

'paragraph', to check their response to what we have said. A professional lecturer takes some time to train himself to look directly at the members of his audience, instead of over their heads, down at his rostrum, or out towards the side or back of the hall. Even though he is in such a dominant position, there are so many of them, all staring (from the safety of their seats) at him, that he experiences a basic and initially uncontrollable fear of them. Only after a great deal of practice can he overcome this. The simple, aggressive, physical act of being stared at by a large group of people is also the cause of the fluttering 'butterflies' in the actor's stomach before he makes his entrance on to the stage. He has all his intellectual worries about the qualities of his performance and its reception, of course, but the massed threat-stare is an additional and more fundamental hazard for him. (This is again a case of the curiosity stare being confused at an unconscious level with the threat-stare.) The wearing of spectacles and sunglasses makes the face appear more aggressive because it artificially and accidentally enlarges the pattern of the stare. If we are looked at by someone wearing glasses, we are being given a super-stare. Mild-mannered individuals tend to select thin-rimmed or rimless spectacles (probably without realising why they do so), because this enables them to see better with the minimum of stare exaggeration. In this way they avoid arousing counter-aggression.

A more intense form of anti-stare is covering the eyes with the hands, or burying the face in the crook of the elbow. The simple act of closing the eyes also cuts off the stare, and it is intriguing that certain individuals compulsively and repeatedly shut their eyes briefly whilst facing and talking to strangers. It is as though their normal blinking responses have become lengthened into extended eye-masking moments. The response vanishes when they are conversing with close friends in a situation where they feel at ease. Whether they are trying to shut off the 'threatening' presence of the stranger, or whether they are attempting to reduce their staring rate, or both, is not always clear.

Because of their powerful intimidating affect, many species have evolved staring eye-spots as self-defence 144