

they will experience the 'shock' of discovery, or playfteeing so that they will be caught.

Laughter therefore becomes a play signal, a sign that the increasingly dramatic inter-actions between the child and the parent can continue and develop. If they become too frightening or painful, then, of course, the reaction can switch over into crying and immediately re-stimulate the protective response. This system enables the child to expand its exploration of its bodily capacities and the physical properties of the world around it.

Other animals also have special play signals, but compared with ours they are unimpressive. The chim-panzee, for instance, has a characteristic play-face, and

soft play-grunt which is the equivalent of our laughter. In origin these signals have the same kind of ambivalence. When greeting, a young chimpanzee protrudes its lips far forward, stretching them to the limit. When frightened, it retracts them, opening its mouth and exposing the teeth. The play-face, being motivated by both feelings of friendly greeting and fear, is a mixture of the two. The jaws open wide, as in fear, but the lips are pulled forward and keep the teeth covered. The soft grunt is halfway between the 'oooo-oo' greeting sound and the scream of fear. If play becomes too rough, the lips pull back and the grunt becomes a short, sharp scream. If it becomes too calm, the jaws close and the lips pull forward into the friendly chimpanzee pout. Basically the situation is the same, then, but the soft play-grunt is a puny signal when compared with our own vigorous, full-blooded laughter. As chimpanzees grow, the significance of the play signal dwindles even more, whereas ours expands and acquires still greater importance in everyday life. The naked ape, even as an adult, is a playful ape. It is all part of his exploratory nature. He is constantly pushing things to their limit, trying to startle himself, to shock himself without getting hurt, and then signalling his relief with peals of infectious laughter.

Laughing at someone can also, of course, become a potent social weapon among older children and adults. It is doubly insulting because it indicates that he is 104