But to go to school on a summer morn,
O, it drives all joy away;
Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day
In sighing and dismay.

William Blake

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Chapter One

Life in Classrooms

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1 The Daily Grind

The "order," the trivia of the institution is, in human terms, a disorder, and as such, must be resisted. It's truly a sign of psychic health that the young are already aware of this.

Theodore Roethke, *On the Poet and His Craft*

On a typical weekday morning between September and June some 35 million Americans kiss their loved ones goodby, pick up their lunch pails and books, and leave to spend their day in that collection of enclosures (totalling about one million) known as elementary school classrooms. This massive exodus from home to school is accomplished with a minimum of fuss and bother. Few tears are shed (except perhaps by the very youngest) and few cheers are raised. The school attendance of children is such a common experience in our society that those of us who watch them go hardly pause to consider what happens to them when they get there. Of course our indifference disappears occasionally. When something goes wrong or when we have been notified of his remarkable achievement, we might ponder, for a moment at least, the meaning of the experience for the child in question, but most of the time we simply note that our Johnny is on his way to school, and now, it is time for our second cup of coffee.

Parents are interested, to be sure, in how *well* Johnny does while there, and when he comes trudging home they may ask him questions about what happened today or, more generally, how things went. But both their questions and his answers typically focus on the highlights of the school experience—its unusual aspects—rather than on the mundane and seemingly trivial events that filled the bulk of his school hours. Parents are interested, in other words, in the spice of school life rather than in its substance.

Teachers, too, are chiefly concerned with only a very narrow aspect of a youngster's school experience. They, too, are likely to focus on specific acts of misbehavior or accomplishment as representing what a particular student did in school today, even though the acts in question occupied but a small fraction of the student's time. Teachers, like parents, seldom ponder the significance of the thousands of fleeting events that combine to form the routine of the classroom.

And the student himself is no less selective. Even if someone bothered to question him about the minutiae of his school day, he would probably be unable to give a complete account of what he had done. For him, too, the day has been reduced in memory into a small number of signal events—"I got 100 on my spelling test,"

"A new boy came and he sat next to me."—or recurring activities—"We went to gym," "We had music." His spontaneous recall of detail is not much greater than that required to answer our conventional questions.

This concentration on the highlights of school life is understandable from the standpoint of human interest. A similar selection process operates when we inquire into or recount other types of daily activity. When we are asked about our trip downtown or our day at the office we rarely bother describing the ride on the bus or the time spent in front of the watercooler. Indeed, we are more likely to report that nothing happened than to catalogue the pedestrian actions that took place between home and return. Unless something interesting occurred there is little purpose in talking about our experience.

Yet from the standpoint of giving shape and meaning to our lives these events about which we rarely speak may be as important as those that hold our listener's attention. Certainly they represent a much larger portion of our experience than do those about which we talk. The daily routine, the "rat race," and the infamous "old grind" may be brightened from time to time by happenings that add color to an otherwise drab existence, but the grayness of our daily lives has an abrasive potency of its own. Anthropologists understand this fact better than do most other social scientists, and their field studies have taught us to appreciate the cultural significance of the humdrum elements of human existence. This is the lesson we must heed as we seek to understand life in elementary classrooms.

I

School is a place where tests are failed and passed, where amusing things happen, where new insights are stumbled upon, and skills acquired. But it is also a place in which people sit, and listen, and wait, and raise their hands, and pass out paper, and stand in line, and sharpen pencils. School is where we encounter both friends and foes, where imagination is unleashed and misunderstanding brought to ground. But it is also a place in which yawns are stifled and initials scratched on desktops, where milk money is collected and recess lines are formed. Both aspects of school life, the celebrated and the unnoticed, are familiar to all of us, but the latter, if only because of its characteristic neglect, seems to deserve more attention than it has received to date from those who are interested in education.

In order to appreciate the significance of trivial classroom events it is necessary to consider the frequency of their occurrence, the standardization of the school environment, and the compulsory quality of daily attendence. We must recognize, in other words, that children are in school for a long time, that the settings in which they perform are highly uniform, and that they are there whether they want to be or not. Each of these three facts, although seemingly obvious, deserves some elaboration, for each contributes to our understanding of how students feel about and cope with their school experience.

The amount of time children spend in school can be described with a fair amount of quantitative precision, although the psychological significance of the numbers involved is another matter entirely. In most states the school year legally comprises 180 days. A full session on each of those days usually lasts about six hours (with a break for lunch), beginning somewhere around nine o'clock in the morning and ending about three o'clock in the afternoon. Thus, if a student never misses a day during the year, he spends a little more than one thousand hours under the care and tutelage of teachers. If he has attended kindergarten and was reasonably regular in his attendance during the grades, he will have logged a little more than seven thousand classroom hours by the time he is ready for junior high school.

The magnitude of 7000 hours spread over six or seven years of a child's life is difficult to comprehend. On the one hand, when placed beside the total number of hours the child has lived during those years it is not very great—slightly more than one-tenth of his life during the time in question, about one-third of his hours of sleep during that period. On the other hand, aside from sleeping, and perhaps playing, there is no other activity that occupies as much of the child's time as that involved in attending school. Apart from the bedroom (where he has his eyes closed most of the time) there is no single enclosure in which he spends a longer time than he does in the classroom. From the age of six onward he is a more familiar sight to his teacher than to his father, and possibly even to his mother.

Another way of estimating what all those hours in the classroom mean is to ask how long it would take to accumulate them while engaged in some other familiar and recurring activity. Church attendance provides an interesting comparison. In order to have had as much time in church as a sixth grader has had in classrooms we would have to spend all day at a religious gathering every Sunday for more than 24 years. Or, if we prefer our devotion in smaller doses, we would have to attend a one-hour service every Sunday for 150 years before the inside of a church became as familiar to us as the inside of a school is to a twelve-year-old.

The comparison with church attendance is dramatic, and perhaps overly so. But it does make us stop and think about the possible significance of an otherwise meaningless number. Also, aside from the home and the school there is no physical setting in which people of all ages congregate with as great a regularity as they do in church.

The translation of the child's tenure in class into terms of weekly church attendance serves a further purpose. It sets the stage for considering an important similarity between the two institutions: school and church. The inhabitants of both are surrounded by a stable and highly stylized environment. The fact of prolonged exposure in either setting increases in its meaning as we begin to consider the elements of repetition, redundancy, and ritualistic action that are experienced there.

A classroom, like a church auditorium, is rarely seen as being anything other than that which it is. No one entering either place is likely to think that he is in a living room, or a grocery store, or a train station. Even if he entered at midnight or at some other time when the activities of the people would not give the function away, he would have no difficulty understanding what was *supposed* to go on there. Even devoid of people, a church is a church and a classroom, a classroom.

This is not to say, of course, that all classrooms are identical, anymore than all churches are. Clearly there are differences, and sometimes very extreme ones, between any two settings. One has only to think of the wooden benches and planked floor of the early American classroom as compared with the plastic chairs and tile flooring in today's suburban schools. But the resemblance is still there despite the differences, and, more important, during any particular historical period the differences are not that great. Also, whether the student moves from first to sixth grade on floors of vinyl tile or oiled wood, whether he spends his days in front of a black blackboard or a green one, is not as important as the fact that the environment in which he spends these six or seven years is highly stable.

In their efforts to make their classrooms more homelike, elementary school teachers often spend considerable time fussing with the room's decorations. Bulletin boards are changed, new pictures are hung, and the seating arrangement is altered from circles to rows and back again. But these are surface adjustments at best, resembling the work of the inspired housewife who rearranges the living room furniture and changes the color of the drapes in order to make the room more "interesting." School bulletin boards may be changed but they are never discarded, the seats may be rearranged but thirty of them are there to stay, the teacher's desk may have a new plant on it but there it sits, as ubiquitous as the roll-down maps, the olive drab wastebasket, and the pencil sharpener on the window ledge.

Even the odors of the classroom are fairly standardized. Schools may use different brands of wax and cleaning fluid, but they all seem to contain similar ingredients, a sort of universal smell which creates an aromatic background that permeates the entire building. Added to this, in each classroom, is the slightly acrid scent of chalk dust and the faint hint of fresh wood from the pencil shavings. In some rooms, especially at lunch time, there is the familiar odor of orange peels and peanut butter sandwiches, a blend that mingles in the late afternoon (following recess) with the delicate pungency of children's perspiration. If a person stumbled into a classroom blindfolded, his nose alone, if he used it carefully, would tell him where he was.

