in aldous huxley’s early novel Antic Hay, Theodore Gombril, Jr., attends a concert of chamber music and hears a performance of Mozart’s String Quintet in G Minor. Although he is deeply moved by the music, Gombril suffers from the same temperamental disposition as Huxley himself and many of his male characters: a hypersensitivity to the rude incongruities between the ideal and the real. Watching the individual performers take their bows, Gombril notes the first violinist’s undisguised vanity, his weary “poached eyes” and disdainful smile. A second player is beady-eyed, potbelly, and bald; the next one, “monolithic and grim.” The others sweat and posture, or twitch nervously. How strange and ironic, Gombril reflects, that from these “ridiculous,” worldly, flawed creatures can emerge such divine, transfiguring sounds. Looking at them, who would believe it?

Those with unflinching Huxleyan minds might also sometimes consider their own less-than-perfect selves and souls and those of their lovers, which nevertheless sometimes transcend these imperfections—as the chamber musicians did—and create together in the act of physical love some-
thing divine and transfiguring. How miraculous that our mortal bodies in these inelegant actions should become the instruments for a composition of sensations that, at their best, awaken us to—or immerse us in—a reality transformed beyond anything imaginable in ordinary life.

For most of us, love and art are our closest encounters with perfection, experiences that may be likened to ideas of heaven and bliss. “How pure the passion,” thinks Gombril as he listens to the Mozart slow movement, “how unaffected, clear and without clot or pretension. . . . Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Pure and unsullied; pure and unmixed, unadulterated” (p. 206).

Both love and art have the power to grasp us utterly and transport us from ordinary sweating, flailing, imperfect “reality” to an indescribable realm where we know and seem known by the sensibility of another, united in a continuing present, our usual isolation momentarily effaced. And in such states, we recognize that this is the reality, and ordinary reality is only an illusion.

Such experiences are “emotional,” yet suffused with a kind of bodily knowing that can be described, if at all, only inadequately by analogy with other mingled modes of being—movement, sensation, transformations. Here, for example, is Gombril’s (Huxley’s) partial description of the Mozart quintet’s slow movement:

The instruments come together and part again. Long silver threads hang aerially over a murmur of waters; in the midst of muffled sobbing a cry. The fountains blow their architecture of slender pillars and from basin to basin the waves fall; from basin to basin, and every fall makes somehow possible a higher leaping of the jet, and at the last fall the mounting column springs up into the sunlight and from water the music has modulated up into a rainbow. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; they shall make God visible too, to other eyes. (p. 206)
And here are his words for the introduction to the final movement:

Blood beats in the ears. Beat, beat, beat. A slow drum in the darkness, beating in the ears of one who lies wakeful with fever, with the sickness of too much misery. It beats unceasingly, in the ears, in the mind itself. Body and mind are indivisible and in the spirit blood painfully throbs. Sad thoughts droop through the mind. A small pure light comes swaying down through the darkness, comes to rest, resigning itself to the obscurity of its misfortune. There is resignation, but blood still beats in the ears. Blood still painfully beats, though the mind has acquiesced. And then, suddenly, the mind exerts itself, throws off the fever of too much suffering and laughing, commands the body to dance. The introduction . . . comes to its suspended, throbbing close. (pp. 206–7)

Comings together and partings, murmurs, a cry in the midst of sobbing, silver threads (“architecture”) of water rising and falling, leaping and springing, sunlight and water somehow becoming rainbow. Or amid the slow beating of blood, a pure light sways in the darkness. In love and art our responses partake of many modes simultaneously, as well as successive tides of rhythms. The most “spiritual” art is felt viscerally; the most bodily love is idealized. Subterranean and empyrean are conjoined.

In art and love, senses and modes of feeling intertwine. The sounds of music are felt as if they were touch: warm, cool, sharp, flat, soft, heavy, light, piercing, brittle. Or they are colored—velvety green, sky blue, silver. They seem to rise, dissolve, shift, and change like things we see, or they unroll like strands and skeins and filaments. Like a shaft of light they illuminate; like a sudden fin they emerge from an undifferentiated sea.

