learned how to live well. His wisdom is a consequence of his experience; he bases his decisions for the future on what he has learned from the past. It is in this sense that Aquinas can say that 'prudence learns from the past and present about the future'. Elsewhere, as well, he specifies: "Our calculations about the future should be based on what has happened in the past. Accordingly, our memory of [what has happened in the past] is needed for being well-advised about the future".¹⁸¹

And this is precisely where the paradox enters in; up until now, we have spoken of prudence solely in the context of the future determining the present. That is how we have presented the idea of prudence: the prudent man looks ahead, and, in light of what he can

¹⁸⁰S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.1, resp: "Cognoscere autem futura ex praesentibus vel praeteritis, quod pertinet ad prudentiam...".

¹⁸¹S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.1, ad 3: "...ex praeteritis oportet nos quasi argumentum sumere de futuris. Et ideo memoria praeteritorum necessaria est ad bene consiliandum de futuris".

'fore-see' about the future, he determines what to do in the present. The paradox, then, is simply that there is a sense in which the past and present determine the future and another sense in which the future determines the present.¹⁸²

Providence, then, is essentially concerned with the "ordering of something adapted to the end".¹⁸³ And this is where we see the near identification of prudence with providence most clearly, for Aquinas says elsewhere: "Prudence, properly speaking, is concerned with things we do for the sake of an end; its office is to muster them effectively for that purpose".¹⁸⁴ What is proper to prudence is the right choice of means to a given end. In the case of child-rearing, for example, parents might choose the means of reinforcement¹⁸⁵ to encourage good behavior and discourage bad

¹⁸²Of course, there is no possibility of the future determining the past, because, as Aquinas himself notes, "praeterita autem in necessitatem quandam transeunt: quia impossibile est non esse quod factum est" (S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.6, resp). The paradox is resolved by attending to just what is meant by 'looking to the future'. It is true that the prudent man looks to the future. But what he sees there, precisely, will be determined largely by what he has seen in the past. For his conjectures have to be based on something; and this something is experience, whether his own or that of others.

¹⁸³S.T. IIa IIae q.48, resp: "...ut ordinet aliquid accommodum ad finem: et hoc pertinet ad providentiam".

¹⁸⁴S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.6, resp: "...prudentia proprie est circa ea quae sunt ad finem; et hoc ad eius officium proprie pertinet, ut ad finem debite ordinentur".

¹⁸⁵For a helpful treatment of 'reinforcement', see chapter four of: Paul Graubard Positive Parenthood (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1977) pp.43-54.

behavior in their children.¹⁸⁶ Every time a child behaves in a way which is morally upright and commendable, she is encouraged in that behavior by positive reinforcement of some kind, such as by a show of affection or praise. And every time the child behaves in a way which is not morally upright and not commendable, she is discouraged from that behavior by negative reinforcement of some kind, such as by a scolding. In this way, over the years, the child learns both, in general, that there are behaviors which are not acceptable (i.e. that it is possible to offend morally) and, in particular, what types of behavior fall into this category.

Proactive parenting requires that parents not only have an end clearly in mind as they set out to raise their children, but also that they keep this end before their eyes as they interact with their children. Aquinas states: "The significance of anything done for the sake of an end is looked at...in the light of that end".¹⁸⁷ What matters, that is, is not merely that we know the end - which would be simply a theoretical exercise (and prudence is always interested in going beyond the theoretical to the practical) - but that we act habitually in function of that end. This is what Aquinas means by 'in the light of that end', surely. And for

¹⁸⁶It is always difficult to know exactly which terminology to use: 'positive' and 'negative' reinforcement, or simply 'reinforcement' for what is positive and 'extinction' for what is negative. We will use the former in the present paper. Positive reinforcement is when a behavior is encouraged and negative reinforcement is when a behavior is discouraged.

¹⁸⁷S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.11, resp: "...ratio autem formalis omnium quae sunt ad finem attenditur ex parte finis".

parents this implies constancy and consistency in their dealings with their children: neither allowing their habitual behavior with them to be guided by preferences (for example, for one child over another), nor by comfort-seeking.

It is always 'easier', at least in the short-term, to neglect the normative aspect of parenting and simply deal with our children as our emotions would have us deal with them; i.e. not to follow any particular plan or strategy with them, but simply to 'take life as it comes', and deal with them as we are moved to deal with them. But this has two undesirable consequences. First, if we behave this way, we will inevitably favor some of the children over others (because at the level of the emotions we will - whether we want to or not - prefer one child to another) and be inconsistent in our application of the 'rules' of the home. And this last problem is, perhaps, the more pernicious. If we operate in function of our passions and not in function of our decisions, we will most likely 'apply the rules' when it is convenient for us to do so and not apply them when it is inconvenient or difficult. And thus our behavior is inconsistent. This can have as an effect, the second consequence, that the children begin to resent and rebel against both our authority as parents and the particular rules we have established, for the simple reason that they perceive both as quite arbitrary. And if we have in fact adopted the comfort-seeking approach just described, they would be quite right to feel this way, for we naturally resent what we perceive to be arbitrary. It

would seem that Aquinas's description of the prudent man fits as well for the prudent and proactive parent. As he says: "The prudent man is he who well adapts his actions to a right end".¹⁸⁸

If the proactive parent needs to be prudent and provident, she needs as well to avoid the vices opposed to prudence. Among these are cunning and what Aquinas calls 'prudence of the flesh'.¹⁸⁹ Aquinas reminds us that "[Although] the main function of prudence is to order things well for an end or purpose...this cannot be done aright unless the end be good and also the means be good and adapted to the end".¹⁹⁰ We have just seen how certain ways of behaving are not propitious means to the end of fostering virtue in children. This in itself implies only that the means are not 'adapted to the end'. But there is also the question of whether these means and ends themselves are good or bad morally.

And Aquinas's point is that since prudence is action in accord with right reason ('recta ratio agibilium'), it cannot be prudent

¹⁸⁸S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.13, resp: "...prudens sit qui bene disponit ea quae sunt agenda propter aliquem bonum finem".

¹⁸⁹We shall address ourselves to the problem of 'prudence of the flesh' again in Part III when we speak of the ends of domestic prudence. For now, let us note with Gilson that prudence of the flesh, as with all the vices resembling prudence, is a kind of 'parody' of the virtue. Etienne Gilson Moral Values and the Moral Life trans. by Leo R. Ward (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1941) p.243.

¹⁹⁰S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.7, resp: "...ad prudentiam...praecipue pertinet recte ordinare aliquid in finem. Quod quidem recte non fit nisi et finis sit bonus, et id quod ordinatur in finem sit etiam bonum et conveniens fini".

-no matter how efficient (well-adapted) the means - either to use means or to strive for ends which contradict right reason. This is not always easy, because immoral ends are often more immediately pleasurable and "[More often than not] deceitful means are handier than truthful [ones]".¹⁹¹ 'Handier', of course, means easier; it is easier - again, in the short-term - to use deceitful means, but it is never prudent to do so. For example, a mother might decide that as a way of discouraging misbehavior in her children she will beat them physically every time they step out of line. While this may get the children to avoid misbehaving - at least in front of their mother and while they are under her care - it is imprudent because it goes against right reason, i.e. it is immoral, to beat children. It is possible, that is, to have a good end and even well-adapted means (although their 'well-adaptedness' is certainly questionable in this instance because the children will one day react, perhaps violently, to the mistreatment they received from their mother) and still be imprudent because the means employed go against reason. Aquinas insists: "a good end should not be sought through false and deceitful means, but only through truthful ones".¹⁹² Cunning, then, is when evil means are used to attain either a true or a false end: "When in pursuit of some end, whether right or wrong, a man takes

¹⁹¹S.T. IIa IIae q.55, a.4, ad 3.

¹⁹²S.T. IIa IIae q.55, a.3, ad 2: "nec oportet ad finem bonum falsis viis pervenire et simulatis, sed veris".

ways that are not genuine, but feigned and specious, this is the sin of cunning".¹⁹³

It is clear, then, that for parents to be proactive, they need to be provident and to choose good means that will lead them to their goal of raising children of strong character. But to speak of choosing means to a given end is to speak of the act of deliberation, and so we need to address ourselves to this subject now. To be prudent requires that we be provident; and to be provident implies the right choice of means to an end. But this choice presupposes, precisely, deliberation on the means. Deliberation, the first of the principal acts of the virtue of prudence, as we will see presently, is both a sign and a source of unity between parents. Unity, in turn, is an important means parents have of effectively encouraging their children to embrace virtue and to shun vice.

Aquinas begins his treatment of deliberation by noting both that "the prudent man is he who is able to deliberate well", and that "deliberation is about what is to be done for the sake of an end".¹⁹⁴ Now, what we need to acknowledge immediately is that no

¹⁹³S.T. IIa IIae q.55, a.3, resp: "Alio modo, inquantum aliquis ad finem aliquem consequendum, vel bonum vel malum, utitur non veris viis, sed simulatis et apparentibus: et hoc pertinet ad peccatum astutiae".

¹⁹⁴S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.2, resp: "...prudentis est bene posse consiliari. Consilium autem est de his quae sunt per nos agenda in ordine ad finem aliquem".

one deliberates about means which are necessary, and that, therefore, as Aquinas puts it: "Prudence is limited to matters that call for counsel...where there is no fixed way of reaching the end".¹⁹⁵ Which means, effectively, that "prudence is concerned with contingent human doings"¹⁹⁶, with things which admit of variation. And, as we noted briefly in Part I, parenting is certainly a domain which admits of different ways of doing things, even if we consider only those ways which are prudent.

There is a sense in which all successful parenting is made up of the same essential elements. As we shall see in Part III, the basic binomial in parenting is a balance between discipline and affection. Children need to be disciplined in order to learn that they are not completely autonomous beings who can do whatever they want. Their will must be educated to obey the dictates of right reason. But, on the other hand, children need, perhaps even more than discipline, a clear sense that they are loved and truly lovable. And so they need to be shown a lot of affection and genuine love.¹⁹⁷ In this sense, then, the means necessary to

¹⁹⁵S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.2, ad 3: "...ad prudentiam non pertinet nisi applicatio rationis recte ad ea de quibus est consilium. Et huiusmodi sunt in quibus non sunt viae determinatae perveniendi ad finem".

¹⁹⁶S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.1, resp: "prudentia est circa contingentia operabilia".

¹⁹⁷Our wording here is highly misleading. But it is difficult to speak of this balance without falling into the error that almost every author we have studied for the present paper falls into; namely: treating discipline and love as if they were antithetical to one another. That this is in no way the case will be one of the

successful parenting would seem to be fixed: the way to be a good parent is to strike the right balance between moral education and affection. But, as we can readily see, this is such a general formula that it leaves many things, practically speaking, up to the discretion - the prudential judgment - of the parents. It is in this latter sense that parenting is a contingent matter, and therefore a matter for prudence. The proactive parent needs, then, the virtue of prudence because she needs to deliberate well about the means she will employ to attain the end of moral virtue in her children.

Now, Aquinas assigns to the act of deliberation a subordinate virtue called, 'eubulia', which is "well-advisedness, or rightness in deliberation".¹⁹⁸ This virtue is 'allied' to deliberation and it helps a person be well-advised. "Well-advisedness (from the Greek: 'eu': good and 'bulia': counsel): the activity of deliberating well, or the cast of mind towards it".¹⁹⁹ We can see how this virtue allied to deliberation would push parents to do the kind of planning that Stenson calls 'strategic thinking'. To be proactive requires that we be provident; but to be provident presupposes

challenges we hope to take up in Part III.

¹⁹⁸S.T. IIa IIae q.51, a.1, sed contra: "eubulia est rectitudo consilii".

¹⁹⁹S.T. IIa IIae q.51, a.1, resp: "Eubulia autem importat bonitatem consilii: dicitur enim ab eu, quod est bonum, et boule, quod est consilium, quasi bona consiliatio, vel potius bene consiliativa".

deliberation of this kind. Thus, to be proactive requires deliberation, and therefore prudence.

Now, Stenson refers to this kind of parental deliberation and planning in terms of strategy formulation, as he says:

Like any other great endeavor, this task [of raising children of strong character] takes serious planning on a long-term basis, a vision that we may call strategic thinking.²⁰⁰ What young couples need is a long-term strategy for their children's upbringing.²⁰¹

And he remarks as well that, in his (wide) experience, one of the salient characteristics of "people who succeed exceptionally well in raising children to responsible adulthood" is precisely the fact that they did much of this thinking early on:

They started young. When their children were still infants or grade-schoolers, they established a clear framework of guidance and discipline, thus consciously forming their children's conscience and character. This firm and intelligent leadership held sway in their children's lives all the way through adolescence.²⁰²

In the opinion of Dr. James Dobson, however, to start when the children are in grade-school is already far too late, for this would mean already at least at the age of five or six. What would seem to be the more intelligent course of action would be - in so far as is realistically possible - for the parents to deliberate and to make firm decisions before even the first child is born. In this way, not a day is missed to instruct the child in those

²⁰⁰Stenson, Upbringing, p.9.

²⁰¹Stenson, Peer p.4.

