

are no more than about thirty recorded instances of families producing offspring that grow up to be fully furred adults.

Even so, all adult members of our species do have a large number of body hairs-more, in fact, than our relatives the chimpanzees. It is not so much that we

have lost whole hairs as that we have sprouted only ``puny ones. (This does not, incidentally, apply to all races-negroes have undergone a real as well as an apparent hair loss.) This fact has led certain anatomists to declare that we cannot consider ourselves as a hairless or naked species, and one famous authority went so far as to say that the statement that we are `the least hairy of all the primates is, therefore, very far from being true; and the numerous quaint theories that have been put forward to account for the imagined loss of hairs are, mercifully, not needed.' This is clearly nonsensical. It is like saying that because a blind man has a pair of eyes he is not blind. Functionally, we are stark naked and our skin is fully exposed to the outside world. This state of affairs still has to be explained, regardless of how many tiny hairs we can count under a magnifying lens.

The neoteny explanation only gives a clue as to how the nakedness could have come about. It does not tell us anything about the value of nudity as a new character that helped the naked ape to survive better in his hostile environment. It might be argued that it had no value, that it was merely a by-product of other, more vital neotenuous changes, such as the brain development. But as we have already seen, the process of neoteny is one of differential retarding of developmental processes. Some things slow down more than others-the rates of growth get out of phase. It is hardly likely, therefore, that an infantile trait as potentially dangerous as nakedness was going to be allowed to persist simply because other changes were slowing down. Unless it had some special value to the new species, it would be quickly dealt with by natural selection.

What, then, was the survival value of naked skin? One explanation is that when the hunting ape abandoned its nomadic past and settled down at fixed 38