Touches and movements of bodily love suggest space—depth and height, expansion and contraction, rising and falling, swirling, sinking. Love also has its rhythms, not
only material but temporal momentum, weight, and fullness. In the temporal experience of art, as of love, we seem to travel through rooms or landscapes of ever changing shape in a charged, expanding present. In both we are immersed in longing, which wakens, anticipates, then swallows the space between significances where nothing is. Love and art sound intimacies, find harmony in deepest immediacy. And in talking or writing about both love and art, we—I speak for myself—recognize the inadequacies, and the edge of embarrassment, in our powers of description.

Perhaps only an obtuse killjoy would then want to ask where such powerful feelings come from, and why. Cast up on the further shores of the revelations of art or love, I find myself as bemused as Gombril: astonished that our mortal frame should know something of this nature and that another mortal (artist or beloved) should have conceived and shared—made possible—this journey, the felt conjoinment, the sense of equipoise that it could happen no other way. The expanded sense of being. But whence—and why?

I am of course aware that not all experiences of art, or of love for that matter, are as momentous or transfiguring as those just described. The "art" and "intimacy" (love) of my title acquire force and value from their rare and sublime embodiments, but they are meant also to apply to lesser incarnations. In the pages that follow, I explore the bodily origins and interconnections of the felt rhythms and modes of love and art, tracing them to what may appear to be inconsequential or even unlikely psychobiological beginnings in the earliest months of individual infancy and in the pre-Paleolithic infancy of the human species. I show that human newborns come into the world with sensitivities and capacities that predispose them to join in emotional communion with others. I then argue that these same sensitivities and capacities, which arose as instruments of survival in our remote hominid past, are later used and elaborated in the rhythms and modes of adult love and art.1

I choose the words "rhythm" and "mode" as general terms for the admittedly indescribable—literally unverbaliz-
able—sense of intermingled movement and sensory overlapping that characterizes infant experiences, as it also characterizes subsequent experiences of love and art. (After all, the word “infant” means, literally, “unable to speak,” and as my efforts to describe them reveal, experiences of love and art are also intrinsically nonverbal.) Yet several senses of these words connote fairly well what I wish to convey of the ineffable tides or undertows of such experiences.

“Rhythm” derives originally from the Greek word rhein, “to flow.” Among its dictionary meanings that I adopt for my purposes here are “an ordered, recurrent alternation of strong and weak elements in the flow of sound and silence in speech [or music]”; a “movement or fluctuation marked by the regular recurrence or natural flow of related elements”; “a regularly recurrent quantitative change in a variable biological process”; and “the effect created by the elements in [a structured event] that relate to the temporal development of the action.” That is, I mean to suggest movement in time and the sense of forward flow of sound and nonsound, both “natural” (or biological) and humanly organized in performances of love or art.

“Mode” comes from the Latin word for “measure” and thus also suggests rhythm and an arrangement of something. My meaning here, however, includes other connotations that have to do with manner, or mode-of-being—that is, a particular form (modality) or variety of sensation and expression—and with style, manifestation, and emotional state and their intermodal or crossmodal associations and expressions. “Mode” is also associated with mood and with sensation.

Rhythm has to do with an unfolding in time, the patterned course of an experience; modes are qualities of that experience—its sense of swiftness, solidity, opening, closing, speed, forcefulness, fullness, barrenness, lightness, and so forth, on a dynamic scale of moreness and lessness. One might say that rhythms are something like verbs, whereas modes are like adjectives, except the two usually interpenetrate, coalesce with other senses (sight, sound, touch, smell, taste, balance), and change from moment to mo-
ment. The words “rhythm” and “mode” are meant to be polyvalent, then, suggestive of states of being and states of feeling.