All of these sights and smells become so familiar to students and teachers alike that they exist dimly, on the periphery of awareness. Only when the classroom is encountered under somewhat unusual circumstances, does it appear, for a moment, a strange place filled with objects that command our attention. On these rare occasions when, for example, students return to school in the evening, or in the summer when the halls ring with the hammers of workmen, many features of the school environment that have merged into an undifferentiated background for its daily inhabitants suddenly stand out in sharp relief. This experience, which obviously occurs in contexts other than the classroom, can only happen in settings to which the viewer has become uncommonly habituated.

Not only is the classroom a relatively stable physical environment, it also provides a fairly constant social context. Behind the same old desks sit the same old students, in front of the familiar blackboard stands the familiar teacher. There are changes, to be sure,—some students come and go during the year and on a few mornings the children are greeted at the door by a strange adult. But in most cases these events are sufficiently uncommon to create a flurry of excitement in the room. Moreover, in most elementary classrooms the social composition is not only stable, it is also physically arranged with considerable regularity. Each student has an assigned seat and, under normal circumstances, that is where he is to be found. The practice of assigning seats makes it possible for the teacher or a student to take attendance at a glance. A quick visual sweep is usually sufficient to determine who is there and who is not. The ease with which this procedure is accomplished reveals more eloquently than do words how accustomed each member of the class is to the presence of every other member.

An additional feature of the social atmosphere of elementary

classrooms deserves at least passing comment. There is a social intimacy in schools that is unmatched elsewhere in our society. Buses and movie theaters may be more crowded than classrooms, but people rarely stay in such densely populated settings for extended periods of time and while there, they usually are not expected to concentrate on work or to interact with each other. Even factory workers are not clustered as close together as students in a standard classroom. Indeed, imagine what would happen if a factory the size of a typical elementary school contained three or four hundred adult workers. In all likelihood the unions would not allow it. Only in schools do thirty or more people spend several hours each day literally side by side. Once we leave the classroom we seldom again are required to have contact with so many people for so long a time. This fact will become particularly relevant in a later chapter in which we treat the social demands of life in school.

A final aspect of the constancy experienced by young students involves the ritualistic and cyclic quality of the activities carried on in the classroom. The daily schedule, as an instance, is commonly divided into definite periods during which specific subjects are to be studied or specific activities engaged in. The content of the work surely changes from day to day and from week to week, and in this sense there is considerable variety amid the constancy. But spelling still comes after arithmetic on Tuesday morning, and when the teacher says, "All right class, now take out your spellers," his announcement comes as no surprise to the students. Further, as they search in their desks for their spelling textbooks, the children may not know what new words will be included in the day's assignment, but they have a fairly clear idea of what the next twenty minutes of class time will entail.

Despite the diversity of subject matter content, the identifiable forms of classroom activity are not great in number. The labels: "seatwork," "group discussion," "teacher demonstration," and "question-and-answer period" (which would include work "at the board"), are sufficient to categorize most of the things that happen when class is in session. "Audio-visual display," "testing session," and "games" might be added to the list, but in most elementary classrooms they occur rarely.

Each of these major activities are performed according to rather well-defined rules which the students are expected to understand and obey—for example, no loud talking during seatwork, do not interrupt someone else during discussion, keep your eyes on your own paper during tests, raise your hand if you have a question. Even in the early grades these rules are so well understood by the students (if not completely internalized) that the teacher has only to give very abbreviated signals ("Voices, class." "Hands, please.") when violations are perceived. In many classrooms a weekly time schedule is permanently posted so that everyone can tell at a glance what will happen next.

Thus, when our young student enters school in the morning he is entering an environment with which he has become exceptionally familiar through prolonged exposure. Moreover, it is a fairly stable environment—one in which the physical objects, social relations, and major activities remain much the same from day to day, week to week, and even, in certain respects, from year to year. Life there resembles life in other contexts in some ways, but not all. There is, in other words, a uniqueness to the student's world. School, like church and home, is someplace special. Look where you may, you will not find another place quite like it

There is an important fact about a student's life that teachers and parents often prefer not to talk about, at least not in front of students. This is the fact that young people have to be in school, whether they want to be or not. In this regard students have something in common with the members of two other of our social institutions that have involuntary attendance: prisons and mental hospitals. The analogy, though dramatic, is not intended to be shocking, and certainly there is no comparison between the unpleasantness of life for inmates of our prisons and mental institutions, on the one hand, and the daily travails of a first or second grader, on the other. Yet the school child, like the incarcerated adult, is, in a sense, a prisoner. He too must come to grips with the inevitability of his experience. He too must develop strategies for dealing with the conflict that frequently arises between his natural desires and interests on the one hand and institutional expectations on the other. Several of these strategies will be discussed in the chapters that follow. Here it is sufficient to note that the thousands of hours spent in the highly stylized environment of the elementary classroom are not, in an ultimate sense, a matter of choice, even though some children might prefer school to play. Many seven-year-olds skip happily to school, and as parents and teachers we are glad they do, but we stand ready to enforce the attendance of those who are more reluctant. And our vigilance does not go unnoticed by children.

In sum, classrooms are special places. The things that happen there and the ways in which they happen combine to make these settings different from all others. This is not to say, of course, that there is no similarity between what goes on in school and the students' experiences elsewhere. Classrooms are indeed like homes and churches and hospital wards in many important respects. But not in all.

The things that make schools different from other places are not

only the paraphernalia of learning and teaching and the educational content of the dialogues that take place there, although these are the features that are usually singled out when we try to portray what life in school is really like. It is true that nowhere else do we find blackboards and teachers and textbooks in such abundance and nowhere else is so much time spent on reading, writing, and arithmetic. But these obvious characteristics do not constitute all that is unique about this environment. There are other features, much less obvious though equally omnipresent, that help to make up "the facts of life," as it were, to which students must adapt. From the standpoint of understanding the impact of school life on the student some features of the classroom that are not immediately visible are fully as important as those that are.

The characteristics of school life to which we now turn our attention are not commonly mentioned by students, at least not directly, nor are they apparent to the casual observer. Yet they are as real, in a sense, as the unfinished portrait of Washington that hangs above the cloakroom door. They comprise three facts of life with which even the youngest student must learn to deal and may be introduced by the key words: *crowds*, *praise*, and *power*.

Learning to live in a classroom involves, among other things, learning to live in a crowd. This simple truth has already been mentioned, but it requires greater elaboration. Most of the things that are done in school are done with others, or at least in the presence of others, and this fact has profound implications for determining the quality of a student's life.

Of equal importance is the fact that schools are basically evaluative settings. The very young student may be temporarily fooled by tests that are presented as games, but it doesn't take long before he begins to see through the subterfuge and comes to realize that school, after all, is a serious business. It is not only what you do there but what others think of what you do that is important. Adaptation to school life requires the student to become used to living under the constant condition of having his words and deeds evaluated by others.

School is also a place in which the division between the weak and the powerful is clearly drawn. This may sound like a harsh way to describe the separation between teachers and students, but it serves to emphasize a fact that is often overlooked, or touched upon gingerly at best. Teachers are indeed more powerful than students, in the sense of having greater responsibility for giving shape to classroom events, and this sharp difference in authority is another feature of school life with which students must learn how to deal.

In three major ways then—as members of crowds, as potential recipients of praise or reproof, and as pawns of institutional authorities—students are confronted with aspects of reality that at least during their childhood years are relatively confined to the hours spent in classrooms. Admittedly, similar conditions are encountered in other environments. Students, when they are not performing as such, must often find themselves lodged within larger groups, serving as targets of praise or reproof, and being bossed around or guided by persons in positions of higher authority. But these kinds of experiences are particularly frequent while school is in session and it is likely during this time that adaptive strategies having relevance for other contexts and other life periods are developed.

In the sections of this chapter to follow, each of the three classroom qualities that have been briefly mentioned will be described in greater detail. Particular emphasis will be given to the manner in which students cope with these aspects of their daily lives. The goal of this discussion, as in the preceding chapters, is to deepen our understanding of the peculiar mark that school life makes on us all.

II

Anyone who has ever taught knows that the classroom is a busy place, even though it may not always appear so to the casual visitor. Indeed, recent data have proved surprising even to experienced teachers. For example, we have found in one study of elementary classrooms that the teacher engages in as many as 1000 interpersonal interchanges each day.[1] An attempt to catalogue the interchanges among students or the physical movement of class members would doubtlessly add to the general impression that most classrooms, though seemingly placid when glimpsed through the window in the hall door, are more like the proverbial beehive of activity. One way of understanding the meaning of this activity for those who experience it is by focusing on the teacher as he goes about channeling the social traffic of the classroom.

