CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

This thesis has been inspired by my own experience as a primary school
teacher. It has been researched and written whilst I have been teaching in
a Group 4 Primary School of some 200 pupils aged 5 - 11, situated in a
medium sized market town in the South West of England. It is notionally
about disruptive behaviour, but since this is only a symptom at one end of
a continuum of behaviour relating to the contingency studied, it must be
about a good deal more than disruptive behaviour.

I had taught in independent boarding schools before coming to teach in the
state sector. I left the former, partly because I felt the curriculum was
inappropriate, but mainly because I found it increasingly difficult to
live with a regime which could only function on the basis of the repression
of children's individual needs, emotions and personalities. The curriculum
in the state school was a considerable improvement, but the way the
children were treated was, to say the least, no better. The same asinine
regime of discipline reigned during the day, and whilst many children did
return to the caring homes I felt were lacking in the boarding school in
the evening, a significant number returned to homes which were anything but
caring and in all probability even worse than the boarding house.

I did not object to "discipline" as such.   Indeed, I attach great
importance to it, for concentrated learning can only occur within a highly
disciplined environment. The root of the whole matter lay in the fact that
the children who did well never required to be "disciplined", whilst the
troublesome or low achieving children were constantly being "disciplined"
with no apparant beneficial effect.   This apparantly simple paradox
excercised my mind constantly.   Why did the successful, high achieving
children not need "discipline"? It was not hard to prove that "discipline"
was totally ineffective on the low achieving children. The same ones went
through the same rituals of warnings and punishments with unfailing

regularity. I sought that elusive quality the successful children had which both kept them out of conflict with authority and enabled them to produce good work.

I began to realise that, although I had gone into teaching because I thought I liked children, I was in conflict, as an "authority" figure with a certain small number of children almost constantly. On the other hand, I enjoyed a pleasant relationship with the majority of children who were to some degree successful and not troublesome. Why should not all children enjoy this relationship? One particular third year boy was not only an irritation at school but apparantly out of control at home, having been in trouble with the police on a number of occasions. He was not overtly disruptive at school, but his work was very poor, and this was the principal source of conflict between us. Of course, I recognized the need for appropriate expectations and appropriate work, as well as the need for praise rather than criticism. But how many teachers have not met the child who annoys them because they know he can do a lot better? I decided to put the "praise" theory to the ultimate test. I took the boy aside and praised him for whatever work he did, irrespective of quality or content. In a remarkably short time, the boy's work improved dramatically. So also did our relationship. Most remarkably, however, his poor behaviour at home ceased almost totally. Some process acting on the whole child, rather than antecedents to and consequences of a specific incident, had surely been set in motion.

I next had an opportunity to put this theory to the test when I inherited a first year boy with a splendidly damning reputation from the infants. Indeed, his mother had been informed that he was the "naughtiest boy in the school". He did, indeed, live up to his reputation, -constantly calling out, disrupting others during story time etc., blocking the sinks with leaves and defying the dinner ladies at lunch time. I resolved from the outset to approach the problem through counselling and self-esteem work. Most importantly, however, there were to be no punishments, -only positive correctives, -reinforced not by rewards but friendly personal encouragement. A remarkable degree of success was achieved with this

pupil, and, since that date I have felt justified in continuing to apply the same principles.

The Moral Question

The above line of reasoning is bound to lead, sooner or later, to some forms of moral judgement. One such judgement has already, by implication, been made. The moral integrity of behaviourist methods has been called into question by virtue of the fact that they appear to deny the validity of certain elements of the child's personality. This, in turn, raises the moral question of whether or not children are actually entitled to this element of their personality. In turn, this leads to the psychological questions of whether or not the recognition and encouragement of this element is a necessary concomitant of healthy socio-emotive development.

It is these moral questions which must form the main substance of the remainder of this chapter, for it was these issues which were raised in the opening pages. An issue which needs clarification at the outset is that of the difference between social development and moral development. The two, in my view, form a close, intertwining relationship, and are frequently confused, not only by the lay person. Very often, *social behaviour* is seen as the desirable product of a sound *moral upbringing*. Such a view has little psychological evidence to support it, and is become increasingly unfashionable. It supposes that socialisation is a form of didactic or prescriptive process. The child will behave in a socially acceptable way through being made to conform to sets of rules laid down by his elders. Ainsworth believes it likely that children may never have become social by such a process.

The difference between social development and moral development lies in the fact the moral behaviour is *judgemental*. All interpersonal behaviour is *social* behaviour; it is moral judgement which determines whether or not a certain piece of social behaviour is *socially acceptable*. It is moral judgement which is the arbiter in the social dilemma. It is the moral judgement of the adult which condemns the child as lacking morality. Recent research (Much & Scweder; 1978, Turiel; 1983) suggests that such