

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FIGHTING**

IF we are to understand the nature of our aggressive urges, we must see them against the background of our animal origins. As a species we are so preoccupied with mass-produced and mass-destroying violence at the present time, that we are apt to lose our objectivity when discussing this subject. It is a fact that the most level-headed intellectuals frequently become violently aggressive when discussing the urgent need to suppress aggression. This is not surprising. We are, to put it mildly, in a mess, and there is a strong chance that we shall have exterminated ourselves by the end of the century. Our only consolation will have to be that, as a species, we have had an exciting term of office. Not a long term, as species go, but an amazingly eventful one. But before we examine our own bizarre perfections of attack and defence, we must examine the basic nature of violence in the spearless, gunless, bombless world of animals.

Animals fight amongst themselves for one of two very good reasons: either to establish their dominance in a social hierarchy, or to establish their territorial rights over a particular piece of ground. Some species are purely hierarchical, with no fixed territories. Some are purely territorial, with no hierarchy problems. Some have hierarchies on their territories and have to contend with both forms of aggression. We belong to the last group: we have it both ways. As primates we were already loaded with the hierarchy system. This is the basic way of primate life. The group keeps moving about, rarely staying anywhere long enough to establish a fixed territory. Occasional inter-group conflict may arise, but it is weakly organised, spasmodic and of comparatively little importance in the life of the average monkey. The 'peck order' (so-called because it was first discussed in respect of chickens) is,

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