

smile. They hope that the counterfeit face will avoid upsetting the infant, but in reality this trick may do more harm than good. I mentioned earlier that it is almost impossible to fool a baby over questions of maternal mood. In the early years of life we seem to be acutely responsive to subtle signs of parental agitation and parental calm. At the pre-verbal stages, before the massive machinery of symbolic, cultural communication has bogged us down, we rely much more on tiny movements, postural changes and tones of voice than we need to in later life. Other species are particularly good at this, too. The astonishing ability of 'Clever Hans', the famous counting horse, was in fact based on its acuteness in responding to minute postural changes in his trainer. When asked to do a sum, Hans would tap his foot the appropriate number of times and then stop. Even if the trainer left the room and someone else took over, it still worked, because as the vital number of taps was reached, the stranger could not help tensing his body slightly. We all have this ability ourselves, even as adults (it is used a great deal by fortune-tellers to judge when they are on the right lines), but in pre-verbal infants it appears to be especially active. If the mother is making tense and agitated movements, no matter how concealed, she will communicate these to her child. If at the same time she gives a strong smile, it does not fool the infant, it only confuses it. Two conflicting messages are being transmitted. If this is done a great deal it may be permanently damaging and cause the child serious difficulties when making social contacts and adjustments later in life.

Leaving the subject of smiling, we must now turn to a very different activity. As the months pass, a new pattern of infant behaviour begins to emerge: aggression arrives on the scene. Temper tantrums and angry crying begin to differentiate themselves from the earlier all-purpose crying response. The baby signals its aggression by a more broken, irregular form of screaming and by violent striking out with its arms and legs. It attacks small objects, shakes large ones, spits and spews, and tries to bite, scratch or strike anything in reach. At first these activities are rather 110