First, consider the rapidity of the teacher's actions. What keeps him hopping from Jane to Billy to Sam, and back again, in the space of a few seconds? Clearly much of this activity is done in the interest of instruction. Teaching commonly involves talking and the teacher acts as a gatekeeper who manages the flow of the classroom dialogue. When a student wishes to say something during a discussion it is usually the teacher's job to recognize his wish and

[1] Philip W. Jackson, "Teacher-pupil communication in the elementary classroom: an observational study," Paper read at the American Educational Research Association meeting, Chicago, February 1965.

to invite his comment. When more than one person wishes to enter the discussion or answer a question at the same time (a most common event) it is the teacher who decides who will speak and in what order. Or we might turn the observation around and say that the teacher determines who will *not* speak, for when a group of students have signalled the desire to enter the dialogue, several of them may be planning to say the same thing. Therefore, if Johnny is called on first, Billy, who also had his hand raised, may now find himself without anything to say. This fact partially explains the urgency with which the desire to speak is signalled to the teacher.

Another time-consuming task for the teacher, at least in the elementary school, is that of serving as supply sergeant. Classroom space and material resources are limited and the teacher must allocate these resources judiciously. Only one student at a time can borrow the big scissors, or look through the microscope, or drink from the drinking fountain, or use the pencil sharpener. And broken pencil points and parched throats obviously do not develop one at a time or in an orderly fashion. Therefore, the number of students desiring to use various classroom resources at any given moment is often greater than the number that can use them. This explains the lines of students that form in front of the pencil sharpener, the drinking fountain, the microscope, and the washroom door.

Closely related to the job of doling out material resources is that of granting special privileges to deserving students. In elementary classrooms it is usually the teacher who assigns coveted duties, such as serving on the safety patrol, or running the movie projector, or clapping the erasers, or handing out supplies. In most classrooms volunteers are plentiful, thus the jobs are often rotated among the students. (A list of current job-holders is a familiar item on elementary school bulletin boards.) Although the delegation of these duties may not take up much of the teacher's time, it does help to give structure to the activities of the room and to fashion the quality of the total experience for many of the participants.

A fourth responsibility of the teacher and one that calls our attention to another important aspect of classroom life, is that of serving as an official timekeeper. It is he who sees to it that things begin and end on time, more or less. He determines the proper moment for switching from discussion to workbooks, or from spelling to arithmetic. He decides whether a student has spent too long in the washroom, or whether those who take the bus may be dismissed. In many schools he is assisted in this job by elaborate systems of bells and buzzers. But even when the school day is mechanically punctuated by clangs and hums, the teacher is not entirely relieved of his responsibility for watching the clock. The implications of the teacher clock-watching behavior for determining what life in school is like are indeed profound. This behavior reminds us, above all, that school is a place where things often happen not because students want them to, but because it is time for them to occur.

All of the teacher's actions described so far are bound together by a common theme. They are all responsive, in one way or another, to the crowded condition of the classroom. If the teacher dealt with one student at a time (as does happen in tutorial settings) most of the tasks that have been mentioned would be unnecessary. It is, in part, the press of numbers and of time that keeps the teacher so busy. But our ultimate concern, it must be remembered, is with the student and the quality of *his* life in the classroom. Therefore, the frenetic activity of the teacher as he goes about calling on students, handing out supplies, granting privileges, and turning activities on and off, is of interest, within the present context, only insofar as that behavior tells us something about what school is like for those who are at the receiving end of the teacher's action.

The things the teacher does as he works within the physical, temporal, and social limits of the classroom have a constraining effect upon the events that might occur there if individual impulse were allowed free reign. If everyone who so desired tried to speak at once, or struggled for possession of the big scissors, or offered a helping hand in threading the movie projector, classroom life would be much more hectic than it commonly is. If students were allowed to stick with a subject until they grew tired of it on their own, our present curriculum would have to be modified drastically. Obviously, some kinds of controls are necessary if the school's goals are to be reached and social chaos averted. The question of whether the teacher should or should not serve as a combination traffic cop, judge, supply sergeant, and time-keeper is somewhat irrelevant to the present discussion, but the fact that such functions must be performed, even if the responsibility for performing them falls upon individual students, is far from irrelevant. For a world in which traffic signs, whistles, and other regulatory devices abound is quite different from one in which these features are absent.

One of the inevitable outcomes of traffic management is the experiencing of delay. In crowded situations where people are forced to take turns in using limited resources, some must stand by until others have finished. When people are required to move as a group toward a goal, the speed of the group is, necessarily, the speed of its slowest member. Almost inevitably, therefore, in such situations some group members are waiting for the others to catch up. Moreover, whenever the future is thought to be more attractive than the present—a common perception among school children—slow movement can sometimes seem like no movement at all.

All of these different kinds of delay are commonplace in the

classrooms. Indeed, when we begin to examine the details of classroom life carefully, it is surprising to see how much of the students' time is spent in waiting. The most obvious examples are to be found in the practice of lining up that has already been mentioned. In most elementary schools students stand in line several times a day. The entire class typically lines up during recess, lunch, and dismissal, and then there are the smaller lines that form sporadically in front of drinking fountains, pencil sharpeners, and the like. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for teachers to hold these lines motionless until talking has ceased and some semblance of uniformity and order has been achieved.

Nor does the waiting end when the line has disappeared. Even when students are sitting in their seats they are often in the same position, psychologically, as if they were members of a line. It is not uncommon, for example, for teachers to move down rows asking questions or calling for recitations or examining seatwork. Under these conditions students interact with the teacher in a fixed order with the consequence of each student waiting until his turn arrives, speaking his piece, and then waiting for the teacher to get to him again in the next round. Even in rooms where teachers do not operate "by the numbers," as it were, the idea of taking turns during discussion and recitation periods is still present. After a student has made a contribution in a more informally run class the teacher is less likely to call on him again, at least for a brief period of time. Conversely, a student who has said nothing all period is more likely to have his raised hand recognized than is a student who has participated several times in the lesson. Unusual variations from this procedure would be considered unfair by students and teachers alike. Thus, even during so-called free discussion invisible lines are formed.

In rooms where students have considerable freedom to move about on their own during seatwork and study periods, the teacher himself often becomes the center of little groups of waiting students. One of the most typical social arrangements in such settings is that in which the teacher is chatting with one student or examining his work while two or three others stand by, books and papers in hand, waiting to have the teacher evaluate their work, give them further direction, answer their questions, or in some other fashion enable them to move along. At such moments it is not unusual for one or two of the seated students also to have their hands raised, propped at the elbow, waiting patiently for the teacher to get around to them.

A familiar arrangement in the lower grades is for the teacher to work with a part of the class, usually a reading group, while the remainder engage in seatwork. Not uncommonly the students working by themselves finish their assignments before the teacher is finished with the group with which he is working. Under such circumstances it is not uncommon for the teacher to admonish the students to "find something to do" until it is time for a new activity to begin. These students may obey the teacher and thus appear to be busy, but their busyness is analogous to that of patients who read the old magazines in the doctor's waiting room.

A final example of the kinds of delay to be observed in the classroom involves the situation in which the group is given a problem to solve or an exercise to complete and some students complete the work long before others. At such times the teacher may be heard to ask, "How many need more time?" or to command, "Raise your hand when you have finished." This type of delay may only last a few seconds, but it occurs very frequently in some classrooms. Further, it is a kind of delay that is not experienced equally by all students, as are some of the others that have been mentioned, but tends, instead, to be encountered most frequently by students who are brighter, or faster, or more involved in their work.

Thus, in several different ways students in elementary classrooms are required to wait their turn and to delay their actions. No one knows for certain how much of the average student's time is spent in neutral, as it were, but for many students in many classrooms it must be a memorable portion. Furthermore, delay is only one of the consequences of living in a crowd and perhaps not even the most important one from the standpoint of constraining the individual. Waiting is not so bad, and may even be beneficial, when the things we are waiting for come to pass. But waiting, as we all know, can sometimes be in vain.

The denial of desire is the ultimate outcome of many of the delays occurring in the classroom. The raised hand is sometimes ignored, the question to the teacher is sometimes brushed aside, the permission that is sought is sometimes refused. No doubt things often have to be this way. Not everyone who wants to speak can be heard, not all of the student's queries can be answered to his satisfaction, not all of their requests can be granted. Also, it is probably true that most of these denials are psychologically trivial when considered individually. But when considered cumulatively their significance increases. And regardless of whether or not they are justified, they make it clear that part of learning how to live in school involves learning how to give up desire as well as how to wait for its fulfillment.

Interruptions of many sorts create a third feature of classroom life that results, at least in part, from the crowded social conditions. During group sessions irrelevant comments, misbehavior, and outside visitors bearing messages often disrupt the continuity of the lesson. When the teacher is working individually with a student—a

common arrangement in elementary classrooms—petty interruptions, usually in the form of other students coming to the teacher for advice, are the rule rather than the exception. Thus. the bubble of reality created during the teaching session is punctured by countless trivial incidents and the teacher must spend time patching up the holes. Students are expected to ignore these distractions or at least to turn quickly back to their studies after their attention has been momentarily drawn elsewhere.