Instilled as part of our biological nature, the rhythms and modes of infancy demonstrate and develop the psychological capacities that predispose humans to mutuality—the sharing of emotional states in patterned sequences with others. In the close early interactions between infants and their caretakers are the prototypes for what will become our later experiences of love, allegiance, art, and other forms of self-transcendence.

In the first chapter I describe how rhythms and modes became, during human evolution, a means of coordinating and expressing emotional states of mutuality between mothers and infants, eventually becoming the basis for “en-culturation” and participation in everyday life—that is, belonging to a social group (chapter 2), finding a sense of life meaning (chapter 3), developing competence for life (chapter 4), and eventually engaging in the elaborating of experience that we now call the arts (chapter 5).

In other words, preverbal rhythms and modes of infancy do not only underlie our ability to engage intimately with others. Additionally, in the early history of our species, expressed as rudiments of the arts (for example, moving together in synchrony, matching vocalizations and gestures, handling or manipulating the physical world), they facilitated the acquisition of the human cultural way of life. The complex societies of today are very different from societies living in ancestral environments (or even recent traditional societies), and acquisition of life knowledge and competence often is gained by means of intellectual abilities more than with rhythmic-modal sensitivities. Implications of this shift in how humans acquire culture are addressed in chapter 6.

an unorthodox view of human nature

Because this is a book about love and art, it is also about human nature: what we are “really like” under the veils of our genders, ethnicities, religions, ways of life—that is, the var-
ious wrappings of our cultures. To say that humans have a nature that underlies culture is to accept that humans are a species which, like other animals, has evolved. Such a position, that of evolutionary (or biosocial) psychology, recognizes that humans have evolved to require culture—they cannot exist in a cultureless or culture-free state—and that they are born with common, cross-culturally recognizable predispositions ("needs") to acquire culture.

My thesis begins with the assumption that it is in the in-born capacity and need for (1) mutuality between mother and infant (the prototype for intimacy or love) that four other essential human capacities and psychological imperatives are enfolded or embedded and gradually, in their time, emerge. Mother-infant mutuality contains and influences the capacities for (2) belonging to (and acceptance by) a social group, (3) finding and making meaning, (4) acquiring a sense of competence through handling and making, and (5) elaborating these meanings and competencies as a way of expressing or acknowledging their vital importance.

It is my overall contention that in our species’ development of culture, as in our own individual development from birth to maturity, the rhythms and modes of love and art have been critical, inasmuch as they have affected these five psychosocial needs or propensities. My view of human nature emphasizes evolved mechanisms (called here “rhythms and modes”) for mutuality and sociality, a position that departs considerably from that of either the general public or the scientific establishment (whose views on this subject tend to be surprisingly similar).

In common parlance the phrase “human nature” is usually invoked with a rueful shake of the head to comment on some lapse that involves one or more of the seven deadly sins: gluttony, lust, sloth, pride, anger, envy, and greed. “It’s only human nature” to be selfish or lazy, to lie, cheat, or steal if you can get away with it.

Similarly, human evolutionary studies have tended to think of human nature as being composed not of psychological or emotional needs that arise from a primary capacity for mutuality but rather of competitive behavioral strategies that serve an underlying selfishness. Evolution-
ary psychologists emphasize the pervasiveness in all ani-
mals, including humans, of these inherent strategies or tac-
tics to acquire or invest in various limited but desirable
resources such as high-quality mates and other material or
social goods—high status, good reputation, abundant food
and possessions. “Success” is defined in such studies by
better and longer survivorship and better and more numer-
ous descendants, achieved as a consequence of individual
differences of ability in competitive strategies and tactics.

