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THE MORE MAN GETS, THE MORE HE WANTS

And the avarice of mankind is insatiable . . . men always -want more and more without end; for it is the nature of desire not to be satisfied, and most men live only for the gratification of it.—Aristotle, Politics

IF MAN'S HAVING the power to reason were all that marked the difference between his nature and that of other animals, he would still be a naked filthy Yahoo searching the woods for grubs, beetles and roots for his food. A rotted log or smelly cave would still be his shelter. Fortunately, besides having reasoning power, man has unlimited desires for more, for something that looks, tastes, smells, sounds, or feels better than that which he already has.

Anthropologists tell us that since earliest times man's companion was the dog. But in spite of the countless centuries that have passed since man and his dog became buddies, the dog hasn't improved its lot. It is still satisfied to eat the few scraps of food man gives it from the dirty ground. Man, who had no more than the dog in the beginning wouldn't think of eating like a dog. He wants a table, covered with snow-white linen bordered in finest lace, embroidered in rich and colorful designs, on which to rest his artistically shaped dishes fashioned of gold, silver, or most delicate china. Because the dog lacked man's reasoning power and unlimited desires for clothing and specially designed shelter, it never learned to provide itself with either.

Some writers credit man's progress to his having been given

hands by his creator. They imply that if the dog had been created with hands, it, like man, might have improved its environment, made itself clothes and so on. But if that were true, monkeys would have progressed faster than man, for, besides having been equipped with twice as many fingers and thumbs as the human, some monkeys also have tails to serve as a fifth hand. Moreover, the beaver, bee, spider and ant build rather well without any hands at all. Yet even these builder-animals haven't improved their condition. Lacking the desire for better, prettier and more efficient things, they do their building today exactly as they did a million years ago.

All humans, by nature, have unlimited desires. Even the hermit desires to live simply and to have nothing to do with the rest of humanity. If we consider how hard he must work to provide himself with food, shelter and fuel and to keep trespassers from interfering with his solitude, we clearly see that his desire to do without is just as strong as the average person's desire to accumulate as much material wealth as possible.

And those of us who enjoy comfortable incomes might be suspected of having completely satisfied desires. We own our homes and automobiles; more than enough clothes and food; and enough money and securities put aside to take care of us for the rest of our lives. Still, our desires are far from completely satisfied. For, although we ate at nine o'clock, we shall desire food again at twelve. Although we are well dressed today, our present wardrobe won't satisfy us long, for we shall soon want another style, or color, or weight of fabric, or texture. The eccentric millionaires we read about, those who seem to wear the same clothes for twenty and thirty years, have very strong desires to get their hands on the few dollars that have by some accident evaded their grasp; and they'll also desire to have their perennial clothing occasionally cleaned, pressed and repaired.

Man continues to desire more and better right up to his last moments of life, and even then he will desire to be buried in that place rather than this, or to be cremated. Or perhaps he will desire a mausoleum rather than an elaborately sculptured head-

stone. Or our desires may be such that we direct in our will that a comfort station, open to all, be erected over our remains so that future generations shall think kindly and gratefully of us. Adam Smith, in 1776, observed:

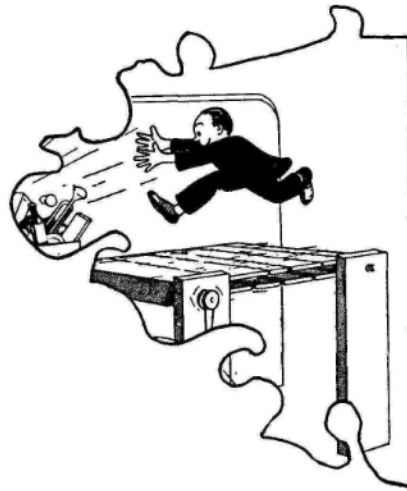
The rich man consumes no more food than his poor neighbor The desire of food is limited in every man by the narrow capacity of the human stomach; but the desire of the conveniences and ornaments of building, dress, equipage, and household furniture seems to have no limit or certain boundaries. . . . (*The Wealth of Nations, Chap. 11, Part II, Book 1.*)

Even if by some magic a meal fed to us at birth would nourish us throughout our lives, and if fashionable clothing grew as freely, naturally and profusely as weeds; and if we should require no medical or other service ever, we should still have unsatisfied desires. For, after material wants are satisfied, we should perhaps desire a deeper knowledge of music, art, or the reason behind the stars. Or we might desire to collect dead butterflies, postage stamps, or prehistoric garbage cans. Or we should probably desire to learn how, exactly, this earth came to be, why babies are born with two identical ears and why no two pairs of ears are ever alike. We might desire to know why an elephant never gives birth to a crocodile, while so many human babies grow up to be jackasses. Such desires, as Epicurus wrote, can never be completely satisfied:

The wealth demanded by nature is both limited and easily procured; that demanded by idle imaginings stretches on to infinity.