Typically, things happen on time in school and this fact creates interruptions of another sort. Adherence to a time schedule requires that activities often begin before interest is aroused and terminate before interest disappears. Thus students are required to put away their arithmetic book and take out their spellers even though they want to continue with arithmetic and ignore spelling. In the classroom, work is often stopped before it is finished. Questions are often left dangling when the bell rings.

Quite possibly, of course, there is no alternative to this unnatural state of affairs. If teachers were always to wait until students were finished with one activity before they began another, the school day would become interminable. There seems to be no other way, therefore, but to stop and start things by the clock, even though this means constantly interrupting the natural flow of interest and desire for at least some students.

Another aspect of school life, related to the general phenomena of distractions and interruptions, is the recurring demand that the student ignore those who are around him. In elementary classrooms students are frequently assigned seatwork on which they are expected to focus their individual energies. During these seatwork periods talking and other forms of communication between students are discouraged, if not openly forbidden. The general admonition in such situations is to do your own work and leave others alone.

In a sense, then, students must try to behave as if they were in solitude, when in point of fact they are not. They must keep their eyes on their paper when human faces beckon. Indeed, in the early grades it is not uncommon to find students facing each other around a table while at the same time being required not to communicate with each other. These young people, if they are to become successful students, must learn how to be alone in a crowd.

Adults encounter conditions of social solitude so often that they are likely to overlook its special significance in the elementary classroom. We have learned to mind our own business in factories and offices, to remain silent in libraries, and to keep our thoughts to ourselves while riding public conveyances. But there are two major differences between classrooms and most of these other settings. First, except for the first few days of school, a classroom is not an *ad hoc* gathering of strangers. It is a group whose members have come to know each other quite well, to the point of friendship in many cases. Second, attendance in the room is not voluntary, as it is in many other social situations. Students are there whether they want to be or not and the work on which they are expected to concentrate also is often not of their own choosing. Thus, the pull to communicate with others is likely somewhat stronger in the classroom than in other crowded situations.

Here then are four unpublicized features of school life: delay, denial, interruption, and social distraction. Each is produced, in part, by the crowded conditions of the classroom. When twenty or thirty people must live and work together within a limited space for five or six hours a day most of the things that have been discussed are inevitable. Therefore, to decry the existence of these conditions is probably futile, yet their pervasiveness and frequency make them too important to be ignored. One alternative is to study the ways in which teachers and students cope with these facts of life and to seek to discover how that coping might leave its mark on their reactions to the world in general.

First, we must recognize that the severity of the conditions being described is to some extent a function of social tradition, institutional policy, and situational wealth and poverty. In some schools daily schedules are treated casually and in others they are rigidly adhered to. In some classrooms a rule of no talking is in force almost all of the time, while a steady murmur is tolerated in others. In some classrooms there are forty or more students, in others, at the same grade level, there are twenty or less. Some teachers are slow to recognize an upraised hand, others respond almost immediately. Some rooms are equipped with several pairs of big scissors, others have only one.

Despite these differences, however, it is doubtful that there is any classroom in which the phenomena we have been discussing are uncommon. Space, abundant resources, and a liberal attitude toward rules and regulations may reduce the pressure of the crowd somewhat but it certainly does not eliminate it entirely. Indeed, most of the observations on which the present analysis is based were made in so-called advantaged schools whose teachers were proud of their "progressive" educational views.

Second, as we begin to focus on the ways of coping with these institutional demands, it should be recognized at once that adaptive strategies are idiosyncratic to individual students. We cannot predict, in other words, how any particular student will react to the constraints imposed on him in the classroom. We can only identify major adaptive styles that might be used to characterize large numbers of students.

The quintessence of virtue in most institutions is contained in the single word: *patience*. Lacking that quality, life could be miserable for those who must spend their time in our prisons, our factories, our corporation offices, and our schools. In all of these settings the participants must "learn to labour and to wait." They must also, to some extent, learn to suffer in silence. They are expected to bear with equanimity, in other words, the continued delay, denial, and interruption of their personal wishes and desires.

But patience is more of a moral attribute than an adaptive strategy. It is what a person is asked to "be" rather than what he is asked to "do." Moreover, when we consider how a person *becomes* patient—that is, the behaviors he must engage in in order to earn the title—it becomes apparent that patience is more clearly determined by what a person does *not* do than by what he does. A patient man is one who does not act in a particular way, even though he desires to. He is a man who can endure the temptation to cry out or to complain even though the temptation is strong. Thus patience has to do principally with the control of impulse or its abandonment.

Returning to the situation in our schools, we can see that if students are to face the demands of classroom life with equanimity they must learn to be patient. This means that they must be able to disengage, at least temporarily, their feelings from their actions. It also means, of course, that they must be able to re-engage feelings and actions when conditions are appropriate. In other words, students must wait patiently for their turn to come, but when it does they must still be capable of zestful participation. They must accept the fact of not being called on during a group discussion, but they must continue to volunteer.

Thus, the personal quality commonly described as patience—an essential quality when responding to the demands of the classroom —represents a balance, and sometimes a precarious one, between two opposed tendencies. On the one hand is the impulse to act on desire, to blurt out the answer, to push to the front of the line, or to express anger when interrupted. On the other hand, is the impulse to give up the desire itself, to stop participating in the discussion, to go without a drink when the line is long, or to abandon an interrupted activity.

Whether or not a particular student acquires the desirable balance between impulsive action and apathetic withdrawal depends in part, as has been suggested, on personality qualities that lie outside the scope of the present discussion. In most classrooms powerful social sanctions are in operation to force the student to maintain an attitude of patience. If he impulsively steps out of line his classmates are likely to complain about his being selfish or "pushy." If he shifts over into a state of overt withdrawal, his teacher is apt to call him back to active participation.

But the fact that teachers and peers help to keep a student's behavior in line does not mean that the demands themselves can be ignored. Regardless of his relative success in coping with it, or the forces, personal or otherwise, that might aid in that coping, the elementary school student is situated in a densely populated social world. As curriculum experts and educational technologists try to experiment with new course content and new instructional devices, the crowds in the classroom may be troublesome. But there they are. Part of becoming a student involves learning how to live with that fact.

III

Every child experiences the pain of failure and the joy of success long before he reaches school age, but his achievements, or lack of them, do not really become official until he enters the classroom. From then on, however, a semi-public record of his progress gradually accumulates, and as a student he must learn to adapt to the continued and pervasive spirit of evaluation that will dominate his school years. Evaluation, then, is another important fact of life in the elementary classroom.

As we all know, school is not the only place where a student is made aware of his strengths and weaknesses. His parents make evaluations of him in the home and his friends do likewise in the playground. But the evaluation process that goes on in the classroom is quite different from that which operates in other settings. Accordingly, it presents the student with a set of unique demands to which he must adapt.

The most obvious difference between the way evaluation occurs in school and the way it occurs in other situations is that tests are given in school more frequently than elsewhere. Indeed, with the exception of examinations related to military service or certain kinds of occupations most people seldom encounter tests outside of their school experience.[2] Tests are as indigenous to the school environment as are textbooks or pieces of chalk.

But tests, though they are the classic form of educational evaluation, are not all there is to the process. In fact, in the lower grades

[2] There are, of course, the popular quizzes in newspapers and magazines which many people seem to enjoy answering. But these exercises, which might best be called "toy tests," are of little consequence when compared with the real thing that goes on in school.

formal tests are almost nonexistent, although evaluation clearly occurs. Thus the presence of these formal procedures is insufficient to explain the distinctively evaluative atmosphere that pervades the classroom from the earliest grades onward. There is more to it than that.

The dynamics of classroom evaluation are difficult to describe, principally because they are so complex. Evaluations derive from more than one *source*, the *conditions of their communication* may vary in several different ways, they may have one or more of several *referents*, and they may range in *quality* from intensely positive to intensely negative. Moreover, these variations refer only to objective, or impersonal features of evaluation. When the subjective or personal meanings of these events are considered, the picture becomes even more complex. Fortunately, for purposes of the present discussion, we need to focus only on the more objective aspects of the student's evaluative experiences.

The chief *source* of evaluation in the classroom is obviously the teacher. He is called upon continuously to make judgments of students' work and behavior and to communicate that judgment to the students in question and to others. No one who has observed an elementary classroom for any length of time can have failed to be impressed by the vast number of times the teacher performs this function. Typically, in most classrooms students come to know when things are right or wrong, good or bad, pretty or ugly, largely as a result of what the teacher tells them.

But the teacher is not the only one who passes judgment. Classmates frequently join in the act. Sometimes the class as a whole is invited to participate in the evaluation of a student's work, as when the teacher asks, "Who can correct Billy?" or "How many believe that Shirley read that poem with a lot of expression?"[3] At other times the evaluation occurs without any urging from the teacher, as when an egregious error elicits laughter or an outstanding performance wins spontaneous applause.