²⁰²Stenson, Peer p.4 (emphasis added).

character strengths which compose a mature personality.²⁰³ As pediatrician Dr. William Slonecker has put it: "If discipline begins on the second day of life, you are one day late".²⁰⁴

Both Dobson and Stenson are convinced that to begin when the children are very young is essential to good character formation. The former - himself a medical doctor and parenting expert for more than twenty-five years now - uses the fact that even infants are capable of altering their behavior to get what they want to argue for early discipline and control. An eighteen-month old baby is perfectly aware of what 'works' and what does not 'work' in getting attention and in getting his own way. There is already, then, obviously, a personal will manifesting itself. And this will needs, precisely, to be instructed in what behavior is acceptable and what behavior is unacceptable. This gives the infant the beginnings of both a respect for legitimate authority and a sense of right and wrong.²⁰⁵

It would appear useful, then, even necessary, if the parents wish to implement certain values in the moral formation of their

²⁰³Being agreed in advance in this way about how they would like to raise the children, young couples might also avoid unnecessary conflicts of opinion and increase the stability of their marriage.

²⁰⁴Cited in Dobson, p.28.

²⁰⁵Dobson insists that: "a child's attitude toward authority can be severely damaged during his toddler years" (p.27).

children, that they deliberate and decide on these values even before the children are born. This assures, moreover, in Covey's terms, that the parents' behavior is a function of their own decisions and not merely their conditions.²⁰⁶ When the four-year old who has never been told 'no' starts to scream in public because he has not gotten his way, it is easier (conditions 'require', do they not?) to give him what he wants (so that he will keep quiet) than it is to discipline him. It is perhaps 'easier' for the moment. But experience would seem to teach that in the long-term it is actually much more difficult. You pay now or you pay later.

Parents need, however, at some point while the children are very young to deliberate, to take counsel, first among themselves, and then with other parents. Among themselves, they need to "communicate deeply", to borrow a phrase from Covey,²⁰⁷ about what for them are the most important things in life, their fundamental values. They need to communicate honestly, openly, and sincerely about the kinds of people they would like their children to be. It is only in this way that they will be able later - in the busy-ness of normal family life - to be proactive, to be able to 'subordinate

²⁰⁶It would be, as well, proof that they were capable of 'choosing their response'. They would be saying, effectively: "The social mirror says that we have been so conditioned by our temperament and our own upbringing that we are not able to act otherwise. But we forthrightly reject this defeatist attitude. Our family will be what we decide it will be and nothing else". This is a truly proactive approach to parenting.

²⁰⁷Covey, p.241.

an impulse to a value'.²⁰⁸ It is in this way, as well, that they will be able 'to parent' not by whim, but "by objective".²⁰⁹

Now, all of this deliberation requires another quality in the parents, to which we have alluded in the previous paragraph; i.e. docility. Stenson insists on the need young parents have of meeting with other parents - and especially older, more experienced parents - to discuss how to raise children well. For him, this sort of advice-seeking is an essential feature of conscientious parenting because young parents cannot possibly be expected to foresee every eventuality. There are simply too many circumstances to attend to and possible obstacles which can spring up.²¹⁰

And, of course, docility is for Aquinas one of the integral parts of the virtue of prudence. The essence of docility is "to be receptive of teaching"; it is that quality which "disposes us to

²⁰⁸It is interesting to note that studies of criminal behavior have found a regular coincidence between impulsiveness and low intelligence (James Q. Wilson and Richard J. Hernstein Crime and Human Nature (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985) p.236). We could perhaps, therefore, recommend proactive parenting precisely on these grounds; i.e. that it is the more intelligent approach.

²⁰⁹Eyres, p.22.

²¹⁰We shall not discuss at length the integral parts of circumspection and caution, but these are precisely the acts which enable a person to attend, repectively, to due circumstances and foreseeable obstacles. And the need that parents have of such qualities is obvious, with the multitude of variables involved in raising a family.

gather sound opinions from others".²¹¹ The docile person "carefully, frequently, and respectfully attends to the teachings of men of weight, and neither neglects them out of laziness nor despises them out of pride".²¹² By 'men of weight', naturally, Aquinas refers to those with sufficient age and experience. And on this point he is in perfect agreement with what Stenson suggests. Stenson's advice is for young couples to meet with "older, more experienced parents", and Aquinas gives a justification for same: "the quality of prudence goes rather with older people [because] age sobers the sensuous passions...and [on account of] their long years of experience".²¹³ And he adds, as well: "In matters of prudence a person stands in the greatest need of being taught by others, especially by his elders, who have acquired fair insight into the outcome of human actions".²¹⁴

We can conclude our consideration of deliberation, this prerequisite of providence and, therefore, of prudence, by simply

²¹¹S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.3, resp: "...ut aliquis sit bene disciplinae susceptivus" and 49, 4, resp: "docilitas ad hoc pertinet ut homo bene se habeat in acquirendo rectam opinionem ab alio".

²¹²S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.3, ad 2: "...dum scilicet homo sollicite, frequenter et reverenter applicat animum suum documentis maiorum, non negligens ea propter ignaviam, nec contemnens propter superbiam".

²¹³S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.15, ad 2: "prudencia magis est in senibus non solum propter naturalem dispositionem, quietatis motibus passionum sensibilium: sed etiam propter experientiam longi temporis".

²¹⁴S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.3, resp: "...et praecipue ex senibus, qui sanum intellectum adepti sunt circa fines operabilium".

mentioning the vice opposed to it; namely, precipitation, or 'headlong haste'. "With respect to a defect of deliberation, which should be characterized by well-advisedness, we have headlong hurry".²¹⁵ And we saw in Part I, as we discussed the 'activity trap' and 'busy-ness' of Covey, the need proactive parents have of avoiding this vice at all costs. To have a plan for our children's character formation presupposes that we have taken the time, precisely, to think about, to take counsel about, this plan. But precipitancy precludes the possibility of doing this because it makes us "tumble and fall headlong"²¹⁶, as it were.

We have seen, then, in this chapter, that to be a proactive parent requires, in the first instance, providence. Parents need to exercise enough foresight to envisage the end at which they are aiming. This end, we saw, consists in the moral virtue, or strong character, of their children. Next, we outlined how providence is exercised principally in the right choice of means to an end and how this kind of choice can only be made in contingent matters. Finally, we saw how deliberation, with its allied acts and qualities, makes providence possible by its careful consideration of the means to be chosen.

²¹⁵S.T. IIa IIae q.53, a.2, resp: "...quantum ad defectum consilii, circa quod est eubulia, est praecipitatio".

²¹⁶S.T. IIa IIae q.53, a.3, sed: "...corruere, sive praecipitari...".

Part III

The Proactive Parent is Equitable

Chapter One

The Production/Production Capability Balance

We come next, then, to the notion which serves as the very foundation of Covey's entire project: the principle of 'the P/PC Balance'. The centrality of this principle cannot be overstated. We have seen that the notion of 'proactivity' proper plays an important role in Covey's overall project. We saw that it is based on two fundamental human capacities: the capacity of self-awareness and that of 'response-ability'. Finally, we have outlined its necessity given the fact that life always acts on us if we fail to act on life. 'Proactivity', however, is not the most fundamental principle for Covey. Neither, for that matter, is the other principle we have studied thus far - that of 'beginning with the end in mind'. While both of these notions are necessary conditions of the effectiveness which Covey recommends, neither the one nor the other is as fundamental as the P/PC Balance. It is this latter notion alone which acts as a base for everything else. The very title of Covey's book, recall, is: The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. And the distinguishing characteristic of this title is the notion of effectiveness. Covey even says explicitly at one point that, "The Seven Habits are habits of effectiveness" (52). He explains that they represent an effective approach to life because they are based on a most fundamental "paradigm of effectiveness" (52). And this paradigm is, precisely, the

principle of the P/PC Balance. Let us, then, explain just what Covey means by this term.

To understand the principle of the P/PC Balance, we need first to recall Aesop's fable of The Goose and The Golden Egg; we reproduce a version of this fable here.

A man and his wife had the good fortune to possess a goose that laid a golden egg every day. Lucky though they were, they soon began to think they were not getting rich fast enough, and, imagining the bird must be made of gold inside, they decided to kill it in order to secure the whole store of precious metal at once. But when they cut it open, they found it was just like any other goose. Thus, they neither got rich all at once, as they had hoped, nor enjoyed any longer the daily addition to their wealth. Much wants more and loses all.²¹⁷

This fable is a story of greed; the man and his wife were overly covetous. They ought to have been content with their tremendously good fortune and simply have continued to collect one golden egg per day. In this way, they would have grown rich at a steady rate and with little or no effort at all. But they allow themselves to be overcome by greed, by the desire to possess more and more. This lack of self-control on their part leads them to commit an act which is highly imprudent; i.e. to destroy the very thing which is the source of their wealth, the goose.

The gloss that Covey makes on this story is the following. The couple had - at the beginning of the tale - two principal assets: the capability to produce a good product (in the form of a

²¹⁷In: William Bennett The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), p.47.

goose) and the good product itself (in the form of golden eggs). At the end of the tale, they are left with no capability to produce a good product (no goose) and, therefore, no good product as such (no golden eggs). What has transpired in the interim is that they have chosen - however unwittingly - to destroy their capacity to produce. Covey reasonably labels the various factors in the equation in this way: the goose represents the couple's capacity to produce, or 'production capability' and the golden eggs represent the good product itself, or simply, 'production'. He then concludes that their mistake has been precisely not to effect a proper balance between production and production capability. They have allowed, that is, a foolish imbalance to characterize their behavior. And the consequence of this has been failure, or a lack of effectiveness. What we call 'the P/PC Balance' is, then, perfectly represented by this fable. 'P' stands for Production, 'PC' stands for Production Capability, and 'Balance' represents the relation which ought to hold between the two.

Now, this balance is a paradigm of effectiveness precisely because it allows whoever would live according to it to succeed at the tasks they undertake.²¹⁸ We can think of a typical counter-example from ordinary life: the young businesswoman who wants so

²¹⁸There are, it is true, enterprises which are impossible in and of themselves. Obviously, the principle of the P/PC Balance does not apply in these cases. But where a task is in itself possible and possible for the individual(s) involved, this balance is a sine qua non of their success.

much to climb the ladder of success quickly that she overworks herself and finishes by having to stop working altogether, at least for a time. She has maintained an imbalance between production (her professional work) and production capability (her physical and/or mental health). And this imbalance, again, has led her to fail at her chosen task. If she had lived according to the P/PC Balance, her comportment and the end result would have been quite different. She would have worked hard during normal working hours (production), made intelligent decisions about her use of time, and made sure that she was properly rested and healthy both physically and mentally (production capability). In this way, she would have produced at optimal levels for the longest period possible and therefore ultimately have succeeded. By respecting this balance, we become highly effective individuals.

One distinction that Covey draws as a way of helping us better understand the P/PC Balance is that of 'types of assets'. He says that there are in life three types of assets: physical, financial, and human, with this last being the most important. Examples of these are, respectively: an automobile, our professional formation, and our relationship with our spouse. If we focus too much on production and not enough on production capability in any one of these areas, we will end up disappointed. For instance, if we enjoy our automobile's performance, but neglect its maintenance, then we will sooner or later have a car which does not perform. We will be deprived of the 'golden egg' of driving a car which

performs well because we would have neglected the care of the 'goose', the car itself. The same holds true, obviously, in human relationships. If a couple selfishly focusses too much on the pleasures and benefits of their relationship without investing, as it were, in the necessary sacrifices and affection which make that relationship possible, then they will one day find the relationship quite weak, maybe even in crisis. The 'goose' of healthful companionship would have been sacrificed for the 'golden egg' of self-gratification.

The Production/Production Capability Balance is essential to effectiveness because it assures, on the one hand, that we continue to have the asset which produces what we want to produce and, on the other, that we continue to have the finished product. Both sides of the equation need to be maintained if we wish to be effective. It would be just as ludicrous (and ineffective) to maintain a machine that we had no intention ever of using as it would to use continuously a machine that we refused to maintain. An unmaintained machine eventually breaks down and becomes useless, but a perfectly-maintained machine which is never used is useless from the very start. As Covey remarks:

Effectiveness lies in the balance. Excessive focus on P results in ruined health, worn-out machines, depleted bank accounts and broken relationships. Too much focus on PC is like a person who runs three or four hours a day, bragging about the extra ten years of life it creates, unaware that he is spending them running (59).

We have to find the appropriate balance in every aspect of our life if we want to be truly effective, to succeed at what we undertake.

Covey goes on to apply this principle of the P/PC Balance to the domain of parenting in ways which are instructive and highly pertinent to the present study. He sees it in terms of two extremes to be avoided: the authoritarian parent, who refuses to listen to or show affection to his children and merely bosses them around, and the permissive parent, who refuses to discipline his children out of weakness or undue fear and allows them to do as they please. As he puts it:

And what about a parent's relationship with a child? When children are little, they are very dependent, very vulnerable. It becomes so easy to neglect the PC work - the training, the communicating, the relating, the listening. It's easy to take advantage, to manipulate, to get what you want the way you want it - right now! You're bigger, you're smarter, and you're right! So why not just tell them what to do? If necessary, yell at them, intimidate them, insist on your way.

Or you can indulge them. You can go for the golden egg of popularity, of pleasing them, of giving them their way all the time. Then they grow up without any internal sense of standards or expectations, without a personal commitment to being disciplined or responsible.

Either way - authoritarian or permissive - you have the golden egg mentality (55).

What parents need to do, then, is to effect a proper balance between discipline and affection, between direction and empathy. Otherwise children grow up either with a flabby character (one which has not been strengthened by training in virtue) or with a character which has been oppressed by a heavy-handed approach. In

the one case as much as in the other, the real loser is the child herself, who lacks character in one way or another. As we will see in the next chapter, parents must respect their children for what they really are: autonomous persons with a will of their own, geese who are definitely capable of producing the golden eggs of virtue.

