

however, in that we do not restrict ourselves to a few species-typical displacement patterns. We make use of virtually any trivial actions as outlets for our pentup feelings. In an agitated state of conflict we may arrange ornaments, light a cigarette, clean our spectacles, glance at a wrist-watch, pour a drink, or nibble a piece of food. Any of these actions may, of course, be performed for normal functional reasons, but in their displacement activity roles they no longer serve these functions. The ornaments that are rearranged were already adequately displayed. They were not in a muddle and may, indeed, be in a worse state after their agitated rearrangement. The cigarette that is lit in a tense moment may be started when a perfectly good and unfinished one has just been nervously stubbed out. Also, the rate of smoking during tension bears no relation to the physiological addictive nicotine demands of the system. The spectacles that are so laboriously polished are already clean. The watch that is wound up so vigorously does not need winding, and when we glance at it our eyes do not even register what times it tells. When we sip a displacement drink it is not because we are thirsty. When we nibble displacement food it is not because we are hungry. All these actions are performed, not for the normal rewards they bring, but simply for the sake of doing something in an attempt to relieve the tension. They occur with particularly high frequency during the initial stages of social encounters, where hidden feats and aggressions are lurking just below the surface. At a dinner party, or any small social gathering, as soon as the mutual appeasement ceremonies of hand-shaking and smiling are over, displacement cigarettes, displacement drinks and displacement food-snacks are immediately offered. Even at large-scale entertainments such as the theatre and cinema the flow of events is deliberately broken up by short intervals when the audience can indulge in brief bouts of their favourite displacement activities.

When we are in more intense moments of aggressive tension, we tend to revert to displacement activities of a kind that we share with other primate species, and our outlets become more primitive. A chimpanzee in 148