

random and unco-ordinated. The crying indicates that fear is still present. The aggression has not yet matured to the point of a pure attack: this will come much later when the infant is sure of itself and fully aware of its physical capacities. When it does develop, it, too, has its own special facial signals. These consist of a tight-lipped glare. The lips are pursed into a hard line, with the mouth-corners held forward rather than pulled back. The eyes stare fixedly at the opponent and the eyebrows are lowered in a frown. The fists are clenched. The child has begun to assert itself.

It has been found that this aggressiveness can be increased by raising the density of a group of children. Under crowded conditions the friendly social interactions between members of a group become reduced, and the destructive and aggressive patterns show a marked rise in frequency and intensity. This is significant when one remembers that in other animals fighting is used not only to sort out dominance disputes, but also to increase the spacing-out of the members of a species. We will return to this in Chapter Five.

Apart from protecting, feeding, cleaning and playing with the offspring, the parental duties also include the all-important process of training. As with other species, this is done by a punishment-and-reward system that gradually modifies and adjusts the trial-and-error learning of the young. But, in addition, the offspring will be learning rapidly by imitation—a process that is comparatively poorly developed in most other mammals, but superbly heightened and refined in ourselves. So much of what other animals must laboriously learn for themselves, we acquire quickly by following the example of our parents. The naked ape is a teaching ape. (We are so attuned to this method of learning that we tend to assume that other species benefit in the same way, with the result that we have grossly over-estimated the role that teaching plays in their lives.)

Much of what we do as adults is based on this imitative absorption during our childhood years. Frequently we imagine that we are behaving in a particular way because such behaviour accords with some 111