There is a third source of evaluation in the classroom that is more difficult to describe than are the positive or negative comments coming from teachers and peers. This type of evaluation, which entails self-judgment, occurs without the intervention of an outside judge. When a student is unable to spell any of the words on a spelling test he has been apprized of his failure even if the teacher never sees his paper. When a student works on an arithmetic example at the blackboard he may know that his answer is correct even if the teacher does not bother to tell him so. Thus, as students respond to test questions or complete exercises in their workbooks, or solve problems at the blackboard, they inevitably obtain some information about the quality of their performance. The information is not always correct and may have to be revised by later judgments (Not everyone who thinks he has the right answer really has it!), but, even when wrong, evaluation can leave its mark.

The conditions under which evaluations are communicated add to the complexity of the demands confronting the student. He soon comes to realize, for example, that some of the most important judgments of him and his work are not made known to him at all. Some of these "secret" judgments are communicated to parents; others, such as IQ scores and results of personality tests, are reserved for the scrutiny of school officials only. Judgments made by peers often circulate in the form of gossip or are reported to persons of authority by "tattle-tales." Before he has gone very far in school the student must come to terms with the fact that many things are said about him behind his back.

Those judgments of which the student is aware are communicated with varying degrees of privacy. At one extreme is the public comment made in the presence of other students. In the elementary classroom in particular, students are often praised or admonished in front of their classmates. Perfect papers or "good" drawings are sometimes displayed for all to see. Misbehavior evokes negative sanctions—such as scolding, isolation, removal from the room—that are frequently visible. Before much of the school year has gone by the identity of the "good" students and the "poor" students has become public knowledge in most classrooms.

A less public form of evaluation occurs when the teacher meets privately with the student to discuss his work. Sometimes the student is called to the teacher's desk and sometimes the teacher walks around the room and chats with individuals while the class is engaged in seatwork. Often, however, these seemingly private conferences are secretly attended by eavesdroppers. Thus, it is quite probable, although it might be difficult to prove, that a student's nearest classmates are more intimately aware of the teacher's evaluation of him than are students sitting at a greater distance.

Writing is an even more private means of communicating evaluations than is the spoken word. The terse comment on the margin of a student's paper is the classic form of written evaluation. A variant of this situation occurs when the student answers a self-quiz in his workbook or textbook but does not report his score to anyone. On

[3] Jules Henry, an anthropologist, has witnessed signs of what he terms "a witch-hunt syndrome" in several elementary classrooms. A chief component of this syndrome is the destructive criticism of each other by the students, egged on, as it were, by the teacher. See his article, "Attitude organization in elementary school classrooms," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 27: 117–133, January 1957.

occasions such as these the student confronts the evaluation of his work in solitude.

Logically, evaluation in the classroom might be expected to be limited chiefly to the student's attainment of educational objectives. And, clearly these limits seem to hold insofar as most of the official evaluations go—the ones that are communicated to parents and entered on school records. But there are at least two other *referents* of evaluation quite common in elementary classrooms. One has to do with the student's adjustment to institutional expectations; the other with his possession of specific character traits. Indeed, the smiles and frowns of teachers and classmates often provide more information about these seemingly peripheral aspects of the student's behavior than they do about his academic progress. Moreover, even when the student's mastery of certain knowledge or skills is allegedly the object of evaluation, other aspects of his behavior commonly are being judged at the same time.

As every school child knows, teachers can become quite angry on occasion. Moreover, every school child quickly learns what makes teachers angry. He learns that in most classrooms the behavior that triggers the teacher's ire has little to do with wrong answers or other indicators of scholastic failure. Rather, it is violations of institutional expectations that really get under the teacher's skin. Typically, when a student is scolded by the teacher it is not because he has failed to spell a word correctly or to grasp the intricacies of long division. He is scolded, more than likely, for coming into the room late, or for making too much noise, or for not listening to directions, or for pushing while in line. Occasionally, teachers do become publicly vexed by their students' academic shortcomings, but to really send them off on a tirade of invective, the young student soon discovers, nothing works better than a partially suppressed giggle during arithmetic period.

The teacher, of course, is not the only source of nonacademic judgments. Evaluation that focuses on a student's personal qualities is as likely to come from his classmates as from anyone else. The student's classroom behavior contributes in large measure to the reputation he develops among his peers for being smart or dumb, a sissy or a bully, teacher's pet or a regular guy, a cheater or a good sport. Most students are fully aware that their behavior is being evaluated in these terms because they judge others in the same way. Classroom friendships and general popularity or unpopularity are based largely on such assessments.[4] Although some of these judgments are instantly communicated to the person being evaluated, others are related through intermediaries or friends. Some are so secret that even best friends won't tell.

The teacher's evaluation of the personal qualities of his students typically deals with such matters as general intellectual ability, motivational level, and helpfulness in maintaining a well-run classroom. Such qualities are commonly mentioned on cumulative record folders in terse but telling descriptions. "Johnny has some difficulty with third grade material, but he tries hard," or "Sarah is a neat and pleasant girl. She is a good helper," or, simply, "William is a good worker," are typical of the thumb-nail sketches to be found in abundance in school records. Some teachers, particularly those who pride themselves on being "psychologically sophisticated," also evaluate their students in terms that relate more closely than do the ones already mentioned to the general concept of psychopathology. Aggressiveness and withdrawal are among the traits most frequently mentioned in this connection. Teachers also use the general labels of "problem child" or "disturbed child" for this purpose.

Quite naturally most of the evaluations that have to do with the student's psychological health are not communicated to the student and often not even to the child's parents. Less severe judgments, however, are often made publicly. In the lower grades it is not at all uncommon to hear the teacher, as she gazes over her class, say things like, "I see that John is a good worker," or "Some people (their identities obvious) don't seem to know how to follow directions," or "Liza has a listening face."

The separation of classroom evaluations into those referring to academic attainment, those referring to institutional adjustment, and those referring to possession of personal qualities should not obscure the fact that in many situations all three kinds of assessment are going on at one time. For example, when a student is praised for correctly responding to a teacher's question it may look as though he is simply being rewarded for having the right answer. But obviously there is more to it than that. If the teacher discovered that the student had obtained the answer a few seconds before by reading from a neighbor's paper he would have been punished rather than praised. Similarly, if he had blurted the answer out rather than waiting to be called on he might have received a very different response from the teacher. Thus, it is not just the possession of the right answer but also the way in which it was obtained that

[4] Watching these evaluations being made in the classroom (through huddled conferences and the surreptitious exchange of notes) one begins to wonder whether friendship is determined by the possession of special qualities, or whether the qualities are ascribed as a rationalization of friendship or enmity that already exists. In many instances it is almost as if the students were saying, "My friends are good guys and my enemies are tattle-tales and cheaters," rather than "Good guys are my friends and tattle-tales and cheaters my enemies." Doubtlessly both kinds of reasoning are in operation in most classrooms.

is being rewarded. In other words, the student is being praised for having achieved and demonstrated intellectual mastery in a prescribed legitimate way. He is being praised, albeit indirectly, for knowing something, for having done what the teacher told him to do, for being a good listener, a cooperative group member, and so on. The teacher's compliment is intended to entice the student (and those who are listening) to engage in certain behaviors in the future, but not simply in the repeated exposure of the knowledge he has just displayed. It is intended to encourage him to do again what the teacher tells him to do, to work hard, to master the material. And so it is with many of the evaluations that appear to relate exclusively to academic matters. Implicitly, they involve the evaluation of many "nonacademic" aspects of the student's behavior.

Evaluations, by definition, connote value. Accordingly, each can be described, at least ideally, according to the kind and degree of value it connotes. Some are positive, others are negative. Some are *very* positive or negative, others are less so. In the classroom, as every one knows, both positive and negative assessments are made and are communicated to students. Teachers scold as well as praise, classmates compliment as well as criticize.

The question of whether smiles are more frequent than frowns, and compliments more abundant than criticisms, depends in part, of course, on the particular classroom under discussion. Some teachers are just not the smiling type, others find it difficult to suppress their grins. The answer also varies dramatically from one student to the next. Some youngsters receive many more negative sanctions than do others, and the same is true with respect to rewards. Conditions also vary for the sexes. From the early grades onward boys are more likely than are girls to violate institutional regulations and, thus, to receive an unequal share of control messages from the teacher. All of these inequalities make it difficult to describe with great accuracy the evaluative setting as it is experienced by any particular child. All that can be said with assurance is that the classroom environment of most students contains some mixture of praise and reproof.