Suppose you want your daughter to have a clean room - that's P, production, the golden egg. And suppose you want her to clean it - that's PC, production capability. Your daughter is the goose, the asset, that produces the golden egg.

If you have P and PC in balance, she cleans the room cheerfully, without being reminded, because she is committed and has the discipline to stay with the commitment. She is a valuable asset, a goose that can lay golden eggs.

But if your paradigm is focused on production, on getting the room clean, you might find yourself nagging her to do it. You might even escalate your efforts to threatening or yelling, and in your desire to get the golden egg, you undermine the health and welfare of the goose (56).

Let us conclude this brief but important section on the P/PC Balance, then, by elaborating first on the relation which holds between this principle and effectiveness, and second on the notion of 'empathic listening', which corresponds to one side of this balance.

Covey suggests that the reason why the principle of the P/PC Balance is so conducive to effectiveness is that it knows how to balance short-term goals with long-term goals (59). It makes a judgment about what is important to accomplish presently and what is important to accomplish ultimately. To focus too much on short-term goals is to over-emphasize production. While this might work (and even be necessary) for a limited time period, as a long-term

strategy, it is flawed for the reasons we have seen. On the other hand, to focus too much on long-term goals, whether personal or professional, is to over-emphasize production capability to the neglect of reasonable present production. Again, "effectiveness lies in the balance" (59). The truly effective individual knows how much he can produce in how much time and makes the necessary adjustments in the amount of time he invests in production capability. He knows how to balance, that is, the long-term goal of ultimate success with the short-term goal of efficient production today. Without such a balance, real effectiveness is impossible. Which is why, no doubt, Covey concludes with such assurance that:

The P/PC Balance is the very essence of effectiveness. It is validated in every arena of human life. We can work with it or against it, but it is there. It is a lighthouse. It is the definition and paradigm of effectiveness upon which the Seven Habits in this book are based (emphasis added, 59).

This is why we insisted above that the centrality of this principle cannot be overstated. Though in itself an idea quite simple to explain, the principle of the P/PC Balance is an all-important aspect of Covey's project. Let us turn now to another principle which Covey considers of the utmost importance for interpersonal effectiveness: 'empathic listening', or understanding.

In the chapter describing his fifth habit, 'Seek first to understand, then to be understood', Covey makes the following unqualified and astounding remark.

If I were to summarize in one sentence the single most important principle I have learned in the field of interpersonal relations, it would be this: Seek first to understand, then to be understood. This principle is the key to effective interpersonal communication (emphasis added, 237).

And this claim takes on even greater significance when we consider Covey's very broad experience in the field. What he means by 'seek first to understand' can be more easily comprehended if we reflect momentarily on the difference between diagnosis and prescription. This is the analogy Covey himself uses. To diagnose means to identify an illness or problem based on the observation of symptoms. This is the first task of a medical doctor: to identify what illness we are suffering from based on the symptoms which we describe to her or which she observes herself. It is a process of 'in-formation', literally, and judgment. The doctor in-forms herself of our status, and then judges what is our condition. Prescription, on the other hand, is what comes after the process of diagnosis; it is the treatment the doctor deems necessary to cure us of whatever ailment we suffer from. Having deliberated upon the initial data, the doctor then judges what illness we have and reasons as to what treatment suits us. She then commands that this treatment be carried out, whence 'doctor's orders'.

Now, while this is the normal order of events when someone visits a doctor, we could easily imagine things otherwise. Covey gives the example of an optometrist who, without proper diagnosis, simply recommends his personal lens' prescription to his patient.

Rather than taking the time and effort necessary to diagnose the patient correctly, this doctor simply hands the patient his own glasses and pretends to have solved her vision problem. He offers the patient a prescription without having first formulated a competent diagnosis.

Covey's point here is that in our dealings with other people - in our so-called 'interpersonal relations' - we often do something similar to what this doctor does here; we are too quick to form a judgment and too quick in offering advice. As a result, our understanding of others is quite superficial and our ability to interact effectively with them is diminished. To have a fruitful, effective, relationship with another person, Covey maintains, we need first to attempt to understand them deeply. This requires an effort on our part, so we are naturally reluctant to do it. "We often fail to take the time to diagnose, to really deeply understand the problem first" (237) because of the effort involved.

Communication, what Covey calls 'empathic listening', plays an important role in the process of understanding others. He begins his treatment of communication by stating forthrightly: "Communication is the most important skill in life" (emphasis added, 237). He then goes on to explain how communication is based on character. By this he means the following. Character is the ensemble of virtues and vices which inhere in an individual's

personality.²¹⁹ A person of trustworthy character is someone who has certain virtues, certain character strengths, such that it is easier for us to confide in him or her. He or she is perhaps prudent, just, compassionate, and honest. We are naturally attracted to such people and it is easier to open ourselves up to them. The opposite is true of someone of weak, or untrustworthy, character; we sense that they lack certain qualities and as a result we find it more difficult to trust them and to open ourselves up to them. But since communication is so dependent, precisely, on this trust between persons and on openness, we can understand the connection Covey wants to make between it and character. We trust and are open with people we perceive as good and we do not trust and are not open with people we perceive as wanting in goodness. Our ability to communicate well with others, then, is highly dependent on our character.

Now, once we have a person's basic trust, what matters is that we make an effort to understand them. Covey makes the interesting claim at one point that, "Next to mere physical survival, the greatest need of a human being is psychological survival - to be understood, to be affirmed, to be validated, to be appreciated" (241). And for someone to feel understood by us, it is necessary that they perceive us first as listening to them. The two concepts are closely interrelated. Another person might trust us enough initially to speak openly to us. But if she perceives that we are

²¹⁹James Stenson Upbringing (New Rochelle: Scepter, 1991), 7.

not listening to her, this initial confidence will evaporate and be replaced by mistrust. To understand a person, to put ourselves in their position and attempt to see the world through their eyes, we need first truly to listen to them, to receive what they are communicating to us about themselves and their experience. This deep listening is what Covey calls 'empathic listening' and it is the key to effectiveness in our dealings with others. As he says:

If you want to interact effectively with me, to influence me - your spouse, your child, your neighbor, your boss, your co-worker, your friend - you first need to understand me (238).

Interpersonal effectiveness is based on our ability to make others feel genuinely understood by us. No one will open themselves up to or allow themselves to be influenced by someone whom they believe misunderstands them, for whatever reason. And the reason why 'empathic listening' is so important is because it is the only way both of understanding others and of making others feel understood. In fact these two notions are inseparable; people know intuitively when another person understands them and when not. The only way to make others feel understood is actually to understand them, or at least to try; there are no short-cuts, no 'techniques' we can apply. This understanding, in turn, is impossible without the ability to listen empathically, which means, precisely, "listening to understand" (241).

The essence of empathic listening is not that you agree with someone; it is that you fully, deeply understand that person, emotionally as well as intellectually (240).

We see, then, that as well as being 'response-able' and 'beginning with the end in mind', part of what it means to be a proactive person and to be effective is to respect the Production/Production Capability Balance and to be understanding with others. Let us turn now to the subject of authoritative parenting, to see how conscientious parents respect the P/PC Balance and are understanding with their children.

Chapter Two

Prudence's Judgment

We saw in the previous chapter how central to Covey and to his whole project of proactive effectiveness is the notion of the production/production capability balance (hereafter simply 'p/pc balance'). He maintains that this balance is the very paradigm of effectiveness upon which his 'seven habits' are founded. The basic idea of the balance is that if we want to be effective we need to care for both the 'goose' of production capability and the 'golden eggs' of production. Effective production is impossible without due maintenance of production capability and the only reason we maintain production capability is to assure production. We saw, as well, the importance of understanding and what Covey calls 'empathic listening'. In the present chapter, our argumentation shall run as follows.

There is a consensus which has formed over the past thirty or forty years among so-called 'parenting authors' that the most effective way to raise healthy, responsible-minded children who can withstand the pressures of society and not conform to ways of behaving which contradict reason is to parent in a way which is neither authoritarian nor permissive, but authoritative. This parenting style suggests that parents need to win the respect of their children by disciplining them reasonably; i.e. by setting proper limits to their habitual behavior through the just application of rules which are carefully explained to the children. 'Authoritative parenting', so-called, has as its guiding principle

the idea that children need, want, and expect to be given certain boundaries to their behavior and that they thrive, precisely, in an environment where these boundaries are perceived by them as reasonable; i.e. non-arbitrary. The way parents can succeed in having the reasonable discipline they provide for their children to be perceived as something good and fair, in turn, is by striking the right balance between discipline and affection in their dealings with their children. Moreover, a large part of the parents' task of showing genuine affection to their children consists, precisely in listening to them, making an effort to understand them, and in explaining their rules to them.

And the links we would like to make between this type of parenting and the work of Covey should be apparent: authoritative parenting is a manifestation of and a vindication of the basic principles underlying both the p/pc balance and the communication established by empathic listening. As Covey himself shows lucidly in the example of the daughter whose parents would like her to keep her room clean without being pestered to do so, it is possible to get children to behave well, to behave responsibly, if our relationship with them is a healthy one and not one based either on indulgence or servile fear. The best way, that is, to encourage responsible behavior, Covey would suggest, is by being 'response-able' ourselves as parents, rejecting out of hand the equally damaging temptations to play the soft placator or the harsh dictator with our children.

Now, the argumentative structure of the present paper is and has been, first, to explicate several aspects of the notion of 'proactivity' and then apply them to the domain of parenting in such a way as to demonstrate that it is not possible to be a proactive parent without the intellectual virtue of prudence. This structure, applied to the present chapter, would suggest, then, that it is not possible to respect the 'p/pc balance', communicate effectively, and be an authoritative parent without possessing prudence. And there would seem to be ample support for this claim.

We said that authoritative parenting is based upon a balance that parents strike between discipline and affection. What we would like to show in this chapter is that this balance itself is not possible without prudence; first, because it is prudence which sets the mean of moral virtue (and authoritative parenting, insofar as it involves human acts, is a moral concern). And, second, because it is prudence which judges, on the one hand, whether a given situation calls for discipline or affection, and, on the other, just how much of either to employ, taking into account all the relevant circumstances. Moreover, it is prudence (which is of its nature concerned with individual things ('singularia')) which allows us to judge and to know well each one of our children individually, so that we can understand them and love them and be properly discerning in their regard. Let us turn, then, to the arguments as such. We begin by identifying which species of prudence pertains to parenting.

We saw in Part II how Aquinas distinguishes between the three different types of parts to be found in prudence: integral, subjective, and potential. We said that the 'subjective parts', so called, were essentially the species of the virtue and that there are principally four of them: monastic, or personal, military, domestic, and political. Of course, the type of prudence which governs the domain of parenting is domestic prudence ('prudencia oeconomica'). As Aquinas specifies: "there is domestic, or 'economic' prudence, directed to the good of the household or family".²²⁰ As well, it is worth noting that Aquinas considers domestic prudence to fall into that category of prudence which is genuine, but incomplete. As he says: "Prudence has a triple sense: sham prudence, genuine, but incomplete prudence, and genuine and complete prudence".²²¹ The reason for its being called 'incomplete' is simply that it concerns a 'specialized employment' and governs only a limited domain of human conduct (the household) and not the whole of life; "the end pursued is a sectional or particular interest".²²²

²²⁰S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.11, resp: "alia autem oeconomica, quae ordinatur ad bonum commune domus vel familiae".

²²¹S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.13, resp.

²²²S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.13, resp: "...imperfecta propter finem particularem".

Aquinas maintains that the object of domestic prudence is "a group formed for the whole of life: the household or family".²²³ The purpose of this group, this family, is the good life entire: "The final purpose of domestic management is the good life as a whole within the terms of family intercourse".²²⁴ However, a difficulty often arises as a result of one of the means which are necessary for domestic management, namely wealth. What happens frequently in families is that since a certain amount of wealth is needed to provide for the good life, the parents, and most typically the father, focus too much of their attention on the accumulation of wealth and not enough on the more important aspects of family life. And the result is an impoverishment of the family for the sake of material well-being. The [father] spends less and less time with the family and more and more time attending to his employment.²²⁵

Stenson refers to this as the 'problem of the good providers': parents who look only to the material well-being of their children,

²²³S.T. IIa IIae q.48, a.1, resp: "Quaedam vero multitudo est adunata ad totam vitam: sicut multitudo unius domus vel familiae".

²²⁴S.T. IIa IIae q.50, a.3, ad 1: "Finis autem ultimus oeconomicae est totum bene vivere secundum domesticam conversationem".

²²⁵Dobson comments on exactly this phenomenon saying: "The situation usually follows a similar pattern: Dad is a very busy man and he is heavily involved in his work. He is gone from early morning to night, and when he does return, he brings home a briefcase full of work. His approach to child-management is harsh and unsympathetic" (Dobson, p.103).

to the neglect of their moral well-being. As he says: "...though the parents fed and clothed and cared for their children, they had done little or nothing to strengthen their children's character. Lacking this thing called strength of character, the children were pushovers for the forces outside the family".²²⁶ These sentiments are repeated in Jeane Westin's book, The Coming Parent Revolution, where the author quotes one of the parents she had interviewed for the book as saying the following. The quotation is highly instructive for two reasons: first, it shows how blind some parents can be to the dangers of neglecting the character formation of their children and, second, it shows unwittingly the usual effects of this kind of neglect.

