

disposal, we might be expected to return to our ancient primate feeding patterns. In essence, this is the vegetarian (or, as one cult calls itself, fruitarian) creed, but it has had remarkably little success. The urge to eat meat appears to have become too deep-seated. Given the opportunity to devour flesh, we are loth to relinquish the pattern. In this connection, it is significant that vegetarians seldom explain their chosen diet simply by stating that they prefer it to any other. On the contrary, they construct an elaborate justification for it, involving all kinds of medical inaccuracies and philosophical inconsistencies.

Those individuals who are vegetarian by choice ensure a balanced diet by utilising a wide variety of plant substances, like the typical primates. But for some communities a predominantly meatless diet has become a grim practical necessity rather than an ethical minority-preference. With advancing crop-cultivation techniques and the concentration on a very few staple cereals, a kind of low-grade efficiency has proliferated in certain cultures. The large-scale agricultural operations have permitted the growth of big populations, but their dependency on a few basic cereals has led to serious malnutrition. Such people may breed in large numbers, but they produce poor physical specimens. They survive, but only just. In the same way that abuse of culturally developed weapons can lead to aggressive disaster, abuse of culturally developed feeding techniques can lead to nutritional disaster. Societies that have lost the essential food balance in this way may be able to survive, but they will have to overcome the widespread illeffects of deficiencies in proteins, minerals and vitamins if they are to progress and develop qualitatively. In all the healthiest and most go-ahead societies today, the meat-and-plant diet balance is well maintained and, despite the dramatic changes that have occurred in the methods of obtaining the nutritional supplies, the progressive naked ape of today is still feeding on much the same basic diet as his ancient hunting ancestors. Once again, the transformation is more apparent than real.