In this view, love and art, like altruism and cooperation,
are themselves strategies or tactics that some individuals
can employ competitively, in the right circumstances, more
successfully than others. For example, mothers and off-
spring are shown to have conflicting interests (Trivers
1974), as at weaning, and to use deception—such as infant
fussing or maternal feigned indifference—to get their way.
Babies may try to obtain as much care and attention as pos-
sible, more than their mothers are able to give, and moth-
ers themselves are motivated, whether they consciously
know it or not, to maximize their reproductive success by
raising the greatest number of healthy children, not just
their present infant, to maturity (Daly and Wilson 1995).6
Although this is an established way to view the matter, it
contributes to a misleadingly one-sided view of humans. If
we regard altruism as only a strategy for competition, we
will be blind to instances when it is not performed for com-
petitive reasons or is not deceptive. An assumption of
simple conflicts of interest is not the only way to interpret
infant and parental behaviors.

Indeed, a number of recent psychological studies of
early interactions between mothers and infants, to be de-
scribed in chapter 1, modify this sweeping assumption of
pervasive selfishness. Evolutionary science has yet to rec-
cognize and take account of their implications. The studies
establish unequivocally the extent to which mutuality be-
tween mother and infant, and its influence upon other con-
sequent or related psychological needs, developed over
hundreds of thousands of years of human evolution as a cru-
cial motivating force that enabled our ancestors to survive
in the earliest human “life-style”—that of small bands of foragers and hunters on the African savannah.

The foraging-hunting way of life of our hominid ancestors required not only resourceful, competitive individuals but also strongly bonded social groups that could work together with confidence and loyalty, convinced of the efficacy of their joint actions. The usual view of humans as selfish, cooperating only so they could advance their own interests, cannot account for the resilience and responsivity of the skeins of mutuality.

It takes a saint or a Pollyanna to claim that humans are not selfish or lazy or that they do not lie, cheat, and steal. They manifestly do, more than most of us are comfortable admitting. Like other animals, humans can be shown to possess a strong (and undeniable) underlying self-interest and impetus for self-preservation. Yet despite the ignoble record of individual and collective human nastiness, what are we to make of the fact that the earliest ability of human infants—who cannot yet use objects, hold themselves upright, or even look about them with a balanced head—is to engage in emotional communion with others? Each of us is born with a mind—senses and emotions—that moves us to seek and engage in intimacy with others before we do anything else.

By going more deeply into the matter, we can look at the truism “it’s only human nature” another way—in terms not of original sin(s) as much as original sensitivities. If mutuality and its associated needs were not evolved characteristics of human nature, they would not matter: we could omit them. Like lizards, we could get along fine without intimate ongoing relationships with others, without feeling accepted by our social group, without a sense of meaning or competence in our lives, or without demonstrating our serious regard and care for what is important to us.

The fact is, however, that people manifestly have such needs, and—if their satisfaction is not forthcoming—feel humanly incomplete and impelled to seek mutuality, belonging, meaning, competence, and elaboration as best they can, frequently in aberrant ways and with maladaptive results to themselves and to their fellows. Using the scheme
that I outline in these pages, I believe one can demonstrate that much human “sinfulness” and selfishness arise from the thwarting or distorting of these primary needs—which in ancestral environments were commonly met in the natural course of life—and from their consequent diversion to substitute sources of satisfaction in societies that neglect to address, acknowledge, and satisfy them.

Culture and human nature

Nearly thirty years ago I spent a year in Sri Lanka, a small island nation in South Asia, then called Ceylon. Eventually I returned there and married a Sri Lankan, and I have lived there on and off for a total of some fifteen years. It sounds trite to say that the experience has changed my life—marriage in general does change lives. But certainly I have never again been able to look at Western ways and the things I once took for granted in quite the same way. In fact, I am always aware now that there is a different way of thinking about or doing almost anything.

Such a realization underlies the currently fashionable claims of “cultural relativism,” the position that each culture is a unique entity that has its own internal consistency and integrity, even though someone from another culture may find it strange and inscrutable. From this perspective, any view of a culture (including one’s own) is at best an incomplete interpretation, but almost certainly individual cultural biases will interfere with understanding the behavior and values of someone from another culture.

Without even leaving home, I think we all eventually discover something of this incommensurability of cultures when we become close to someone from another kind of family than our own—not to mention another religious background, race, or geographical area. Even the sexes, male and female, have different “cultures,” so that one’s view of what is right or natural will often conflict with what his or her mate considers to be right and natural.