For years I've been asking myself: Where did I fail? And my kids, especially my oldest boy, have been laying a guilt trip on me, telling me it's my fault they're hooked on dope and can't hold down a job. Just this past year I've been able to get out from under all that guilt. I'm sick of taking the blame for their messed up lives. I look around me and see lots of young people who didn't have what they had, whose father didn't work two jobs and send them to college - and I see these kids making it.²²⁷

Now, leaving aside the obvious rationalizing this father is engaging in, we can note two things. First, he reveals his skewed priorities perfectly when he states what the other young people did not have. That one phrase, 'whose father didn't work two jobs', says it all. We are tempted to add: PRECISELY! These other kids are 'making it' because they had a father, something much more

²²⁶Stenson, Peer, p.6.

²²⁷Emphasis added; Westin, p.181.

important than a paycheck. The phrase shows very clearly this father's attitude - which is, regretfully, the attitude of many parents - that what matters most is providing for the material well-being of the home and not attentive formation in strengths of character. Second, this father reveals unwittingly the usual effects of the 'working two jobs' mentality; i.e. children who grow up without proper instruction in the virtues and who have many problems in 'their messed up lives'. Moreover, Westin's book, which is a superbly documented collection of interviews with contemporary parents, is replete with such revealing statements.

Now, what does Aquinas have to say in regard to the 'problem of the good provider'? Essentially, what he says is that the parent who looks only to the material well-being of his home lacks true prudence and has the mere semblance of prudence which is called 'prudence of the flesh'.²²⁸ He prefaces his remarks by affirming that "Wealth is what domestic management is for, not as its final purpose, but as a means instrumental to that".²²⁹ This would seem to be where the father quoted above goes wrong; he thought that it was enough to work two jobs and provide the wealth necessary to send his children to college. And thus he imprudently neglects - precisely by his continual absence from the home - to

²²⁸ 'Prudence of the flesh' simply means seeking a wrong end. For example, the man who makes sensual pleasure the end of his life has not prudence, but prudence of the flesh. Cf. S.T. IIa IIae q.55, a.1.

²²⁹ 50, 3, ad 1: "...divitiae comparantur ad oeconomicam non sicut finis ultimus, sed sicut instrumenta quaedam".

provide for the 'good life as a whole' of his family. And we know that by this phrase 'good life as a whole' Aquinas is referring to the life of virtue. We can close this section with an instructive line from the Treatise. It suggests that the reason why many parents fail to raise their children well is on account of the effort involved, and the personal sacrifice. We cannot give what we do not ourselves have and to instruct children in virtue, we must struggle to have a degree of it ourselves. But, unfortunately, it is easier to 'work two jobs' than earnestly to struggle ourselves to be virtuous and do what we ought. Aquinas states:

Some sinners are careful to provide for certain particular requirements of the household, but not for the good life entire in domestic intercourse, for this above all calls for a virtuous life.²³⁰

We see here again, then, that what conscientious, or proactive, parents need above all, if they would raise their children well is the virtue of genuine [domestic] prudence.

Another way that 'prudence of the flesh' can manifest itself in the context of child-rearing is if the parents fail to live the virtue of justice with their children and try to force upon them their own plans for their career or style of life.²³¹ Just as there

²³⁰S.T. IIa IIae q.50, a.3, ad 2: "ad aliqua particularia quae sunt in domo disponenda possunt aliqui peccatores provide se habere: sed non ad ipsum totum bene vivere domesticae conversationis, ad quod praecipue requiritur vita virtuosa".

²³¹What one author calls "The temptation to live through our children". Mary B. Hoover The Responsive Parent (New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1972) p.227.

is no moral virtue without prudence, so neither is there prudence without moral virtue; the two are entirely interdependent. Thus, as well as being prudent, parents need to be just with their children. We said above that parents need to have a plan for their children's growth in character. But it is essential to distinguish between this training which concerns what the children are as persons and the child's own choice of what she wants to do in life, the 'career path' she decides to follow and the style of life she wants to adopt. Parents have the right (and, as we say, even the grave duty) to instruct their children in their values and in the virtues precisely because these are unqualified goods, or things which are good by definition. But parents, if they would live the virtue of justice with their children, must respect their personal decisions which do not directly concern matters of morality.

The typical way in which parents fail in this regard is by insisting that a child go into a particular career - for example, medicine or law - just so that she will bring honor to the family and earn a lot of money and have a comfortable life. This is prudence of the flesh, again, because the parents' end is wrong: they want the child to have a prestigious career so that they themselves can feel proud or so that the child can be financially independent and have a comfortable life. While these are not bad things in themselves, for the parents to set them up as the final end of their child-rearing is prudence of the flesh because they should clearly be subordinated to the child's growth in personal

virtue. The parents' lack of moral virtue, their lack of justice, would have caused them to be imprudent by envisaging wrongful ends through prudence of the flesh. Thus, justice is another virtue most necessary to proactive parenting because it is not possible to be truly prudent if we are not first just.²³² Aquinas ratifies these considerations by reminding us, first, that prudence of the flesh resembles genuine prudence because it "involves some exercise of reasoning", and, second, that "the wrong use of reason is most manifest in the vices opposed to justice, the chief of which is [precisely] covetousness".²³³

Now, the difficulty which immediately arises when we speak of justice in the context of the parent-child relationship is the following. According to Aristotle, whom Aquinas takes as his authority, justice is only possible between equals. But it would seem that parents and children are hardly equals, if we consider their age, knowledge, social status, etc. Aquinas resolves, or rather 'dissolves' the problem by suggesting that there is here an equivocation on the term 'justice'. In the end, he agrees with Aristotle and follows a strict reading on the matter by stating:

²³²Again we return to the question of the respect parents should have for their children as persons. To be just towards their children implies that parents respect the internal dynamism (intelligence and freedom, essentially) of the child.

²³³Emphasis added; S.T. IIa IIae q.55, a.8, resp: "...in aliquali usu rationis..." and "Et ideo usus rationis indebitus etiam maxime apparet in vitiis oppositis iustitiae. Opponitur autem sibi maxime avaritia".

Certainly it is for justice to render to each his due, yet it presupposes the distinction of one individual from another. Giving oneself one's due is not justice in the strict sense of the term. What belongs to the child is the father's...and accordingly there is no strict justice between them²³⁴

There are difficulties with Aquinas's analysis here because there are difficulties, frankly, in his manner of perceiving the parent-child relationship in the first place. He suggests in the Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics that children ('the engendered') "may be compared to [parents] as separable parts are to the whole, such as teeth or hair or some other such" (Emphasis added, Book VIII, Chapter 12); a truly remarkable claim if we reflect on it. We shall have reason to comment again on this problem of equality between parents and children when we speak below of the friendship that it is so necessary to foster in this relationship. Let us return, then, to our principal line of argumentation and explain just what is meant by the term 'authoritative parenting'.

Dr. Diana Baumrind, Research Psychologist at the University of California at Berkeley and one of the world's foremost parenting experts, has found that there are three basic parenting types: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative. In fact, her work in the late sixties and early seventies has been instrumental in so labelling these three types. In her groundbreaking article, "Parental Disciplinary Patterns and Social Competence in Children",

²³⁴Emphasis added; S.T. IIa IIae, q.57, a.4, ad 1.

Dr. Baumrind begins by stating categorically that: "There is no way in which parents can evade having a determining effect upon their children's personality, character, and competence" and "Adult caretakers will play a determining role in the way their children develop, either consciously and conscientiously or by default".²³⁵ She then goes on to give a brief description of the kind of discipline associated with each of the parenting types. We quote from her summary descriptions.

First, there is authoritarian discipline:

The authoritarian parent values obedience as a virtue and favors punitive, forceful measures to curb self-will at points where the child's actions or beliefs conflict with what the parent thinks is right conduct. The authoritarian parent believes in keeping the child in a subordinate role and in restricting his autonomy, and does not encourage verbal give and take, believing that the child should take the parent's word for what is right.

Next, there is permissive discipline:

The permissive prototype of adult control requires the parent to behave in an affirmative, acceptant, and benign manner towards the child's impulses and actions. The permissive parent sees him- or herself as a resource for the child to use as he wishes, but not as an active agent responsible for shaping and altering the child's ongoing and future behavior.

And, finally, rising as the virtuous mid-point between these two defective extremes, there is authoritative discipline:

The authoritative parent, as identified in my studies, attempts to direct the child's activities in a

²³⁵Diana Baumrind, "Parental Disciplinary Patterns and Social Competence in Children" (Youth and Society, Vol. 9, no. 3, March, 1978), p.239.

rational, issue-oriented manner. He or she encourages verbal give and take, shares with the child the reasoning behind parental policy, and solicits the child's objections when the child refuses to conform. Both autonomous self-will and disciplined conformity are valued by the authoritative parent. Therefore, this parent exerts firm control when the child disobeys, but does not hem the child in with restrictions. The authoritative parent enforces the adult perspective, but recognizes the child's individual interests and special ways. Such a parent affirms the child's present qualities, but also sets standards for future conduct, using reason as well as power and shaping by regimen and reinforcement to achieve parental objectives. But this parent does not base his or her decisions on group consensus or the individual child's desires.²³⁶

Dr. Baumrind then goes on to demonstrate how children raised in an authoritative manner - as opposed, precisely to an authoritarian or permissive manner - tend to succeed better in life because they have a higher degree of what is called 'instrumental competence'. These further claims, though interesting and related, are, however, beyond the limits of the present paper, and so we return to focus on the three parenting types as such.

We see, then, that Baumrind characterizes each parenting style - as is only to be expected given the number of wills at work in child-raising - in terms of two basic factors: discipline, or control, and the affirmation of the child as an autonomous individual with value in him- or herself. This is perhaps most clearly seen in her description of the authoritative parent. She says there that 'Both autonomous self-will and disciplined

²³⁶Emphasis added to all three citations; Baumrind, pp. 244 - 245.

conformity are valued by the authoritative parent'. That is, the authoritative parent acts so as to affirm the child as an individual, with a will of her own, but does so in such a way that the child learns to accept reasonable limits to her behavior.

If we set aside for the moment the contrast between authoritarian and authoritative discipline on this subject of control versus affirmation, there are several interesting avenues we might explore in the (arguably more distinct) contrast between permissive and authoritative discipline. While authoritarian and authoritative parents agree at least that the child's freedom needs to be in some way restricted, whence no doubt their nominal similarity, the "immediate aim of the ideologically aware permissive parent is to free the child from restraint as much as is consistent with survival".²³⁷ Baumrind herself elsewhere intimates that this latter contrast is perhaps the more relevant when she states:

The best adjusted and most self-possessed children [in the study] had parents who were loving, but also demanding, authoritative, and consistent in their discipline. By contrast, permissive parents, no matter how loving, produced children who lacked self-control, initiative, and resilience.²³⁸

Moreover, while perhaps a generation ago the authoritarian/authoritative contrast would have provoked the more fruitful discussion, given the contemporary ethos of unlimited freedom and

²³⁷Baumrind, p.244.

²³⁸Diana Baumrind, cited in Kilpatrick, p.257.

contempt for authority of any kind, we shall focus our attention principally on the permissive/authoritative debate.

Baumrind introduces us to this debate by suggesting that there is a movement taking place within parenting circles away from permissive parenting and towards authoritative parenting. First she states the position of one of the foremost proponents of permissive parenting, A. S. Neill, who believes:

...the child has a natural tendency to self-actualization - left to itself the child will learn all it needs to know and will turn to conventionally approved modes of behavior when and if it wishes to do so. By opposing natural tendencies, the parents are preventing the expression of the child's capacity for self-actualization...²³⁹

She then goes on to state:

However, in recent years there seems to have been an increasing disaffection with permissive upbringing. As Spock (1957: 2) himself put it in the introduction to the second edition of his classic baby book, "A great change in attitude has occurred and nowadays there seems to be more chance of a conscientious parent's getting into trouble with permissiveness than strictness".²⁴⁰

And these sentiments are reflected in the work of innumerable contemporary parenting authors. For our part we shall focus our attention on the work of one author who is arguably the most well-known and most respected in the field: Dr. James Dobson. Dr. Dobson is a licensed psychologist, president of 'Focus on the Family', and author of the best-selling books Dare to Discipline

²³⁹Emphasis added; Baumrind, pp. 241-242.

²⁴⁰Emphasis added; Dr. Spock cited in Baumrind, p. 242.

and The New Dare to Discipline.²⁴¹ While Dobson clearly comes down on the side of authoritative parenting over permissive parenting, what interests us even more than this datum is the fact that he agrees fundamentally with Baumrind in speaking of conscientious parenting in terms of a balance between discipline and affection, between discipline and love.

Although he certainly recommends that parents discipline their children, Dobson is quick to reassure his readers that he in no way endorses parental harshness. He recognizes that there is a balance which needs to be struck and speaks of an unfortunate pendulum he has often seen between "harsh, oppressive control" on the one hand and "unstructured permissiveness" on the other. He concludes: "Both extremes leave their characteristic scars on the lives of young victims and I would be hard pressed to say which is more damaging".²⁴² For him the problem facing most children today, however, is not authoritarianism, although this still exists, as child abuse statistics will attest. It is, rather, what he refers to as "an unworkable, illogical philosophy of child management"²⁴³;

²⁴¹James Dobson Dare to Discipline and The New Dare to Discipline (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1970 and 1992).