Because both the teacher and his fellow classmates may evaluate a student's behavior, contradictory judgments are possible. A given act may be praised by the teacher and criticized by peers, or vice versa. This may not be the normal state of affairs, to be sure, but it does happen frequently enough to bear comment. A classic example of this kind of a contradiction was observed in one second grade classroom in which a boy was complimented by his teacher for his gracefulness during a period of "creative" dancing while, at the same time, his male classmates teased him for acting like a sissy. This example calls attention to the fact that students are often concerned with the approval of two audiences whose taste may differ. It also hints at the possibility that the conflict between teacher and peer approval might be greater for boys than for girls. Many of the behaviors that the teacher smiles upon, especially those that have to do with compliance to institutional expectations (e.g., neatness, passivity, cleanliness), are more closely linked in our society with feminine than with masculine ideals.

From all that has been said it is evident that learning how to live in a classroom involves not only learning how to handle situations in which one's own work or behavior are evaluated, but also learning how to witness, and occasionally participate in, the evaluation of others. In addition to getting used to a life in which their strengths and weaknesses are often exposed to public scrutiny, students also have to accustom themselves to viewing the strengths and weaknesses of their fellow students. This shared exposure makes comparisons between students inevitable and adds another degree of complexity to the evaluation picture.

The job of coping with evaluation is not left solely to the student. Typically the teacher and other school authorities try to reduce the discomfort that might be associated with some of the harsher aspects of meting out praise and punishment. The dominant viewpoint in education today stresses the pedagogical advantages of success and the disadvantages of failure. In short, our schools are reward-oriented. Thus, teachers are instructed to focus on the good aspects of a student's behavior and to overlook the poor. Indeed, even when a student gives a wrong answer, today's teacher is likely to compliment him for trying. This bias toward the positive does not mean, of course, that negative remarks have disappeared from our schools. But there are certainly fewer of them than there might be if teachers operated under a different set of educational beliefs.

When harsh judgments have to be made, as they often must, teachers often try to conceal them from the class as a whole. Students are called up to the teacher's desk, private conferences are arranged before or after school, test papers are handed back with the grades covered, and so on. Sometimes, when the judgments are very harsh, they are not reported to the student at all. Students are rarely told, for example, that they have been classified as "slow learners" or that the teacher suspects them of having serious emotional problems. Such evaluations, as has been pointed out, are usually the carefully guarded secrets of the school authorities.

School practices covering the communication of positive evaluations are probably less consistent than are those covering negative judgments. Although there is a common tendency to praise students whenever possible, this tendency is usually tempered by the teacher's desire to be fair and "democratic." Thus, the correct

answers and perfect papers of students who almost always do good work may be overlooked at times in the interest of giving less able students a chance to bask in the warmth of the teacher's admiration. Most teachers are also sensitive to the fact that lavish praise heaped upon a student may arouse negative evaluations ("teacher's pet," "eager beaver") from his classmates.

Although the student's task in adjusting to evaluation is made easier by common teaching practices, he still has a job to do. In fact, he has three jobs. The first. and most obvious, is to behave in such a way as to enhance the likelihood of praise and reduce the likelihood of punishment. In other words, he must learn how the reward system of the classroom operates and then use that knowledge to increase the flow of rewards to himself. A second job, although one in which students engage with differing degrees of enthusiasm, consists of trying to publicize positive evaluations and conceal negative ones. The pursuit of this goal leads to the practice of carrying good report cards home with pride, and losing poor ones along the way. A third job, and, again, one that may be of greater concern to some students than to others, consists of trying to win the approval of two audiences at the same time. The problem, for some, is how to become a good student while remaining a good guy, how to be at the head of the class while still being in the center of the group.

Most students soon learn that rewards are granted to those who lead a good life. And in school the good life consists, principally, of doing what the teacher says. Of course the teacher says many things, and some of his directions are easier to follow than others, but for the most part his expectations are not seen as unreasonable and the majority of students comply with them sufficiently well to ensure that their hours in the classroom are colored more by praise than by punishment.

But only in very rare instances is compliance the only strategy a student uses to make his way in the evaluative environment of the classroom. Another course of action engaged in by most students at least some of the time is to behave in ways that disguise the failure to comply: in short, to cheat. It may seem unduly severe to label as "cheating" all the little maneuvers that students engage in to cloak aspects of their behavior that might be displeasing to the teacher or their fellow students. Perhaps the term should be reserved to describe the seemingly more serious behavior of trying to falsify performance on a test. But this restriction bestows greater significance than is warranted to test situations and implies that similar behavior in other settings is harmless or hardly worthy of notice.

Yet why should a student who copies an answer from his neighbor's test paper be considered guilty of more serious misbehavior than the student who attempts to misinform by raising his hand when the teacher asks how many have completed their homework assignment? Why is cheating on a test considered a greater breach of educational etiquette than is faking interest during a social studies discussion or sneaking a peek at a comic book during arithmetic class? The answer, presumably, is that performance on tests counts for more, in that it is preserved as a lasting mark on the student's record. And that answer might justify the differences in our attitudes toward these various practices. But it should not permit us to overlook the fact that copying an answer on a test, feigning interest during a discussion, giving a false answer to a teacher's query, and disguising forbidden activities are all of a piece. Each represents an effort to avoid censure or to win unwarranted praise. Such efforts are far more common in the classroom than our focus on cheating in test situations would have us believe. Learning how to make it in school involves, in part, learning how to falsify our behavior.

There is another way of coping with evaluations that warrants mention even though it is not deserving of the term "strategy." This method entails devaluing the evaluations to a point where they no longer matter very much. The student who has adopted this alternative over those of complying or cheating has learned how to "play it cool" in the classroom. He is neither elated by success nor deflated by failure. He may indeed try to "stay out of trouble" in the classroom and thus comply with the teacher's minimal expectations, but this is principally because getting into trouble entails further entanglements and involvement with school officials and other adults, a situation that he would prefer to avoid.

This brief description of emotional detachment from school affairs has two shortcomings. It makes the process sound more rational than it probably is and it focuses on a rather extreme form of the condition. Students do not likely *decide* to become uninvolved with school in the same way that they decide to collect baseball cards or to visit a sick friend. Rather, their lack of involvement likely has a causal history of which they are only dimly aware at best. The way in which such an attitude might slowly develop without the student being acutely conscious of it is one of the major topics to be discussed in the next chapter. Also, detachment is surely not an either/or state of affairs. Students cannot be sharply divided into the involved and the uninvolved. Rather, all students probably learn to employ psychological buffers that protect them from some of the wear and tear of classroom life. To anyone who has been in a classroom it is also evident that some students end up being more insulated than others.

Before leaving the topic of evaluation in the classroom, attention must be given to a distinction that has enjoyed wide currency in

educational discussions. This is the distinction between "extrinsic" motivation (doing school work for the rewards it will bring in the form of good grades and teacher approval) on the one hand, and "intrinsic" motivation (doing school work for the pleasure that comes from the task itself) on the other. If we want children to continue to learn after they leave the classroom, so the argument goes, it would be wise gradually to de-emphasize the importance of grades and other "extrinsic" rewards and concentrate instead on having the student derive his major satisfactions from the learning activities themselves. An illustration often used in making this point involves the child's progress in learning how to play the piano. When piano lessons are first begun the student may have to be forced to practice through the use of external rewards and punishments. But after a time, hopefully, the student will derive such pleasure from the skill itself that rewards and punishments will no longer be very important.

The trouble with the piano-playing illustration and with the whole concept of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as it relates to classroom activity is that it does not take into account the complexity of the evaluations that occur there. If classroom rewards and punishments only had to do with whether the students practiced their spelling or their arithmetic, life for both the teacher and his students would be much simpler. But, clearly, reality is more complicated than that.

The notion of intrinsic motivation begins to lose some of its power when applied to behaviors other than those that involve academic knowledge or skills. What about behaviors that deal with conformity to institutional expectations? What kind of intrinsic motivation can the teacher appeal to when he wants students to be silent even though they want to talk? It is true that he might make a logical appeal to them rather than merely telling them to shut up, but it is hard to imagine that the students will ever find anything intrinsically satisfying about being silent when they wish to talk. And the same thing is true for many aspects of classroom behavior that arouse evaluative comments from teachers and students. Thus, the goal of making classroom activities intrinsically satisfying to students turns out to be unattainable except with respect to a narrowly circumscribed set of behavior.

IV

The fact of unequal power is a third feature of classroom life to which students must become accustomed. The difference in authority between the teacher and his students is related, quite obviously, to the evaluative aspects of classroom life. But it involves much more than the distribution of praise and reproof. This difference provides the most salient feature of the social structure of the classroom and its consequences relate to the broader conditions of freedom, privilege, and responsibility as manifest in classroom affairs.

