

a strange complacency that this can never happen, that there is something special about us, that we are somehow above biological control. But we are not. Many exciting species have become extinct in the past and we are no exception. Sooner or later we shall go, and make way for something else. If it is to be later rather than sooner, then we must take a long, hard look at ourselves as biological specimens and gain some understanding of our limitations. This is why I have written this book, and why I have deliberately insulted us by referring to us as naked apes, rather than by the more usual name we use for ourselves. It helps to keep a sense of proportion and to force us to consider what is going on just below the surface of our lives. In my enthusiasm I may, perhaps, have overstated my case. There are many praises I could have sung, many magnificent achievements I could have described: By omitting them I have inevitably given a one-sided picture. We are an extraordinary species and I do not wish to deny it, or to belittle us. But these things have been said so often. When the coin is tossed it always seems to come up heads, and I have felt that it was high time we turned it over and looked at the other side. Unfortunately, because we are so powerful and so successful when compared with other animals, we find the contemplation of our humble origins somehow offensive, so that I do not expect to be thanked for what I have done. Our climb to the top has been a get-rich-quick story, and, like all nouveaux riches, we are very sensitive about our background. We are also in constant danger of betraying it.

Optimism is expressed by some who feel that since we have evolved a high level of intelligence and a strong inventive urge, we shall be able to twist any situation to our advantage; that we are so flexible that we can re-mould our way of life to fit any of the new demands made by our rapidly rising species-status; that when the time comes, we shall manage to cope with the over-crowding, the stress, the loss of our privacy and independence of action; that we shall remodel our behaviour patterns and live like giant ants; that we shall control our aggressive and territorial feelings, our sexual impulses and our parental 210