²⁴²Dobson (all references are to the second edition of his work), p.11. He adds further on: "I don't believe in parental harshness" (p.12) and "Children are incredibly vulnerable to rejection, ridicule, criticism, and anger at home, and they deserve to grow up in an environment of safety, acceptance, and warmth" (p.13).

²⁴³Dobson, p.5.

namely permissiveness. Let us give Dobson's definition of this parenting style and then recount an anecdote he tells which demonstrates the kind of behavior enjoined by it.

Permissiveness is the absence of effective parental authority, resulting in the lack of boundaries for the child. This word represents a tolerance of childish disrespect, defiance, and the general confusion that occurs in the absence of adult leadership.²⁴⁴

The anecdote Dobson tells is of a mother with her young daughter. The daughter has been spoiled by the mother's permissiveness and can now pretty well dictate her mother's behavior. Although long, we recount it in full because it illustrates well the foolishness of this style of parenting.

I'll never forget a mother in that predicament who asked for help in handling her defiant three-year-old daughter, Sandy. She realized that her tiny little girl had hopelessly beaten her in a contest of wills and the child had become a tyrant and a dictator. On the afternoon prior to our conversation, an incident occurred which was typical of Sandy's way of doing business. The mother (I'll call her Mrs. Nichols) put the youngster down for a nap, but knew it was unlikely she would stay in bed. Sandy was not accustomed to doing anything she didn't fancy, and naptime was not on her list of fun things to do in the afternoon.

On this occasion, however, the child was more interested in antagonizing her mom than in merely having her own way. Sandy began to scream. She yelled loudly enough to upset the whole neighborhood, fraying Mrs. Nichols' jangled nerves. Then she tearfully demanded various things, including a glass of water.

At first Mrs. Nichols refused to comply with the orders, but she surrendered when Sandy's screaming reached a peak of intensity. As the glass of water was delivered, the mischievous child pushed it aside, refusing to drink because her mother had not brought it soon enough. Mrs. Nichols stood offering the water for a few minutes, then said she would take it back to the kitchen if Sandy didn't drink by the time she counted to five.

²⁴⁴Dobson, p.60.

Sandy set her jaw and waited through the count: "three...four...five!" As Mrs. Nichols grasped the glass and walked toward the kitchen, the child screamed for the water. Sandy dangled her harassed mom back and forth like a yo-yo until she tired of the sport.

And this anecdote, Dobson insists, is not by any means extreme. He says that in his experience many parents today approach their role with this same (pathetic) attitude of a slave. As we noted with Baumrind above: "The permissive parent sees him- or herself as a resource for the child to use as he wishes..."²⁴⁵

Dr. Dobson, whose life's work has been, in large measure, to deal with the fallout of this particular parenting style, concludes, not a little dismayed: "Permissiveness has not simply failed as an approach to child-rearing. It has been a disaster for those who have tried it".²⁴⁶ Jeane Westin comes to a similar conclusion after her in-depth research into the matter. Writing in 1981, she had set out to expose "the trap that had ensnared all those parents who, like me, swallowed the bait of the last quarter-century's progressive child-rearing practices".²⁴⁷ Having raised her own daughter permissively and seen the highly negative consequences, she was better able to understand parents who would respond to her questionnaires as did this one parent:

My kids were free boarders and rather unpleasant ones at that. They treated their home like a hotel and their mother and me like servants who should always be ready to

²⁴⁵Baumrind, p. 244.

²⁴⁶Dobson, p.7.

²⁴⁷Westin, p.16.

drop everything and wait on them. I was too easy on them, thinking they'd 'only be kids once'. Now it looks like they'll be kids all their lives."²⁴⁸

And this idea that permissive parenting leads to a kind of perpetual childishness in the youngsters raised according to it is repeated by many authors. Before giving Dobson's solution to the problem of permissiveness, therefore, let us examine this idea and its corollaries.

James Stenson, for one, makes exactly this point in his book Upbringing. First, he lists those vices which oppose the four so-called 'cardinal' virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. As he prefers to characterize them, they are: "Immature judgment, irresponsibility, softness, and self-indulgence".²⁴⁹ He goes on to show how these vices are, each in its own way, essentially childish. "When we look at these weaknesses of character, we are struck by one common thread among them: they are vestiges of childhood".²⁵⁰ What needs to happen, in Stenson's view, is for parents to lead their children, first by their example, but also by their instruction, out of these essentially narcissistic ways of behaving. And he emphasizes that this requires an effort on the part of parents; i.e. that moral formation "does not happen naturally". As he says:

²⁴⁸Westin, p. 194.

²⁴⁹Stenson, Upbringing, pp. 33-35.

²⁵⁰Stenson, Upbringing, p. 35.

If children do not learn character strengths - by word, example and repeated practice - then they retain the weaknesses of childhood well into adolescence and even adulthood. Though such young people may attain advanced degrees and professional skills, they remain self-centered, pleasure-driven, and irresponsible.²⁵¹

And it is precisely this fact which makes the previous parent's testimony so poignant. He says, recall: "I was too easy on them, thinking they'd 'only be kids once' [as the popular saying has it]...Now it looks like they'll be kids all their lives". This man has come to the sorry realization that his children's selfishness and lack of virtue is in large measure his own doing. They still act like children, he acknowledges to himself, they still have all the character weaknesses typical of children, because he neglected to train them to behave otherwise.

And this reminds us, in turn, of Stenson's previous warning that "We have one chance, and one only, to raise our children well".²⁵² It is a call to parental solicitude. Dobson uses a metaphor of his own to express a related idea. He reminds us that certain animals, frogs for example, can be fatally tricked in the following way. If a frog is placed in a pot of boiling water, he will immediately attempt to hop or climb out of the pot. But if he is put in a pot of warm water which is subsequently heated up slowly, by degrees, he will allow himself to remain in the pot until it is too late and he boils to death. And the explanantion

²⁵¹Stenson, Upbringing, p. 36.

²⁵²Stenson, Upbringing, p. 15.

is simply that in the second instance he is unaware of the imminent danger. He has been coaxed, to use a hackneyed phrase, into a false sense of security.

This metaphor is related to Stenson's warning in the following way. Among the reasons, usually, why parents fail to be solicitous in their children's regard and fail to 'educate for character', is simply that they do not realize the necessity. They are unaware of the need to do so. And, so, just as the frog allows himself to be boiled to death when he could easily save himself by hopping out of the pot, parents fall into "neglect and inaction...the only really irremediable errors in child-raising".²⁵³ What happens, Stenson suggests, is that parents are put off by the children's innocence and adorability. Children, especially very young children, are so adorable that most parents have a hard time seeing the need to discipline them.²⁵⁴ It is, however, the common experience of generation after generation of parents, that, as Dobson puts it:

Heredity does not equip a child with proper attitudes; children learn what they are taught...If we want to see honesty, truthfulness, and unselfishness in our offspring, then these characteristics should be the

²⁵³Stenson, Upbringing, p. 110.

²⁵⁴It is interesting to note that again here what is required is the prudence, the practical wisdom, to discern the reality of the situation. German Thomist, Josef Pieper, defines prudence, in fact, as "the perfected ability to make decisions in accord with reality" (Four Cardinal Virtues, p.31). Children are adorable, it is true. But they still need to have their self-will intelligently curbed. Parents need prudence, therefore, to be able to judge well about the need children have of discipline.

conscious objectives of our early instructional process.²⁵⁵

And Stenson adds:

What parents don't seem to realize is that problems later in life - with faith, morality, marital stability - do not come about overnight. And, emphatically, they do not come about merely through subversive peer influences. What is done or not done in childhood directly influences how well or poorly the children will resist the pressures of materialism, the temptation to abandon traditional values and conform to a different vision of life.²⁵⁶

Thus, for parents to be proactive, they must subordinate their impulse to negligence to the value of solicitude and command themselves to act. They must begin with the end in mind, exercise foresight, and, judging well, try to strike an appropriate balance between the affection they love to give and the discipline they know they ought to give to their children.

It would seem that Covey's farming metaphor is quite appropriate in relation to parenting. He says that just as a farmer cannot take short-cuts, so neither can proactive parents. The farmer must plant in the early Spring, water profusely in the Summer, and wait patiently til the Fall, if he would harvest an abundant crop. He cannot leave out any one of these steps and he must fulfill each one of them in their proper order. If he fails to plant in the Spring, or if he neglects to water enough in the Summer, or if he impatiently tries to harvest before the crop is

²⁵⁵Dobson, p. 15.

²⁵⁶Stenson, Peer, pp. 7-8.

mature, he will be an ineffective farmer because he will most certainly not have a fruitful harvest. Likewise, parents must nurture their children physically, emotionally, mentally, and morally when they are very young - guiding them in the path of moral virtue - or they cannot expect to have a well-mannered and responsible young adult at the time of adolescence. As Dobson puts it: "We cannot expect the coveted behavior to appear magically if we have not done our early homework".²⁵⁷ And this, of course, is in direct opposition to the claim of permissiveness proponent, A.S. Neill, who insists that "left to itself the child will learn all it needs to know and will turn to conventionally approved modes of behavior..."²⁵⁸

We can think, perhaps, of three stages in the life of a young person growing up, in descending order of importance: 0-6 years old, 7-12 years old, and 13-18 years old. Unless Dobson, Smalley, Westin, Stenson, and a host of other highly respected parenting authors are wrong, then parents need to be prudent and to exercise fortitude and vigilance, disciplining their children - again, reasonably, not harshly - when they are in the first two stages, if they want the third stage and beyond to be a fruitful time of growth in virtue and not a time of regretful damage control.

²⁵⁷Dobson, p.15.

²⁵⁸Baumrind, p. 241.

Dobson tells the story of a middle-aged couple who had practiced permissiveness, neglecting ever to discipline their daughter, and who later regretted it sincerely. Again, although long, we recount the anecdote in full first because it is true and second because it illustrates well the kinds of attitudes and behaviors we encourage in children when we fail to discipline them appropriately. We can speak at length about the dangers of permissive parenting and of the need for parents to discipline their children, but an anecdote is worth a thousand words.

When mothers and fathers fail to take charge in moments of challenge, they create for themselves and for their families a potential lifetime of heartache. That's what happened in the case of the Holloways, who were the parents of a teen named Becky (not their real names). Mr. Holloway came to see me in desperation one afternoon and related the cause for his concern. Becky had never been required to obey or respect her parents, and her early years were a strain on the entire family. Mrs. Holloway was confident Becky would become more manageable, but that never happened. She held her parents in utter contempt from her youngest childhood and was sullen, disrespectful, selfish, and uncooperative. Mr. and Mrs. Holloway felt that they did not have the right to make demands on their daughter, so they smiled politely and pretended not to notice her horrid behavior.

Their magnanimous attitude became more difficult to maintain as Becky steamrolled into puberty and adolescence. She was a perpetual malcontent, sneering at her family in disgust. Mr. and Mrs. Holloway were afraid to antagonize her in any way because she would throw the most violent tantrums imaginable. They were victims of emotional blackmail. They thought they could buy her cooperation, which led them to install a private telephone in her room. She accepted it without gratitude and accumulated a staggering bill during the first month of usage.

They thought a party might make her happy and Mrs. Holloway worked hard to decorate the house and prepare refreshments. On the appointed evening, a mob of dirty, profane teens swarmed into the house, breaking and destroying the furnishings. During the course of the evening, Mrs. Holloway said something that angered Becky.

The girl struck her mother and left her lying in a pool of blood in the bathroom.

Away from home at the time, Mr. Holloway returned to find his wife helpless on the floor; he located his unconcerned daughter in the backyard, dancing with friends. As he described for me the details of their recent nightmare, he spoke with tears in his eyes. His wife, he said, was still in the hospital, contemplating her parental failures as she recovered from her wounds.²⁵⁹

Now, clearly, Dobson's purpose here is rhetorical and his tone not a little emotional ('utter contempt', 'sneering' 'victims of emotional blackmail', 'steamrolled into puberty', 'a mob of dirty, profane teens' 'swarmed into the house', etc). And he makes his point very effectively. But if we step behind the language and try to envisage these parents, their daughter, and simply the facts of the situation, do we not emerge with a useful image of the real deficiencies of permissive parenting? Are we not able, that is, to foresee the teenage Becky in the three-year-old Sandy?

Perhaps the daughter actually striking her mother is the most useful image to retain, or the mother lying wounded on the floor. In any case, although physical violence directed at parents is still by and large an exceptional occurrence, anyone acquainted with current youth statistics or anyone with first-hand experience in modern grammar schools and high schools is more than cognizant of the problems arising out of a lack of parental diligence. For the schools and for society at large as much as for the parents themselves, as Stenson puts it wryly: "...there seems to be a

²⁵⁹Dobson, pp. 21-22.

balancing economy, a sort of universal law in child-raising: you pay now or you pay later".²⁶⁰ We are no doubt reminded of Dobson's frog.

Now, two statements summarize well Dobson's attitude towards authoritative parenting. He believes [both] that:

Children thrive in an atmosphere of genuine love, undergirded by reasonable, consistent discipline.

