

QUOTATION

DISCRIMINATED AVOIDANCE IN THE SCHOOLBOY

"The boy who had been reading when David had come in had finished, and his place was taken by a second who seemed less able to maintain the rapid drone of his predecessor. At first, when he faltered, the rabbi corrected him by uttering what was apparently the right sound, for the boy always repeated it. But gradually, as his pupil continued in his error, a harsh note of warning crept into the rabbi's voice. After awhile he began to yank the boy by the arm whenever he corrected him, then to slap him smartly on the thigh, and finally, just before the boy had finished, the rabbi cuffed him on the ear.

"As time went by, David saw this procedure repeated in part or whole in case of almost every other boy who read. There were several exceptions, and these, as far as David could observe, gained their exemption from punishment because the drone that issued from their lips was as breathless and uninterrupted as the roll of a drum. He also noticed that whenever the rabbi administered one of these manual corrections, he first dropped from his hand the little stick with which he seemed to set the pace on the page, and an instant later reached out or struck out, as the case might demand. So that, whenever he dropped the stick, whether to scratch his beard or adjust his skull-cap or fish out a half-burned cigarette from a box, the pupil before him invariably jerked up an arm or ducked his head defensively. The dropping of that little stick, seemed to have become a warning to his pupils that a blow was on the way."

Henry Roth. *Call it sleep*. New York: R. O. Ballou, 1934, p. 287.

(Contributed by Donald M. Keller, Department of Psychology, La Salle College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19141.)