The inescapable fact that man's desires are indeed unlimited is of particular interest to the Poleco-ist, because if man had no more desires than the other animals, he would require no wealth; and if he required none he wouldn't bother to produce any; and if no wealth were produced, Poleco would have no purpose, since Poleco is the science that investigates the nature of Wealth, how it's made, and who is entitled to what part of it. It

is man's unlimited desires that is the actual beginning of all wealth. The world wouldn't know the blessings of wealth in the form of the pickle fork if some humans hadn't desired pickle forks. It is only because society has always desired faster, more terrible methods for murdering whole communities of humans at one time that it now enjoys man's most horrible weapons. If the desire for such things hadn't existed as part of man's nature, neither bombs nor pickle forks could possibly have existed.



"Man's desires for wealth are without limit."

We have made our first important discovery along the trail we chose in order to track down the terrible secret we intend to unearth. The small piece of a jigsaw puzzle is only a clue. We shall surely find additional pieces if we keep searching. And, after we've found them all, we might fit them together to build an airtight case against the villain we unmask.

Just as reason alone wasn't sufficient to lift man to first place in the animal league, desire by itself is also insufficient. Even unlimited desire combined with man's power to reason couldn't have lifted man above the beasts with which he formerly competed for his food. One other element in human nature would

be lacking, i.e., the fact that *man seeks to satisfy his desires with no more effort than he finds absolutely necessary.*

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MAN DOES THINGS THE EASY WAY

. . . every man desires to obtain additional wealth with as little sacrifice as possible.—N. W. Senior, Political Economy

ELEMENT number three in man's nature, *man seeks to satisfy his desires with no more effort than he finds absolutely necessary*, does not mean, as it would seem at first glance, that man is lazy. For the word *lazy*, as Webster defines it, means "disinclined to action or exertion; indolent; slothful." Man, under normal conditions, is not at all like that. On the contrary, man is willing to work twice as hard if, by doing so, he can satisfy three times as many of his desires. True, he'd rather be carried upstairs by a slave, an escalator, or an elevator; but he'll climb up if he can't satisfy his desire to go up in any easier way. He'd rather strike a match to satisfy his desire for fire; but he'll rub two sticks together for hours if he hasn't a match. He'd rather drop one atom bomb than a hundred made of TNT; but if he's out to kill he'll use a club if he has nothing more efficient.

If man weren't by nature an energy saver, he wouldn't have become the inventing genius he is today. For an invention is nothing more than the result of a reasoning man's desire to find an easier way to get the things he wants. The man who invents a better mousetrap is not more of an inventor than the swindler who works out a new scheme for robbing fools of their money, ^ne invents a contraption to catch mice; the other a method ^{Or} catching suckers. Like the swindler, or any other human

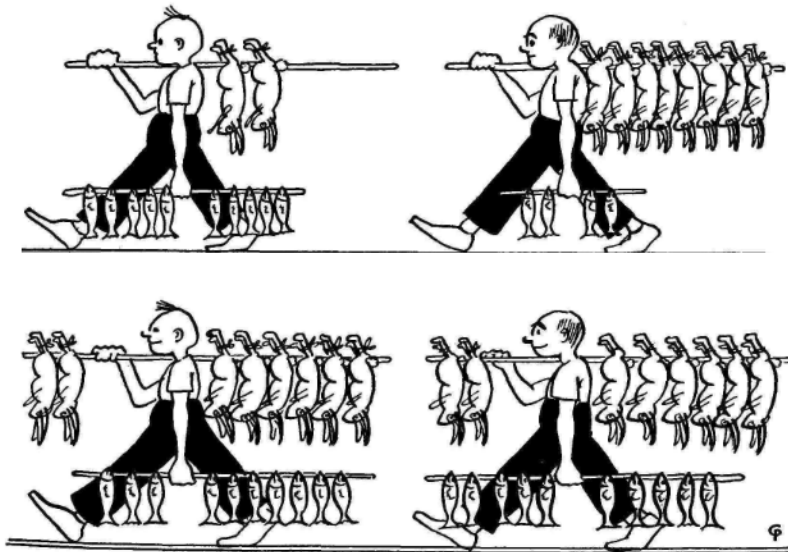
being, the inventor invents only to satisfy his own desires in the easiest way he knows. He's simply acting according to the nature of a normal human being.