Yet my intimate life with Sri Lankans, despite differences between us, made me the opposite of a fanatical cul-
tural relativist: I have in fact become more impressed with the deeper human similarities that underlie cultural differences. I have become, that is, a firm advocate of a common human nature.

Living in other cultures has made me aware not only of how much we humans do not understand about each other but also of how much we nevertheless are able to understand. I have become more aware of the nonverbal aspects of our associations with others, the things that go unsaid because we do not know the words for them (or because there are no words for many things). And yet communication takes place—to a large degree by means of the “rhythms and modes” I will describe. (Mismatches of rhythms and modes may be responsible for miscommunications as well.)

Living in another culture has also made me passionately curious about human nature, that is, about how humans are alike and how and why we got that way. Recognizing a fundamental sameness under the skin—humanness—has sent me to learn about a wide diversity of subjects: about our archaeological or ancestral past; about other societies, especially premodern or traditional societies that are closer to the ancestral societies in which human nature evolved; about children, especially infants, who come into the world “uncultured” and thus have common infant behaviors; about other animals. All these subject areas give insights into where humans came from and what we share. Underlying capacities for engaging in love (or mutuality, a term I prefer because it is more descriptive and less emotionally charged) and for engaging with the arts (which I will trace to the more rudimentary impetus to elaborate) are among the many traits we share.

I use the words “love” and “art” in my chapter title because they are more accessible and recognizable than “mutuality” and “elaborating.” These longer words will, however, stand for the underlying and related universal motivational schemes of what we in modern societies often mean by “love” and “art.” In contemporary America (and other industrial and postindustrial societies based on market values
and generally characterized by terms such as secular, pluralistic, consumerist, specialized, individualistic, and informational), the concepts of love and art show only blurred outlines and traces of their originals—like a photocopy of an oft-photocopied photocopy. Yet I maintain that the need for and propensity to attain mutuality and to elaborate artfully—whether we use the words “love” and “art” or something else—are innate.

Many people are surprised to learn that “innate” does not mean “inevitable.” Most innate aptitudes in humans require fostering—a child who never hears language will not learn to speak; someone who lives in a desert will not learn to swim; women who have never been around babies will not instinctively know how to care for them. Yet speaking, swimming, and mothering are all evolved (“innate”) propensities—things we will normally learn to do. Mutuality with others and elaborating the things that are important to us are similarly innate propensities, among many others.

Any culture (or subculture) places its individual stamp on our innate propensities, emphasizing some, devaluing others. So we have, for example, more or less peaceable and more or less aggressive societies that bring out these characteristics in their members (who, as individuals, also vary in their temperamental, behavioral, mental, and physical features and abilities). A few individuals may deliberately choose lives of celibacy, silence, or isolation from society. To accept that humans have a “nature” does not imply uniformity and determinism.

Because an understanding of human nature is assisted by knowing about as many different cultures as possible, I refer in the following chapters to a number of societies outside of Europe and North America, particularly some that have (or recently had) more traditional ways of life. At the end of each chapter, I devote a section to reflecting upon some of the ways in which modern societies have diverged from what seems to have been the ancestral hunter-gatherer prototype, and what these divergences imply.

I suggest that at least some contemporary personal and social problems can be understood as arising from re-
responses to powerful evolved needs and impulses that in a Paleolithic hunter-gatherer society would have been normal and adaptive but that in complex, pluralistic modern societies are not. Ancestral ways of life “selected for” (or promoted) some traits that can be maladaptive today—for example, unthinking allegiance to authority, conformity, mistrust of those considered to be outsiders. Other predispositions—making things with our hands, using our bodies for work—have atrophied through disuse and disinclination. Yet these traits, in the small homogeneous subsistence societies in which humans lived for 99.9 percent of their evolutionary history, gave a kind of security and aptitude for life that contemporary people frequently lack.