[and]

When properly applied, loving discipline works! It stimulates tender affection, made possible by mutual respect.²⁶¹

And this last word directs us to the operative notion. Dobson gives in his book a detailed description of what he calls the "five underpinnings to commonsense child-rearing". The first of these is: "Developing respect for parents is the critical factor in child management".²⁶² To speak of discipline, for Dobson, is to speak about developing respect for the authority of the parents. Without this respect, the child lacks sufficient motivation to believe and

²⁶⁰Emphasis added; Stenson, p.55. He goes on to add, interestingly:

So many parents find this out the hard way. They practice comfortable neglect when the children are small, and then endure heartbreaking disappointment later, even tragedy. Successful parents will make any sacrifice now to keep this from happening. They seem to know that their children's future happiness, the very stability of their children's future marriage - everything - depends on making sacrifices now when the children are young enough to learn life's all-important lessons: a confident, persistent teaching of character strengths through word, example, and repeated practice.

²⁶¹Dobson, p. 7.

²⁶²Dobson, p. 18.

obey the parent, and this, in turn, can have very serious consequences, as we have seen.

For Dobson, the key to earning the respect (and respect is, finally, something that must be earned) of the children is for parents to do two things: first, to know how to discipline in normal circumstances and, second, to know how to discipline in cases of defiance. The problem, he explains, with all permissive theories of parenting is that they have nothing useful to say about how to deal with outright defiance. The permissive parenting authors are quick to speak of the 'rights of the child' and of the child's need to achieve 'self-actualization' through absolute liberty, etc., etc., but they have nothing useful to say when it comes to dealing with simple defiance.²⁶³ Their reasoning is typically along the following lines.

A child will eventually respond to reason and forbearance [alone], ruling out the need for firm leadership...[Therefore, parents ought to] encourage the child's rebellion...it offers a valuable release of hostility. Verbalize the child's feelings.²⁶⁴

The problem with such advice, obviously, is that the child is never taught to say 'No' to her feelings. If she feels like screaming at the top of her voice, then she screams at the top of her voice; if

²⁶³Dobson suggests (p.50): "A simple principle: when you are defiantly challenged [by your child] win decisively. When the child asks: 'Who's in charge?' tell him. When he mutters: 'Who loves me?' take him in your arms and surround him with affection. Treat him with respect and dignity, and expect the same from him. Then begin to enjoy the sweet benefits of competent parenthood".

²⁶⁴Dobson, p. 5.

she feels like throwing a violent tantrum, then she throws a violent tantrum; if she feels like striking her mother.... The child, far from being truly free, is actually a kind of slave of her emotions. Never having been told 'No' by her parents, she is practically incapable of saying 'No' to herself.²⁶⁵

Dobson's point - and, again, he is massively supported in the current literature on the subject - is twofold. First, that children, if they are to be able later successfully to "meet the demands imposed on them by their school, peer group, and later adult responsibilities"²⁶⁶, need to be disciplined, to be told 'No' sometimes, when they are very young. Otherwise, they grow up not knowing the legitimate 'boundaries' to their behavior. And, second, that it is precisely through this 'loving discipline' - a discipline which accepts and affirms the child as a person, while at the same time rejecting his misbehavior - that parents win the respect of their children. Children naturally have a keen sense of what is fair and what is unfair. If they perceive that the parent loves them and is disciplining them not because she is angry and wants to be vindictive, but because she wants deliberately to eradicate a specific behavior, then they will come, over time, to

²⁶⁵We must add 'practically' because our whole analysis of Viktor Frankl and the notion of 'response-ability' in Part I presupposes, precisely, that she is capable, if she would only make the effort necessary to overcome her impulses. The point is that, depending on the case in question, this effort can sometimes be truly herculean.

²⁶⁶Dobson, p. 6.

respect both the parent herself and her authority, as well as her particular indications. It is by reasonable discipline, the discipline specifically justified and recommended by Dr. Baumrind, among others, then, that parents instruct their children in moral virtue and earn their much needed respect.

Stenson agrees with Dobson on this point of respect and helps us better to understand the notion at issue by observing, importantly, that:

Respect is the key to most significant human relationships...and respect always derives from perception of strength.²⁶⁷

That is, we only respect people whom we perceive as in some way strong, whether physically, intellectually, emotionally, or morally. It is essential, therefore, for parents to be perceived by their children as people who are strong in some way.²⁶⁸ And Dobson is suggesting that it is impossible for a child to respect someone whom he or she can disobey at will and with perfect impunity. As he says: "When a child can successfully defy his parents during his first fifteen years, laughing in their faces and

²⁶⁷Stenson, Upbringing pp.72-73.

²⁶⁸A most important way, many authors suggest, is by their own moral virtue. We have seen that a 'virtue' is a character strength, precisely. Well, one way parents can and ought to show that they are strong, and thereby gain the respect of their children, is by their own example of a virtuous life. This, in turn, is not possible, as we have seen, without the direction of prudence.

stubbornly flouting their authority, he develops a natural contempt for them".²⁶⁹

Now, the terms in which Dobson speaks of authoritative parenting are: love and control.²⁷⁰ He says that the authoritative parent, the parent who is conscientious and who wants to gain the respect of his children, is he who knows how to strike an appropriate balance between his desire to lavish affection on his children and his duty to instruct them morally by a reasonable discipline. In fact, Dobson goes so far as to state, remarkably, that:

The foundational understanding on which the whole parent-child relationship rests...is to be found in a careful balance between love and discipline. The interaction of these two variables is as close as we can get to a formula for successful parenting.²⁷¹

He is convinced, moreover, that much, if not all, of children's rebelliousness comes from their innate desire to know where the boundaries to their behavior lie.

²⁶⁹Dobson, p. 18.

²⁷⁰He suggests that parents need to send two messages, principally, to pre-school children:

1. "I love you, little one, more than you can possibly understand"; and

2. "Because I love you so much, I must teach you to obey me". The authoritative parent knows how to balance these two. It goes without saying, of course, that the obedience Dobson refers to here is not obedience for the sake of obedience; that would simply be tyranny. It is, rather, obedience for sake of growth in virtue, and it presupposes that what the parents command is in accord with right reason.

²⁷¹Emphasis added; Dobson, p. 48. This is, in fact, the fifth of Dobson's '5 underpinnings of commonsense childrearing'.

Do children really want limits set on their behavior? Most certainly! I could not be more convinced of this fact. They derive security from knowing where the boundaries are and who's available to enforce them.²⁷²

He tells the story of an experiment that was carried out on a group of very young grammar school children. Someone had suggested hypothetically that children, if they are to enjoy themselves, need to feel totally free and without boundaries when they are playing. To test this, the chain-link fence surrounding the playground at the school was removed. However, instead of wandering outward and testing the limits, so to speak, of their new-found freedom, the children tended more than ever to huddle together in the center of the playground. The suggestion, of course, is that the fence represented at least a degree of security, and the absence of a fence meant, in effect, that the 'edges' of their safe area had become blurred and even closer.²⁷³

Dobson maintains that it is by discipline that parents will win the respect of their children, and he insists that this discipline must be presented in a unified manner; that is, that the parents should not contradict each other in what they command or in what they forbid. As he says:

It is a real problem when the mother and the father represent opposing extremes in control. The situation usually follows a familiar pattern: dad is a very busy man and he is heavily involved in his work. He is gone

²⁷²Dobson, p. 59.

²⁷³Dobson, p. 59. He concludes: "There is security in defined limits. When the home atmosphere is as it should be, children live in utter safety".

from early morning til night, and when he does return, he brings a briefcase full of work. His approach to child-management is harsh and unsympathetic. By contrast, mom is much more supportive...She worries about dad's lack of affection and tenderness for the children. She feels that she should compensate for his sternness by leaning in the other direction. When he sends the children to bed without supper, she slips them some milk and cookies...Thus the two parental symbols of authority act to contradict each other, and the child is caught somewhere between them. The child respects neither parent because each has assassinated the authority of the other.²⁷⁴

Here we see, as well, the link between the unity of the parents and the corresponding respect of the children. If children perceive that parents are not in agreement on matters of discipline, they begin to feel that they have the right to judge what is right and wrong for themselves. Moral behavior loses its sense of objectivity and becomes a mere matter of opinion.

Stenson makes exactly similar claims in his chapter entitled: 'Successful Parents: A Profile'. He states categorically, first, that in his experience:

The single most significant trait of successful parents is unity of mind and will in dealing with their children. Each child has only one mind and one conscience, and therefore needs one unified and coherent set of directions coming from both parents. Clever, manipulative children can take advantage of disunity between their parents playing off one against the other. Successful parents simply do not permit this to happen.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴Dobson, p. 50. He adds, significantly: "The most hostile, aggressive teenagers I have known have emerged from this anti-thetical combination. Again, the 'middle ground' of love and control must be sought if we are to produce healthy, responsible children".

²⁷⁵Stenson, Upbringing, p. 10.

He sees this in terms of teamwork; the parents work together, not at cross purposes. And this helps the children both to develop a firm moral sense and to respect both of their parents as figures of legitimate authority. The parents affirm and validate each other's authority in the eyes of the children by managing "to smooth over the differences through compromise, in matters relating to the children's discipline".²⁷⁶

As well, according to Stenson, it is essential, if they want to win the respect of their children, that parents show openly their mutual respect for one another. It can happen, for a variety of reasons, in modern life that children rarely, if ever, see adults outside the family showing respect to their parents. Consequently, if parents themselves fail to show each other respect, the children might find it quite difficult indeed to develop a respect for them. It is important, therefore, that the children see that "in Dad's eyes, Mom is the absolutely number one person in his life"²⁷⁷, and likewise with Mom's love and respect for Dad. Children frequently mirror the respect that one parent has for the other. "To the extent that each parent respects the other, and shows this [openly], the children unconsciously adopt this same respect themselves".²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶Stenson, Upbringing, p. 46.

²⁷⁷Stenson, Upbringing, p. 47.

²⁷⁸Stenson, Upbringing, p. 47.

Now, all along we have spoken of the need to balance 'love and discipline'; and if properly understood, there is not a problem in so speaking. However, on the surface at least, there is a problem because, as both Stenson and Dobson themselves point out, there is a sense in which discipline and love are not contradictory notions.

Dobson puts this very well:

Disciplinary action is not an assault on parental love; it is a function of it. Discipline is not something parents do to a child, it is something they do for him or her...[as if to say] 'I love you too much to let you behave like that'.²⁷⁹

This is part of what Covey is getting at when he says that 'love is a verb':

Proactive people make love a verb. Love is something you do: the sacrifices you make, the giving of self, like a mother bringing a newborn into the world...If you are a parent, look at the love that you have for the children that you sacrificed for. Love is a value that is actualized through loving actions.²⁸⁰

Covey distinguishes love as a decision of our will from love as an emotion; he is clever enough to realize that the two are not equivalent. Stenson too sees that successful parents typically see discipline as a "positive framework for building character, and not merely a negative control apparatus". And this too is a sign of their love. "Children raised in this way come to see, sooner or later...that all their parents' disciplinary efforts derive from their love and their spirit of sacrifice".²⁸¹

²⁷⁹Dobson, p. 22.

²⁸⁰Covey, p. 80.

²⁸¹Stenson, Upbringing, p. 50.

As many of the parenting authors are quick to point out, the very term 'discipline' derives from the word 'disciple'. A disciple is a follower of someone else; but, precisely, where there is a follower, there must needs be a leader. To discipline our children is thus to lead them²⁸² [into the path of virtue]. We are reminded, as well, of our earlier remarks about 'diligence'. To be 'diligent' (from 'diligo'), literally, is to show our love with deeds. And the principal way that parents do so is by having their values clearly in mind and disciplining their children consistently and fairly according to these values.

Now, this notion that discipline is not a contradiction of love, but is, rather, a manifestation of it is something which Aquinas's analysis of prudence allows us to understand more deeply. Aquinas makes, at the very beginning of the Treatise, the following fascinating observation: "It is in this sense that prudence is said to be love, not that of its nature it is a kind of love, but because its activity is caused by love".²⁸³ Our concern to do well what we are doing, to be prudent stewards, is always motivated by love of some kind. Parents want to be prudent in their management of the home, among other reasons, no doubt, because they love each

²⁸²Here, again, we see the need of prudence. To lead is to direct, but to direct is a function proper to reason. Prudence, an intellectual virtue, is directive of the other virtues and of all our actions which accord with right reason.

²⁸³S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.1, ad 1: "Sic igitur prudentia dicitur esse amor non quidem essentialiter, sed inquantum amor movet ad actum prudentiae".

other and their children and want to do what is best for them. This is consistent with what Aquinas has to say elsewhere on the same topic:

Prudence, however, does not consist in knowing alone, but also in loving, because, as we have said, its chief act is to command, which is to apply the knowledge one possesses to desiring and acting.²⁸⁴

The proactive person 'makes love a verb', but this is precisely the work of prudence. And prudence, the virtue which directs the discipline conscientious parents provide for their children, is itself motivated, or caused, by love. Discipline, then, in the context of child-rearing, is not a lack of love, but one of its very manifestations.

