

we put it, it looks out of place. Eventually we are driven to position it right at one end of the row of skins, next to the hides of the tailless great apes such as the chimpanzee and the gorilla. Even here it is obtrusively different. The legs are too long, the arms are too short and the feet are rather strange. Clearly this species of primate has developed a special kind of locomotion which has modified its basic form. But there is another characteristic that cries out for attention: the skin is virtually naked. Except for conspicuous tufts of hair on the head, in the armpits and around the genitals, the skin surface is completely exposed. When compared with the other primate species, the contrast is dramatic. True, some species of monkeys and apes have small naked patches of skin on their rumps, their faces, or their chests, but nowhere amongst the other one hundred and ninety-two species is there anything even approaching the human condition. At this point and without further investigation, it is justifiable to name this new species the 'naked ape'. It is a simple, descriptive name based on a simple observation, and it makes no special assumptions. Perhaps it will help us to keep a sense of proportion and maintain our objectivity.

Staring at this strange specimen and puzzling over the significance of its unique features, the zoologist now has to start making comparisons. Where else is nudity at a premium? The other primates are no help, so it means looking farther afield. A rapid survey of the whole range of the living mammals soon proves that they are remarkably attached to their protective, furry covering, and that very few of the 4,000 species in existence have seen fit to abandon it. Unlike their reptilian ancestors, mammals have acquired the great physiological advantage of being able to maintain a constant, high body temperature. This keeps the delicate machinery of the body processes tuned in for top performance. It is not a property to be endangered or discarded lightly. The temperature-controlling devices are of vital importance and the possession of a thick, hairy, insulating coat obviously plays a major role in preventing heat loss. In intense sunlight it will also prevent over-heating and damage to the skin from 15