I find it ironic that instead of suffering from unavoidable disease, predation, accident, and malnutrition (in a nevertheless caring, helping, interdependent hunter-gatherer society), our modern children—most of whom have inoculations and antibiotics, safe homes, and more food
than they can eat—may nonetheless suffer from parental neglect or abuse, a sense of meaninglessness, social vulgar-
ity and violence, and general indifference from the institu-
tions that control and direct their lives. The simple fact that
suicide is the third highest cause of death in American teen-
age youth (and that the teen suicide rate is 95 percent
higher today than it was in 1970) is evidence to me that
something is awry in the way we live. Adolescents in
hunter-gatherer societies may undergo painful initiation or-
deals and serious or fatal accidents, but they rarely, if ever,
killed themselves.

In the chapters that follow, I show that mutuality and
elaboration (love and art), and the mechanisms (rhythms
and modes) that express and sustain them are valid, age-
old, if today neglected, ways to instill a sense of belonging,
meaning, and competence in people in modern societies
who require more from their lives than diversion.

how mutuality may have originated

Like other momentous adaptive forces, mutuality probably
emerged from an unlikely antecedent—in this case, the col-
lision course between two incompatible anatomical trends.
It is well known from human evolutionary history that our ho-
mind ancestors, unlike our ape cousins, walked upright on
two legs. Bipedality required a number of corresponding
anatomical changes, including alterations in the bones, mus-
cles, and other tissues of feet, legs, and hips to enable bet-
ter walking and running.

Upright walking permitted other useful adaptations: for
example, it freed the hands for carrying and gesturing, and
it undoubtedly contributed to changes in habitat and way of
life that promoted larger brains—the second trend. Over
four million years, hominid brains more than doubled in size,
from around 450 cubic centimeters to 1,100 (Mithen 1996,
12).

Obviously there was a conflict at the time of childbirth
between a large-brained infant and the narrow pelvis shape
necessary to support an upright walker, requiring several other adaptations that would ease the risk to both mother and infant. Over time, the female pelvis changed in shape and flexibility, even becoming able to open slightly at the time of birth. For their part, babies developed a large fontanelle (or opening along the suture lines of the skull) that allowed the head bones to be temporarily compressed during the process of birth; their brain growth patterns also altered.

Yet even these adjustments were apparently not enough, for we find that over the millennia infants were born in an increasingly immature state (Morgan 1995), so that at birth their bodies would more safely and comfortably pass through the birth canal. There was obviously intense selective pressure for infant “prematurity.” A truly “full-term” human pregnancy, if human infants were as mature at birth as infant apes are, would last for twenty-one months (Leakey 1994, 44) and result in a twenty-five-pound baby (Morgan 1995, citing Portmann, p. 59, and Gould, p. 60). Although human females are in the same size range as female great apes and have similar gestation lengths, their ba-
bries are much more immature at birth, although twice as large. A human infant’s brain continues to grow and mature outside the womb: between birth and age four, its size triples (Mithen 1996, 192).

The adaptive anatomical and physiological changes that made these earlier births possible would have been accompanied by behavioral adaptations too. Because human infants were helpless for a far longer time after birth than infants of any other species, they required prolonged attention and care. Mothers and infants who found ways to develop and sustain intense affective bonds would have been at an advantage over mothers and infants who did not.

As primates, human ancestors were already well equipped for mutual affection. Monkeys and apes are renowned for their general sociability and for having long-lasting social bonds. But it is evident that ancestral human mothers and their physically helpless young gradually developed capabilities for social interaction that went beyond those of primate mother-infant communication and affiliation.9

Indeed, human mothers and infants today, in the face-to-face play that is so familiar and ordinary that we sometimes dismissively refer to it as “baby talk,” are unconsciously doing something quite specialized. Using rhythmic head and body movements, gestures, and facial expressions, as well as vocal sounds, they mutually create and maintain communicative (“protoconversational”) sequences that careful analyses have shown to be exquisitely patterned over time. Some of these sequences show alternation or turn-taking, whereas others display simultaneity or synchronicity. These exchanges not only communicate emotional information but also allow for emotional state-sharing, or attunement. For both mother and baby (who are unaware of the complex intricacies of their duet), they are pleasurable—joyous, captivating, and fun.