Let us conclude, then, this overview of authoritative parenting by adding to the testimonies of Baumrind and Dobson those of several other major parenting authors; namely, James Stenson, Barbara Coloroso, Gary Smalley, and Jeane Westin. Stenson expresses his understanding of successful/authoritative parenting thus:

Successful parents combine firmness with understanding ...They lay down the law, but affectionately, and with forgiveness. They hate the sin, but love the sinner. They show their children that they love them enough to correct their faults, and thereby build strengths. They are thus neither harsh nor soft-hearted, neither

²⁸⁴S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.16, resp: "Sed prudentia non consistit in sola cognitione, sed etiam in appetitu: quia ut dictum est, principalis eius actus est praecipere, quod est applicare cognitionem habitam ad appetendum et operandum".

tyrannical nor permissive - for both of these extremes are essentially self-centered.²⁸⁵

Barbara Coloroso speaks of authoritative ('backbone') parenting in terms of the two extremes to which it is opposed:

There are three basic kinds of families: brick-wall, jellyfish, and backbone...In brick-wall families, the structure is rigid and is used for control and power... In jellyfish families, structure is almost non-existent...In backbone families, structure is present and firm and flexible and functional.²⁸⁶

Gary Smalley speaks of the same reality in slightly modified terms. He adds to the usual distinction of three types a fourth which the other authors would probably consider an aspect of the two defective types. He characterizes his 'four basic types of parenting' as follows. 'Dominant parents' give "few explanations for their rigid rules". 'Neglectful parents' are just "not available" for their children and are "not 'home' even when they are home". 'Permissive parents' "tend to be warm, supporting people, but weak in establishing and enforcing rules and limits for their children". And 'loving and firm parents' are "a healthy and balanced combination of the dominant and permissive parents".

They have clearly defined rules, limits, and standards for living. And they take time to train their children to understand these limits. But they also give support by expressing physical affection and spending personal time listening to each child. They are flexible.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵Stenson, Upbringing p. 50.

²⁸⁶Barbara Coloroso Kids Are Worth It! (Toronto: Somerville House, 1994), p. 38.

²⁸⁷Gary Smalley The Key to Your Child's Heart (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992); page numbers, respectively: 49, 50, 53, & 55.

And, finally, Jeane Westin describes her "New Traditional Family" as "a family that operates on a balance of love and discipline". She acknowledges:

"Children have a right to loving care...[But] they also have an absolute right to adequate parental discipline to teach them how eventually to control their own lives".²⁸⁸

We see, then, that there is widespread agreement as to the nature and advisability of authoritative parenting. It is seen as the just mean rising between the two defective extremes opposed to it. It is judged favorably because it suggests that the most effective way of raising healthy, responsible young adults is by striking a balance between affection and discipline, between letting children know unequivocally that they are highly esteemed and, at the same time, that they must develop habits in accord with - and not against - right reason. The logic of the p/pc balance helps us to see why the most proactive thing parents can do for their children is to implement this so-called authoritative discipline. Just as we need to care for a machine if we want it to work well, so parents need to care for their children's moral formation if they want them to behave well. If they want 'production' in the form of virtue, strong character, and moral behavior, then they must care for the 'production capability' of authoritative parenting.

²⁸⁸Westin; pages respectively: 181 and 185.

Now, as we indicated above, the very balance upon which this [nearly universally agreed upon] parenting style is based, is not possible without the virtue of prudence. Aquinas is quite clear that: "prudence is directive of all acts of moral virtue".²⁸⁹ But 'parenting', taken in general, inasmuch as it involves the deliberate actions of free agents - the parents - certainly falls within the domain of morality. That is, to raise children effectively requires, as we have seen, that parents do certain things and avoid doing certain other things. In the former category we could put: thinking ahead, deciding on the values they want to encourage, devising a strategy for their children's character development, actually disciplining the children when they misbehave, showing the children a lot of affection, etc. And in the latter category we might put: being selfish, lazy, and negligent; not thinking ahead or planning, not disciplining in a consistent, timely manner, and/or not showing enough genuine love and affection for their children.²⁹⁰ Thus, in all that parents are required to do for their children, they need generally to be guided by prudence.

²⁸⁹S.T. IIa IIae q.56, a.1, resp: "[Prudentia] est directiva omnium virtuosorum actuum".

²⁹⁰Even here we see clearly the need for prudence. In the first category (what is recommendable) we speak of what the parents do, their actions; and this is the domain of prudence. In the second category (what is not recommendable) we speak of what the parents fail to do, their omissions; and this is the domain of negligence, the principal vice opposed to prudence. We are reminded, naturally, of Covey's insistence that proactive people are in the first instance active people and of Stenson's admonition that it is typically more what parents neglect to do which makes for ineffective parenting.

In particular, we can say that prudence is required for all of these parental actions for two reasons. First, because it is prudence which sets the mean of moral virtue. Aquinas's reasoning in this regard runs as follows. He first defines moral virtue as: "keeping to a mean decided by reason in the way that a wise man would so decide it" and states: "to be conformed to right reason is the proper purpose of any moral virtue".²⁹¹ The mean, then, that conscientious parents must observe in all their relations with their children can only be supplied by prudence. As Aquinas says:

Yet quite how and through what we strike the virtuous mean, this is the business of prudence. For though keeping the mean is the aim of moral virtue, nevertheless, it is in the correct marshalling of means to the end that the mean is found.²⁹²

If we think for a moment of the basic dynamic involved in authoritative parenting, the need for prudence becomes all the more evident. This type of parenting requires, fundamentally, that parents strike an appropriate balance between their discipline and their affection. This balance can be seen as the virtuous mean between the two defective extremes proposed by authoritarian and permissive parenting, respectively. But here we have seen that it is only by prudence that the mean of moral virtue can be struck.

²⁹¹S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.7, sed and resp, respectively: "...definitione virtutis moralis dicitur quod est in medietate existens determinata ratione prout sapiens determinabit";

and: "...hoc ipsum quod est conformari ratione rectae est finis proprius cuiuslibet moralis virtutis".

²⁹²S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.7, resp: "Sed qualiter et per quae homo in operando attingat medium rationis pertinet ad dispositionem prudentiae. Licet enim attingere medium sit finis virtutis moralis, tamen per rectam dispositionem eorum quae sunt ad finem medium invenitur".

Thus, it is not possible to be an authoritative parent without the virtue of prudence.

Now, in this particular context, the second reason we can say that prudence is required for conscientious/proactive parenting is the following. We said in the previous chapter that Covey considers the P/PC Balance - which, for him, recall, is "the very essence of effectiveness [and]... the definition and paradigm upon which the Seven Habits are based" - a "difficult judgment call".²⁹³ His whole project of proactive effectiveness depends upon an act of judgment²⁹⁴: the judgment of how to balance long-term and short-term, how to balance production and production capability. And we have just outlined how this balance ought to be applied to the domain of parenting. But the ability to judge well is, precisely, one of the three principal acts of the virtue of prudence: 'iudicare'.²⁹⁵ Without this virtue perfecting our intellect as it applies itself to practical matters, we could not judge according to right reason. And, thus, it is not possible to respect the P/PC Balance and proactively parent according to authoritative

²⁹³Emphasis added; Covey, p. 59.

²⁹⁴And the act of judgment "en lui meme, est un acte de connaissance". R. Verneaux Philosophie de l'Homme (Paris: Beauchesne et ses Fils, 1956) p.111.

²⁹⁵S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.10, resp: "Quia igitur ad prudentiam pertinet recte consiliari, iudicare, et praecipere de his per quae pervenitur ad debitum finem".

discipline without the virtue of prudence. Let us examine this claim more closely.

The three principal acts of the virtue of prudence are: to deliberate, to judge, and to command. And we saw above that annexed to the first of these is the 'potential part' called "well-advisedness", which makes a person to be of good counsel. But annexed to the act of judgment there are, not one, but two 'potential parts', so-called. These are: 'synesis', "sound judgment according to the common rules of conduct", and 'gnome', "the wit to judge when departure from the common rules is called for".²⁹⁶ It is possible, moreover, for someone to be good at deliberating and not at judging. As Aquinas puts it: "Many are good at counsel, yet lack the good sense to form a sound judgment".²⁹⁷

Now, in the case of parenting, the need for reasoned judgment and these two 'allied' virtues of synesis and gnome is evident. In a certain sense, it is the essential task of a good parent to judge well; parents are constantly having to exercise judgment on behalf of their children, especially the younger ones. What Aquinas calls

²⁹⁶S.T. IIa IIae q.48, resp: "...et synesis, quae est circa iudicium eorum quae communiter accidunt; et gnome, quae est circa iudicium eorum in quibus oportet quandoque a communi lege recedere".

²⁹⁷S.T. IIa IIae q.51, a.3, resp: "...multi enim sunt bene consiliativi qui tamen non sunt bene sensati, quasi recte iudicantes".

'judgment according to the common rules of conduct' is necessary for parents in the normal run of ordinary family life. They must judge, for example, whether a given child is being stubbornly defiant and needs to be disciplined, or if he is simply upset for some other reason and looking for attention by misbehaving. It is a 'judgment call' on their part, and they need 'synesis' to be able to judge well in these circumstances.

On the other hand, exceptional situations do arise and parents will then need the allied virtue of 'gnome' if they are to judge well about them. For example, if and when a child is disciplined by some school official, whether her teacher or the principal. It may happen that the child has truly misbehaved, is recalcitrant about the matter, and, therefore, needs to be duly disciplined. But it may also happen that the child has simply been misunderstood by the authorities and that there are extenuating circumstances²⁹⁸ which either lessen her guilt or take it away entirely. This kind of situation does not normally arise on a regular basis (or at least one would hope not), so parents need a special virtue to deal with it and like situations. Aquinas calls this the 'allied' virtue of 'gnome' and likens it to the quality of being merciful. In the exceptional case just outlined, for example, the parents must treat their child with refinement, understanding, and

²⁹⁸We see again here the need parents have of circumspection, the integral part of prudence which allows a person to judge aright concerning the circumstances surrounding an act.

gentleness regardless of her objective culpability. Aquinas refers to *gnome* as "a certain perspicacity of judgment".²⁹⁹

And this idea of 'perspicacity' is reflected as well in the work of the parenting authors. In fact, Covey, Dobson, and Smalley all make quite significant claims about the parents' need to communicate deeply with their children, to discern their motives, and to be understanding and gentle with them. All of this represents the second half of the equation, 'discipline/affection'. If it is important for parents to have and implement a plan of character formation and to discipline their children, it is equally - if not more - important for them to love their children a lot, showering them with affection, acceptance, and understanding. This makes sense even practically speaking, of course, because a child is much more likely to obey and imitate his parents if he feels understood by them; i.e. if they have won over his heart.

First, then, Covey - who has a very broad experience dealing with people on this subject of interpersonal relations - makes the following two remarkable claims, as we saw in the previous chapter:

If I were to summarize in one sentence the single most important principle I have learned in the field of interpersonal relations, it would be this: 'Seek first to understand, then to be understood'. This principle is the key to effective interpersonal communication.

²⁹⁹S.T. IIa IIae q.51, a.4, ad 3: "Et ad hoc pertinet *gnome*, quae importat quandam perspicacitatem iudicii".

[and]

Communication is the most important skill in life.³⁰⁰

For him communication is made possible, in turn, by empathic listening and the effort truly to understand other people. We bring this up in the present context because it parallels nicely what Dobson and Smalley have to say about the discernment and understanding parents should exercise towards their children. Covey himself applies this doctrine to the domain of family life: "If you want to interact effectively with me, to influence me - your spouse, your child... - you need first to understand me". And he adds: "Unless you are influenced by my uniqueness, I am not going to be influenced by your advice".³⁰¹

Dobson, for his part, emphasizes the need for parents to be discerning. And we are reminded of what Aquinas has to say about the relation which holds between prudence, love, and discernment: namely, that prudence is, in a certain sense, "caused by love" ('amor causaliter')³⁰² and that "love is called discerning in that it prompts the mind to discriminate".³⁰³ Dobson links the notion of discernment, in turn, to that of respect:

³⁰⁰Covey, p. 237.

³⁰¹Covey, pp. 238 - 239.

³⁰²S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.1, ad 1.

³⁰³Ibid: "Dicitur autem amor discernere, inquantum movet rationem ad discernendum".

The issue of respect is also useful in guiding parents' interpretation of given behavior. First, they should decide whether an undesirable act represents a direct challenge to their authority...to their leadership position as the father or mother. The form of disciplinary action they take should depend on the result of that evaluation.³⁰⁴

And this is the all-important idea for Dobson: the parents' ability to judge well the intentions of their children. If we recall the priority Dobson places on respect, the importance of this being able to 'get behind the child's eyes' takes on its full significance. His very first 'underpinning of common sense child-rearing', recall, is: "Developing respect for parents is the critical factor in child management". Thus, parents have to be able to judge accurately whether or not a given behavior, represents, as he says, a 'direct challenge to their authority'. Otherwise, their response (whether to discipline or not) will not fit the actual circumstances of the situation, and will, to that extent, be inept.

Dobson believes that "a child's resistant behavior always contains a message to his parents, which they must decode before responding". The child is asking, ultimately, "are you in charge, or am I?"³⁰⁵ And, although Dobson admits that this discernment of motives is "the toughest task in parenthood", he nonetheless insists that:

³⁰⁴Emphasis added; Dobson, p. 20.

³⁰⁵Dobson, p. 29.

The most effective parents are those who have the skill to get behind the eyes of their child, seeing what he sees, thinking what he thinks, feeling what he feels... The art of good parenthood revolves around the interpretation of meaning behind behavior.³⁰⁶

And, needless to say, these words take on an even greater significance when we put them, as we shall, in the context of the effectiveness of proactivity and the sound judgment of prudence. For the moment, let it suffice to underline the close link Dobson maintains between the ability to discern a child's motives and the ability to discipline effectively. As he puts it: "The primary parental task is to 'get behind the eyes' of the child, thereby tailoring the discipline to his unique perception".³⁰⁷

Finally, Gary Smalley's immensely popular child-rearing book, The Key to Your Child's Heart, is based on the very notion that one of the most effective things that parents can do to raise 'motivated, obedient, and loving children' is to be tractable with them, to communicate deeply with them, and, above all, to know how to apologize to them when they have offended them in some way. And this is all certainly part of the second half of the discipline/affection equation of authoritative parenting. Smalley lists five steps that parents should follow when then have offended one of their children. He insists that when a child feels unloved (either because of some kind of authoritarian oppression or

³⁰⁶Emphasis added, Dobson, p. 29.

