

and grooming actions have been borrowed and elaborated for other uses. In acquiring a display function, the original comfort actions concerned with skin care have been transformed into what amounts to skin mutilation.

This trend can also be observed in certain captive animals in a zoo. They groom and lick with abnormal intensity until they have plucked bare patches or inflicted small wounds, either on their own bodies or those of companions. Excessive grooming of this kind is caused by conditions of stress or boredom. Similar conditions may well have provoked members of our own species to mutilate their body surfaces, with the already exposed and hairless skin aiding and abetting the process. In our case, however, our inherent opportunism enabled us to exploit this otherwise dangerous and damaging tendency and press it into service as a decorative display device.

Another and more important trend has also developed out of simple skin care, and that is medical care. Other species have made little progress in this direction, but for the naked ape the growth of medical practice out of social grooming behaviour has had an enormous influence on the successful development of the species, especially in more recent times. In our closest relatives, the chimpanzees, we can already witness the beginning of this trend. In addition to the general skin care of mutual grooming, one chimpanzee has been seen to attend to the minor physical disabilities of another. Small sores or wounds are carefully examined and licked clean. Splinters are carefully removed by pinching the companion's skin between two forefingers. In one instance a female chimpanzee with a small cinder in her left eye was seen to approach a male, whimpering and obviously in distress. The male sat down and examined her intently and then proceeded to remove the cinder with great care and precision, gently using the tips of one finger from each hand. This is more than simple grooming. It is the first sign of true co-operative medical care. But for chimpanzees, the incident described is already the peak of expression. For our own species, with greatly increased intelligence and