

in this context. This substance appears to have developed exclusively as a displacement feeding device. It provides the necessary tension-relieving occupational' element, without contributing damagingly to the overall food intake.

Turning now to the variety of foodstuffs eaten by a present-day group of naked apes, we find that the range is extensive. By and large, primates tend to have a wider range of food objects in their diets than carnivores. The latter have become food specialists, whereas the former are opportunists. Careful field studies of a wild population of Japanese macaque monkeys, for example, have revealed that they consume as many as 110 species of plants, in the shape of buds, shoots, leaves, fruits, roots and barks, not to mention a wide variety of spiders, beetles, butterflies, ants and eggs. A typical carnivore's diet is more nutritious, but also much more monotonous.

When we became killers, we had the best of both worlds. We added meat with a high nutritive value to our diet, but we did not abandon our old primate omnivory. During recent times—that is, during the last few thousand years—food-obtaining techniques have improved considerably, but the basic position remains the same. As far as we can tell, the earliest agricultural systems were of a kind that can loosely be described as 'mixed farming'. The domestication of animals and plants advanced side by side. Even today, with our now immensely powerful dominance over our zoological and botanical environments, we still keep both strings to our bow. What has stopped us from swinging further in one direction or the other? The answer seems to be that, with vastly increasing population densities, an all-out reliance on meat would give rise to difficulties in terms of quantity, whereas an exclusive dependence on crops would be dangerous in terms of quality.

It could be argued that, since our primate ancestors had to make do without a major meat component in their diets, we should be able to do the same. We were driven to become flesh-eaters only by environmental circumstances, and now that we have the environment under control, with elaborately cultivated crops at our