³⁰⁷Dobson, p. 70.

permissive indifference) he tends to 'close his spirit' to his parents. When this happens, parents should:

1. Become soft-hearted and show loving affection to the child
2. Attempt to increase their understanding of the child's perspective
3. Admit that they were wrong and that they offended the child
4. Touch the child tenderly and affectionately [and]
5. Ask the child for forgiveness.³⁰⁸

Of course, these are not easy things for the normal parent to do; they require a degree of humility even. But this openness and willingness to try to understand our children is, Smalley insists, the very key to their hearts.

Now, before we conclude this chapter by showing how it is not possible to parent in the ways here outlined without the virtue of prudence, let us clear up a difficulty which arises from our foregoing analysis. This is that: everything that these parenting authors suggest as ways of showing affection for children has as its ostensible goal that parents become the friends of their children. As Dobson puts it, succinctly:

The best way to get children to do what you want is to spend time with them before disciplinary problems occur -having fun together and enjoying mutual laughter and joy...Many confrontations can be avoided by building

³⁰⁸Smalley, pp. 26 - 32.

friendships with kids, and thereby making them want to cooperate at home.³⁰⁹

And the problem with this reasoning, at least for the Thomistic context in which we have tried to situate our discussion of parenting, is exactly parallel to the problem raised above concerning the possibility of justice between parents and children. It is that: Aquinas's professed authority in so much of his moral theory - Aristotle - admits of friendship only between persons of equal status; again, in terms of age, citizenship, relative wealth, social class, education, etc.. And children, especially very young children, would hardly appear to be the equals of their parents in any one of these respects. How, then, on the Thomistic/Aristotelian account, can parents be the friends of their children as these authors recommend?

Aristotle's solution to this problem is ingenious. He certainly recognizes that at some level there has to be a kind of friendship existing between parents and children, because they certainly will each other's good. His suggestion is that, although parents are objectively superior to their children in many ways, and, again, perhaps especially in regard to their very young children, they can 'bridge the gap' between them, so to speak, and

³⁰⁹Dobson, p. 75. Covey speaks of this in terms of what he calls 'emotional bank accounts'. One person can be demanding with another person if and only if his 'emotional bank account' with that person is not overdrawn; that is, if he is not 'in debt' to that person because of some offense he has committed in their regard. As he says: "Building and repairing relationships are long-term investments" (Covey, p.188 - 190).

establish a kind of equality by loving each other proportionately.³¹⁰ That is, according to Aristotle and Aquinas, to say that one person is 'superior' to another and not his equal, is to say, in effect, that the one is objectively more worthy of honor than the other. Or, as in the context of virtue and love, that the one, being better, or more good, is more deserving of love. Their logic is that: what we love is goodness and since the one person has more goodness than the other, she is the more deserving of love. Aquinas summarizes very well Aristotle's solution when he comments:

Friendship between unequal persons is maintained by loving and being loved proportionately; i.e. to the degree commanded by their dignity. Friendship between unequals is preserved by 'proportionate love'.³¹¹

Parents, therefore, must love their children a lot, proportionate to their dignity as persons; and likewise children their parents.

To return, then, to our principal line of argumentation, let us conclude by addressing ourselves to the fact that the virtue of prudence, first, is concerned with individuals; second, is tractable and even merciful; and third, is essentially characterized by sound judgment and perspicacity.

³¹⁰This is not a notion which will sit well with the modern mindset for the simple reason that this latter rejects out of hand the suggestion that one person could be objectively superior to another in the first place. But this is neither here nor there. Aristotle's solution presupposes such a possibility and works to nullify it.

³¹¹Thomas Aquinas Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics trans. by C. I. Litzinger, vol. ii, (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964), Book VII, chapter 8.

First, we saw above how important, according to the parenting authors, it is for parents to know and love their children as individuals. Recall Covey's 'unless you are influenced by my uniqueness' and Dobson's 'tailored to the child's unique perception'. And this same idea, that parents need to know each child as an individual is certainly implied in Smalley's recommendation that parents try earnestly to understand their children and be able to apologize to them. But the virtue of prudence is itself concerned, precisely, with individuals.

There is a danger that we equivocate on the term 'individual', but if we are attentive to the danger, this need not occur. By 'individual', of course, Aquinas does not mean in the first instance what is meant by the term 'individual' in common parlance; i.e. this person as separable from all other persons. What he means primarily is individual actions. Thus: "prudence ...has to know individuals", "the subject matter of prudence is composed of contingent individual incidents...", and "prudence is about individual actions".³¹² But, although this is not its first meaning, Aquinas's use of the term 'individual' is certainly broad enough to include the colloquial meaning. In fact it does include the colloquial meaning. Thomas Gilby observes that "'particular'

³¹²S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.3, sed: "prudentia non est universalium solum, sed oportet et singularia cognoscere";

S.T. IIa IIae q.47, a.9, ad 2: "Quia vero materiae prudentiae sunt singularia contingentia"; and...

S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.8, resp: "ea circa quae est prudentia sunt contingentia operabilia".

refers to a restricted part of a general class, e.g. 'a man'; whereas 'individual' indicates a unique object separable from all others".³¹³ But, if this is so, and if 'individual' refers as well to individual persons, then the need parents have of prudence, given our foregoing analysis is evident. It is by prudence that parents are enabled to judge aright concerning their children as individuals and their individual actions.

Next, does Smalley's concern that parents be able to apologize to their children not find an echo in the following words of Aquinas, which are spoken, precisely, in the context of domestic prudence ('*prudencia economica*'): "All the same, people in authority ought themselves to be tractable sometimes, for in matters of prudence, no one is wholly self-sufficient".³¹⁴ That is, parents need to recognize that they too can be mistaken at times and should make amends as the situation demands. This same idea is repeated in Aquinas's understanding of the 'allied' virtue of 'gnome'. Gilby remarks: "'gnome' is the right discrimination of the equitable, judging what is equitable in an exceptional case; transcending legalistic justice, mercy...It is judgment with sympathy, lenience, forgiveness".³¹⁵ This explains, as well, why,

³¹³Blackfriars edition, p. 11.

³¹⁴S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.3, ad 3: "Quamvis etiam ipsos maiores oporteat dociles quantum ad aliqua esse: quia nullus in his quae subsunt prudentiae sibi quantum ad omnia sufficit".

³¹⁵Blackfriars, p. 103.

when he later speaks of the so-called 'gifts of the Holy Spirit', Aquinas associates 'gnome' with the supernatural gift of mercy.

Finally, and most significantly, when Dobson says that "the most effective parents are those who can 'get behind the eyes' of their children" and 'interpret the meaning behind their behavior', is he not, in so many words, suggesting that the most effective parents are the prudent ones? For prudence has as one of its principal acts, precisely, the ability to judge well. And this is exactly what Dobson's parents are doing: they are judging whether the child is challenging their authority, they are judging whether she should be disciplined or not. Moreover, the whole balance upon which authoritative parenting rests is based on a judgment that the parents make as to the amount of discipline and the amount of affection to show their children. Without the virtue of prudence and without the 'allied' virtues of sound judgment ('synesis') and wit ('gnome') no such equitable judgment would be possible.

As well, part of being prudent is being able to "find the right course of action in sudden encounters"³¹⁶, an ability much needed by parents because family life is often one 'sudden encounter', one rush of activity, after another. Parents need, that is, the ability to make decisions 'on their feet'. This Aquinas calls "perspicacity...which disposes us to make fair

³¹⁶S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.4, resp: "...solemtia est habitus qui provenit ex repentino, inveniens quod convenit".

assessments by ourselves"; it is "the ready and rapid lighting on the middle term".³¹⁷ Aquinas makes the interesting observation that: "[Perspicacity] hits upon the middle term in practical issues as well; for example: that the friendship of two people sprang from a common enmity".³¹⁸ But this is exactly the kind of discerning ability which parents need if they are to judge the intentions of their children as Dobson recommends.

We see, then, that if parents are going to be able to 'get behind' their children's eyes, get inside their children's hearts, and equitably balance their discipline and affection for them, then they must be persons of sound practical judgment and perspicacity. Since this, in turn, is not possible without prudence, we can conclude that it is not possible to parent proactively, authoritatively, without this virtue.

³¹⁷S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.4, resp: "...ut homo bene se habeat in acquirendo rectam existimationem per seipsum";
and: "solertia autem est facilis et prompta coniecturatio circa inventionem medii".

³¹⁸S.T. IIa IIae q.49, a.4, ad 1: "...puta cum aliquis videns aliquos amicos factos coniecturat eos esse inimicos eiusdem".

Conclusion

In the present dissertation, we have attempted to demonstrate, first, how beneficial it is for parents to take a 'proactive' approach to their role as the moral educators of their children, and, second, how such an approach presupposes their possessing the intellectual virtue of prudence. Parents have been called upon to take an active part in their children's moral formation, to think ahead both about the kind of young adults they would like their children to become and about what means they intend to employ towards this end. They have been called upon, as well, to reject authoritarian and permissive discipline in favor of authoritative discipline and attempt, in their dealings with their children, to balance their corrective measures with genuine understanding and affection. We have seen that these suggestions - which all come highly recommended by many parenting experts - are in basic agreement with the fundamental tenets of proactivity. To be proactive means, essentially, to subordinate impulses to values, to begin with the end in mind, and to respect what has been called the 'Production/Production Capability Balance'.

We have seen, further, that these essential elements of proactivity are to a remarkable degree congruent with Thomas Aquinas's teaching on the intellectual virtue of prudence. Aquinas maintains that the prudent individual is he whose practical intellect is perfected by the stable dispositions to command well,

to foresee the expedient means to a due end, and to judge equitably in ordinary and in extraordinary circumstances.

Among the many observations we might make in conclusion, there is perhaps one deserving of special mention. We have suggested in the third Part of the paper that it is not right that we should consider parental discipline as something at odds with parental love. While acknowledging the practical difficulty of not speaking of the two as contradictories, we have insisted that not only are they not opposed, but that in fact discipline is a function of and a clear manifestation of parental love. Recall what we have said above about what it means to be diligent and solicitous. Parents who truly love their children show their love by deeds of self-sacrificing service. And the best service they can render them, in addition to showering them with abundant affection, is, precisely, to discipline them, to teach them the invaluable lesson of self-control. For, if they are not masters of themselves first, they stand little chance of being masters of much else.

Dr. James Dobson concludes his excellent book, The New Dare to Discipline, by asking parents earnestly: "Where in God's name have we been?...How bad does it have to get before we say enough is enough?".³¹⁹ As only stands to reason, he sees many of our society's present ills as the direct consequence of a lack of

³¹⁹Dobson, p. 206.

parental solicitude. He speaks of a "moral castastrophe that has rocked our families to their foundation" and he insists that "it is our children who have suffered and will continue to pay for our lack of stewardship and diligence".³²⁰ And, given the moral and emotional challenges faced by so many young people today, he is indeed hard to gainsay. Even James Stenson, who is typically quite sanguine, insists: "the problem is urgently serious and our discussion here is really a kind of warning".³²¹

The present dissertation, while not denying the seriousness of the situation - for that would, as we suggest, be quite difficult - wants nonetheless to offer parents good reasons to hope. Hope that the outlook can change. The situation can change, and change for the better, because we can change. We can, precisely, using our self-awareness and response-ability change ourselves, change our behavior, and, ultimately, change the world. Is the present situation bad? Then we want to maintain forthrightly: it does not have to be that way. Parents, more than anyone, as the primary moral educators of their children, can change the situation by changing themselves and changing the way they deal with their children. Has the cause of the problem been parental negligence? Then the present paper is a call to parental solicitude. Has the cause of the problem been absentee parents? Then the present paper

³²⁰Ibid.

³²¹Stenson, Peer, p. 5.

is a call for parents who will take the time patiently to instruct their children, to borrow Stenson's apt phrase, "by word, example, and repeated practice".

In all of this, what is Stephen Covey suggesting? And what are the parenting authors suggesting? Essentially: Be prudent. Precisely. Do not just act. Pro-act. 'Act before you act', as it were. And this prior act is to think, to plan; so that we act not on our impulses, our feelings, but on our values, on right reason. Not on our conditions, but on our decisions, our judgments. What are Covey and the parenting authors suggesting? Do not just act. Act deliberately. Act with solicitude about your affairs, with foresight and sound judgment. Whence our insistence on such a close identification of the proactive attitude with prudence. To be proactive is, in many respects, simply to be prudent. Which is why it is not possible to be the former without being the latter.

Thus, what does proactivity teach us? In one sense, very little that is new. Certainly very little that was unknown to a certain humble Dominican friar seven centuries past. Covey has simply found a new - albeit ingenious - way of phrasing these particular truths about man and his acting.

It is said humorously, although not without truth, that: 'Some parents bring up their children...while others let them down'. If parents today would proactively raise their children to happy,

responsible adulthood - something, surely, that every conscientious parent desires - then they would be wise to take Thomas Aquinas as their guide to the indispensable virtue of prudence.

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