One of the earliest lessons a child must learn is how to comply with the wishes of others. Soon after he becomes aware of the world he is in, the newborn infant becomes conscious of one of the main features of that world: adult authority. As he moves from home to school the authority of parents is gradually supplemented by control from teachers, the second most important set of adults in his life. But early parental authority differs in several important ways from that which he will confront in school and these differences are important for understanding the character of the classroom environment.

Two of the chief differences between the parent's relationship with his child and the teacher's with his student have to do with the intimacy and duration of the contact. The emotional ties between parents and children are usually stronger and last longer than those between teachers and students. This does not mean, of course, that students never feel close to their teachers, and vice versa. We know that a child's relationship with his teacher can at times rival in intensity the union between him and his mother and father. We also know that teachers are occasionally attracted toward particular students in an intense and personal way. But still the dominant relationship in the classroom is quite impersonal when compared with that which goes on in the home.

The reduced intimacy in the classroom as compared with the home has to do not only with the intensity of feelings among participants but also with the extent to which the participants have been exposed to each other in a variety of poses and guises. Members of a household come to know each other physically as well as psychologically, in a way that almost never happens in the classroom. Also, family members share a personal history in a way that members of other groups do not. Consequently, parents and children are likely to have a much more extensive familiarity with each other than are teachers and students.

The relative impersonality and narrowness of the teacher-student relationship has consequences for the way in which authority is handled in the classroom. It is there that students must learn to take orders from adults who do not know them very well and whom they do not themselves know intimately. For the first time in the child's life, power that has personal consequences for the child himself is wielded by a relative stranger.

Perhaps one of the chief differences between the authority of parents and teachers, although not the most obvious, has to do with the purposes for which their power is put to use. Parents, by and large, are principally restrictive. Their chief concern, at least during the child's early years, is with prohibiting action, with telling the child what *not* to do. Parental authority during the pre-school years is characterized by the commands, "Stop!" and "Don't!" It is an authority whose chief goal is to place limits on natural impulses and spontaneous interests, particularly when those impulses and interests endanger the child himself or threaten to destroy something of value to the parent. The infant's playpen symbolizes the type of authority with which children must learn to live during their early years. This ubiquitous piece of child-rearing equipment places definite limits on the child's sphere of activity, but within that sphere he is free to do almost anything he wishes.

The teacher's authority, in contrast, is as much prescriptive as restrictive. Teachers are concerned with setting assignments for students rather than with merely curbing undesirable behavior. Their authority is characterized as much by "Do" as by "Don't." Just as the playpen is symbolic of the parent's commands so is the desk symbolic of the commands issued by teachers. The desk represents not just a limited sphere of activity but a setting specially designed for a very narrow range of behavior. Seated at his desk the student is in the position to do something. It is the teacher's job to declare what that something shall be.

At the heart of the teacher's authority is his command over the student's attention. Students are expected to attend to certain matters while they are in the classroom, and much of the teacher's energies are spent in making sure that this happens. At home the child must learn how to stop; at school he must learn how to look and listen.

Another view of the teacher's authority might focus on the process of substitution by which the teacher's plans for action are substituted for the student's own. When students do what the teacher tells them to do they are, in effect, abandoning one set of plans (their own) in favor of another (their teacher's). At times, of course, these two sets of plans do not conflict and may even be quite similar. But at other times that which is given up in no way resembles the action called for by the teacher. The lack of resemblance between the teacher's plans and the student's own must partially account for the difficulty some students have in adjusting to the classroom, but the relationship between these two states of affairs is surely not simple. The important point is that students must learn to employ their executive powers in the service of the teacher's desires rather than their own. Even if it hurts.

The distinction between work and play has far-reaching consequences for human affairs, and the classroom is the setting in which most people encounter this distinction in a personally meaningful way. According to one of its many definitions, work entails becoming engaged in a purposeful activity that has been prescribed for us by someone else; an activity in which we would not at that moment be engaged if it were not for some system of authority relationships. As pre-schoolers the students may have played with the concept of work, but their fanciful enactments of adult work situations usually lack one essential ingredient, namely: the use of some kind of an external authority system to tell them what to do and to keep them at their job. The teacher, with his prescriptive dicta and his surveillance over the students' attention, provides the missing ingredient that makes work real. The teacher, although he may disclaim the title, is the student's first "Boss."

The worker, almost by definition, is a person who is tempted, from time to time, to abandon his role. Presumably there are other things he would rather be doing, but his boss's eye, or his need for money, or the voice of his inner conscience keep him at the job. Sometimes, of course, he yields to his temptation, either by taking the day off or, when conditions become intolerable, by quitting his job. The right to leave the work situation varies greatly from one job to another, but the ultimate privilege, that of quitting, is open to all adults. Any worker, if he doesn't like his job, can throw down his tools and walk away. He may live to regret his decision, but the decision to leave is his.

But consider the plight of the young student. If a third grader should refuse to obey the system of bells that tell him when to enter and when to leave the classroom, the wheels of retributive justice would begin to grind. And the teacher would sound the alarm that would put them in motion. This fact calls attention to an important aspect of the teacher's use of authority. As has been pointed out, schools resemble so-called total institutions, such as prisons, mental hospitals, and the like, in that one subgroup of their clientele (the students) are involuntarily committed to the institution, whereas another subgroup (the staff) has greater freedom of movement and, most important, has the ultimate freedom to leave the institution entirely. Under these circumstances it is common for the more privileged group to guard the exits, either figuratively or literally. Again, teachers may not like this description and may, in protesting, insist that they operate "democratic" classrooms, but in a very real sense their responsibilities bear some resemblance to those of prison guards. In "progressive" prisons, as in most classrooms, the inhabitants are allowed certain freedoms, but there are real limits. In both institutions the inmates might be allowed to

plan a Christmas party, but in neither place are they allowed to plan a "break."

The starkness of the difference in power between teachers and students may be heightened or subdued depending on school policy and the personal predilections of the teachers. Many of the differences between so-called traditional and progressive institutions derive from the ways in which the teacher's authority is handled. In some schools, for example, students are required to rise when the teacher enters the room, whereas in others they are encouraged to call the teacher by his first name. In some schools students have little or no say in determining the content of the curriculum, whereas in others pupil-planning is used as a procedure for increasing the "meaningfulness" of the students' experience. But, even in the most progressive environments, the teacher is very much in control and pupils usually are aware of the centrality and power of his position. Even a first grader knows that an absent teacher requires a substitute, whereas an absent student does not.

In the best of all possible worlds it is expected that children will adapt to the teacher's authority by becoming "good workers" and "model students." And, by and large, this ideal comes close to being realized. Most students learn to look and to listen when told to and to keep their private fantasies in check when class is in session. Moreover, this skill in complying with educational authority is doubly important because the student will be called upon to put it to work in many out-of-school settings. The transition from classroom to factory or office is made easily by those who have developed "good work habits" in their early years.

But not all students become good workers, and even those who do are sometimes forced to employ "shady" practices when dealing with the teacher's authority. Under conditions of grossly unequal power such as exists in classrooms, two types of interpersonal maneuvering almost inevitably arise. The first involves the seeking of special favor. One way of managing life in a total institution is by moving close to the sources of power during the off-hours and behaving in ways that cause authorities to respond favorably. At the more manipulative and cynical extreme this strategy involves fawning, false compliments, and other forms of social dishonesty. These extreme practices which might be referred to collectively as "apple polishing" are usually accompanied by feelings of cynicism or self-hatred. Less extreme variations include merely "being helpful" and "creating a good impression." In adult society this strategy leads to the practice of bringing the boss home for dinner. The classroom equivalent of dinner for the boss is the traditional apple for the teacher.

A second tactic that is in some ways the reverse of the first involves the practice of hiding words and deeds that might displease the authorities. It takes effort to create a good impression but it also requires work to avoid creating a bad one. Just as some of the pupil's energies are spent in trying to please the teacher, so are others spent in trying to keep out of trouble. The secrecy that frequently develops in total institutions is aligned, at least in part, with the authority structure. Certainly this is true in school. Teachers keep secrets from their principals as do students from their teachers. But not all of these secrets have to do with the avoidance of a negative evaluation from authority figures. Some may have as their goal the manipulation of institutional privileges. When, for example, a teacher asks a student if he has already been to the drinking fountain that morning and he untruthfully says "no," it is not because a truthful answer would provoke the teacher but because it might destroy the chances of his getting a second drink. So it is with many of the minor subterfuges that are commonplace in the classroom.

Because the oppressive use of power is antithetical to our democratic ideals it is difficult to discuss its normal occurrence in the classroom without arousing concern. The concepts of obedience and of independence are often thought to be antithetical and, in our society, the latter concept is more often the declared objective of our schools than is the former. Therefore, we typically play down or fail to recognize the extent to which students are expected to conform to the expectations of others and when this state of affairs is called to our attention the natural response is one of alarm.