I suggest that these interactions were developed during human evolution because they fostered and sustained emotional bonds (“love”) between a mother and her physically helpless infant—bonds that would motivate the mother to
devote the necessary care and attention to enable the infant’s survival. While “instinctive” mother love seems to suffice for most mammals, it may not be enough in higher primates. Captive chimpanzee and gorilla mothers in zoos frequently have difficulty raising infants unless they have observed others of their kind caring for babies. Mothering in humans is innately predisposed, to be sure, but like mothering in chimps and gorillas, it requires social facilitation.

Because of the requisite extremely long period of infant helplessness in humans, it seems that in addition to a mother’s learning the specifics of infant care by watching other mothers and handling others’ babies, it would have been an excellent fail-safe device for a baby to be perceived as being distinctly lovable. The communicative sounds, gestures, and facial expressions of primates express such fundamental motivations as affiliation, appeasement, hostility, and fear, along with ambivalence. The specifically human adaptation came when human mothers and infants, using the affiliative facial expressions, gestures, and sounds already operant in other primates, began to elaborate them in dynamic, patterned (that is, rhythmic and modal) sequences that would sustain each partner’s own positive feelings while they were communicated to the other.

This relationship, or emotional communion—not simply “affiliation” or “sociability”—has become so crucial to the human project that infants are born with specialized brain pathways for seeking out and responding to just these emphasized and elaborated rhythmic and modal signals from other humans (Aitken and Trevarthen 1997; Schore 1994; Trevarthen, Kokkinaki, and Fiamenghi 1999). The most precociously mature functions of a young child’s brain are those that communicate needs, feelings, and motives to other persons and lead these others to present the world to the child in precisely regulated ways (Trevarthen 1987, 108).

Somewhat older babies and toddlers spontaneously display untaught traits of sharing, sympathy, conciliation, and social participation. Yet although children also unmistakably show untaught traits of selfishness, aggression, anger, or deceit, humans do not lose their capacities for emotional at-
tunement with others. These remain as covert rhythmic and modal signals in the subtleties of facial expressions and what is called “body language,” and in the prosody of spoken language (the expressive tonal and dynamic features of speech). They comprise much of what is called “chemistry” or “vibes” in our engagements with others—the nonverbal signs of attunement. They are of course also manifested and elaborated in lovemaking with a sympathetic partner, distinguishing it unmistakably from selfish or deceitful simulations.

Where we also find and feel these primary indications of sympathetic and emotional expression—further enhanced with dynamic variety and highly affecting shape—is in experiences of the arts. Dance, music, poetic language, and other kinds of performance share many suggestive features with mother-infant engagement. Even the static visual arts partake of these primary elements because of their overlapping analogical associations with kinetic and other sensory experiences. These features and analogies are explored in the pages that follow.

That humans have an inborn capacity for engaging in and responding to the arts may seem even more astonishing to a contemporary reader than having a native capacity for mutuality. Evolutionary scientists, like many other members of society, often seem uncomfortable with the arts, just as they seem to be uncomfortable with emotion and what cannot be verbalized.10

Yet what is meaningful in life is not necessarily what is, or even can be, encoded in words. It is time for nonverbal, emotional experience to be incorporated into our contemporary view of human nature along with mutuality and its personal and cultural concomitants. These are more difficult to discern and discuss than observable or verbally describable experiences and individual self-interested behavior, but they have been no less intrinsic and essential to human evolution. In chapter 6, I make the case that the arts remain the birthright of modern individuals and that even in societies that no longer take the arts seriously, they still provide av-
venues for belonging, meaning, competence, and an enlargement of the sense of being.