Yet the habits of obedience and docility engendered in the classroom have a high pay-off value in other settings. So far as their power structure is concerned classrooms are not too dissimilar from factories or offices, those ubiquitous organizations in which so much of our adult life is spent. Thus, school might really be called a preparation for life, but not in the usual sense in which educators employ that slogan. Power may be abused in school as elsewhere, but its existence is a fact of life to which we must adapt. The process of adaptation begins during the first few years of life but it is significantly accelerated, for most of us, on the day we enter kindergarten.

V

As implied in the title of this chapter, the crowds, the praise, and the power that combine to give a distinctive flavor to classroom life collectively form a hidden curriculum which each student (and

teacher) must master if he is to make his way satisfactorily through the school. The demands created by these features of classroom life may be contrasted with the academic demands—the "official" curriculum, so to speak—to which educators traditionally have paid the most attention. As might be expected, the two curriculums are related to each other in several important ways.

As has already been suggested in the discussion of praise in the classroom, the reward system of the school is linked to success in both curriculums. Indeed, many of the rewards and punishments that sound as if they are being dispensed on the basis of academic success and failure are really more closely related to the mastery of the hidden curriculum. Consider, as an instance, the common teaching practice of giving a student credit for trying. What do teachers mean when they say a student tries to do his work? They mean, in essence, that he complies with the procedural expectations of the institution. He does his homework (though incorrectly), he raises his hand during class discussion (though he usually comes up with the wrong answer), he keeps his nose in his book during free study period (though he doesn't turn the page very often). He is, in other words, a "model" student, though not necessarily a good one.

It is difficult to imagine any of today's teachers, particularly those in elementary schools, failing a student who tries, even though his mastery of course content is slight. Indeed, even at higher levels of education rewards sometimes go to the meek as well as the mighty. It is certainly possible that many of our valedictorians and presidents of our honor societies owe their success as much to institutional conformity as to intellectual prowess. Although it offends our sensibilities to admit it, no doubt that bright-eyed little girl who stands trembling before the principal on graduation day arrived there at least in part because she typed her weekly themes neatly and handed her homework in on time.

This manner of talking about educational affairs may sound cynical and may be interpreted as a criticism of teachers or as an attempt to subvert the virtues of neatness, punctuality, and courteous conduct in general. But nothing of that kind is intended. The point is simply that in schools, as in prisons, good behavior pays off.

Just as conformity to institutional expectations can lead to praise, so can the lack of it lead to trouble. As a matter of fact, the relationship of the hidden curriculum to student difficulties is even more striking than is its relationship to student success. As an instance, consider the conditions leading to disciplinary action in the classroom. Why do teachers scold students? Because the student has given a wrong answer? Because, try as he might, he fails to grasp the intricacies of long division? Not usually. Rather, students are commonly scolded for coming into the room late or for making too much noise or for not listening to the teacher's directions or for pushing while in line. The teacher's wrath, in other words, is more frequently triggered by violations of institutional regulations and routines than by signs of his students' intellectual deficiencies.

Even when we consider the more serious difficulties that clearly entail academic failure, the demands of the hidden curriculum lurk in the background. When Johnny's parents are called in to school because their son is not doing too well in arithmetic, what explanation is given for their son's poor performance? Typically, blame is placed on motivational deficiencies in Johnny rather than on his intellectual shortcomings. The teacher may even go so far as to say that Johnny is *un*motivated during arithmetic period. But what does this mean? It means, in essence, that Johnny does not even try. And not trying, as we have seen, usually boils down to a failure to comply with institutional expectations, a failure to master the hidden curriculum.

Testmakers describe a person as "test-wise" when he has caught on to the tricks of test construction sufficiently well to answer questions correctly even though he does not know the material on which he is being examined. In the same way one might think of students as becoming "school-wise" or "teacher-wise" when they have discovered how to respond with a minimum amount of pain and discomfort to the demands, both official and unofficial of classroom life. Schools, like test items, have rules and traditions of their own that can only be mastered through successive exposure. But with schools as with tests all students are not equally adroit. All are asked to respond but not everyone catches on to the rules of the game.

If it is useful to think of there being two curriculums in the classroom, a natural question to ask about the relationship between them is whether their joint mastery calls for compatible or contradictory personal qualities. That is, do the same strengths that contribute to intellectual achievement also contribute to the student's success in conformity to institutional expectations? This question likely has no definite answer, but it is thought-provoking and even a brief consideration of it leads into a thicket of educational and psychological issues.

It is probably safe to predict that general ability, or intelligence, would be an asset in meeting all of the demands of school life, whether academic or institutional. The child's ability to understand causal relationships, as an instance, would seem to be of as much service as he tries to come to grips with the rules and regulations of classroom life as when he grapples with the rudiments of plant chemistry. His verbal fluency can be put to use as easily in "snowing" the teacher as in writing a short story. Thus, to the extent that

the demands of classroom life call for rational thought, the student with superior intellectual ability would seem to be at an advantage.

But more than ability is involved in adapting to complex situations. Much also depends upon attitudes, values, and life style—upon all those qualities commonly grouped under the term: *personality*. When the contribution of personality to adaptive strategy is considered, the old adage of "the more, the better," which works so well for general ability, does not suffice. Personal qualities that are beneficial in one setting may be detrimental in another. Indeed, even a single setting may make demands that call upon competing or conflicting tendencies in a person's makeup.

We have already seen that many features of classroom life call for patience, at best, and resignation, at worst. As he learns to live in school our student learns to subjugate his own desires to the will of the teacher and to subdue his own actions in the interest of the common good. He learns to be passive and to acquiesce to the network of rules, regulations, and routines in which he is embedded. He learns to tolerate petty frustrations and accept the plans and policies of higher authorities, even when their rationale is unexplained and their meaning unclear. Like the inhabitants of most other institutions, he learns how to shrug and say, "That's the way the ball bounces."

But the personal qualities that play a role in intellectual mastery are very different from those that characterize the Company Man. Curiosity, as an instance, that most fundamental of all scholarly traits, is of little value in responding to the demands of conformity. The curious person typically engages in a kind of probing, poking, and exploring that is almost antithetical to the attitude of the passive conformist. The scholar must develop the habit of challenging authority and of questioning the value of tradition. He must insist on explanations for things that are unclear. Scholarship requires discipline, to be sure, but this discipline serves the demands of scholarship rather than the wishes and desires of other people. In short, intellectual mastery calls for sublimited forms of aggression rather than for submission to constraints.

This brief discussion likely exaggerates the real differences between the demands of institutional conformity and the demands of scholarship, but it does serve to call attention to points of possible conflict. How incompatible are these two sets of demands? Can both be mastered by the same person? Apparently so. Certainly not all of our student council presidents and valedictorians can be dismissed as weak-willed teacher's pets, as academic Uriah Heeps. Many students clearly manage to maintain their intellectual aggressiveness while at the same time acquiescing to the laws that govern the social traffic of our schools. Apparently it *is* possible, under certain conditions, to breed "docile scholars," even though the expression seems to be a contradiction in terms. Indeed, certain forms of scholarship have been known to flourish in monastic settings, where the demands for institutional conformity are extreme.

Unfortunately, no one seems to know how these balances are maintained, nor even how to establish them in the first place. But even more unfortunate is the fact that few if any school people are giving the matter serious thought. As institutional settings multiply and become for more and more people the areas in which a significant portion of their life is enacted, we will need to know much more than we do at present about how to achieve a reasonable synthesis between the forces that drive a person to seek individual expression and those that drive him to comply with the wishes of others. Presumably what goes on in classrooms contributes significantly to this synthesis. The school is the first major institution, outside the family, in which almost all of us are immersed. From kindergarten onward, the student begins to learn what life is really like in The Company.

The demands of classroom life discussed in this chapter pose problems for students and teachers alike. As we have seen, there are many methods for coping with these demands and for solving the problems they create. Moreover, each major adaptive strategy is subtly transformed and given a unique expression as a result of the idiosyncratic characteristics of the student employing it. Thus, the total picture of adjustment to school becomes infinitely complex as it is manifested in the behavior of individual students.

Yet certain commonalities do exist beneath all the complexity created by the uniqueness of individuals. No matter what the demand or the personal resources of the person facing it there is at least one strategy open to all. This is the strategy of psychological withdrawal, of gradually reducing personal concern and involvement to a point where neither the demand nor one's success or failure in coping with it is sharply felt. Chapter 3 focuses exclusively on this all-purpose strategy, detachment, as it is employed in the classroom. In order to better understand student tactics, however, it is important to consider the climate of opinion from which they emerge. Before focusing on what they do in the classroom, we must examine how students feel about school.