Contrary to what most people believe, inventions are not generally developed in hopes of selling the patent for a fortune. Man couldn't stop inventing even if he wanted to, since it is his nature to try to find ways to do things with the least possible effort.



The second and far more significant result of man's energy-saving nature is *division of labor*, which he probably discovered shortly after he became a reasoning animal. *Division of labor* is built up around the fact that two men, working together, produce *more* than twice as much as one man working alone. When modern factories set up assembly lines on which hundreds of men work together to produce one automobile or tractor, we say that they are profiting through *division of labor*. But an even more important form of *division of labor* is exchange, i.e., one man producing more of one thing than he needs for his own use, and then exchanging his surplus for the goods produced by another man. Through the exchange of goods, they are also exchanging their labor, and both profit considerably.

This gain becomes more apparent if it is demonstrated in the very simplest form of production. Here is John, a wonderful fisherman but a very poor hunter. His neighbor Joe, on the other hand, is a marvelous hunter but lacks the patience of a good fisherman. By spending half his day fishing and half in hunting, John usually comes home with ten fish and two rabbits, while Joe's catch for the day is only four fish and eight rabbits. Now let us suppose they agree to specialize, that is, agree that



each shall spend his full day doing what he does best, and then share their total catch equally. The result: John, fishing a full day instead of a half, brings home twice as many fish: twenty. And Joe, of course, will bring home sixteen rabbits, twice his usual number, since he now hunts twice as many hours. When they divide their total product equally between them, both will find they have gained through specializing—devoting all of their time to what they do best. For John is better off by six rabbits; and Joe by six fish. The idea may be clarified by the following arithmetical demonstration:

	Rabbits	Fish
If both work half a day hunting, and half a day fishing		
John earns	2	10
Joe earns	8	4
If each works a full day at what he does best		
John earns	0	20
Joe earns	16	0
If they divide their combined catch		
John earns	8	10
(that is, the same number of fish and rabbits he earned working alone, plus six rabbits)		
Joe earns	8	10
(that is, the same number of fish and rabbits he earned working alone, plus six fish)		
Counting a fish and a rabbit as being of equal value, both men increased their earnings by 50% through <i>division of labor</i> by exchange.		

The same idea of profiting through specialization is today carried beyond *division of labor* between next-door neighbors. Joe the rabbit hunter lives thousands of miles from the nearest pineapple plantation. And yet, by catching rabbits and offering them in exchange, he can enjoy Philippine Islands pineapples grown and picked by Jose; or Chinese tea grown by Joe Sung; or fine leather luggage made by Joseph, Ltd., in England. The people of each country, making what is easiest for them to produce in the soil and climate of their own area, are able through exchange not only to benefit in higher earnings but to earn goods of a kind they'd find impossible to produce for themselves.

In our highly developed civilization, almost no one works alone to feed, clothe, and shelter himself. Farmers raise food, cooks prepare it, canners preserve it, grocers bring it conveniently close to the consumer. Sheep raisers shear the wool, spinners form it into yarn, weavers form it into cloth, tailors fashion it into garments, and retailers deliver the finished product to the consumer. Lumbermen fell trees, lumber mills shape them into

boards, builders join the boards, and so on, until the house we choose to live in is ready for our use. No one person, no matter how strong, fast, or capable he might be, could possibly produce food, clothing, and shelter for himself in the amount to which he as a modern man has become accustomed.

Without *division of labor* no human could produce an airplane from beginning to end within his own lifetime. To do so, a man would have to dig out the metals, refine them and shape them; he'd have to grow rubber trees and tap them for rubber, which he would then have to process into tires, tubing, insulation, and seat cushions. And he'd not only have to make the panel boards with their dozens of delicate instruments, but extract and process the raw materials from which they are made. A little thought makes it quite obvious that no man lives long enough to complete such a job; that without *division of labor* society would still be back in the primitive stage; that there could be no *division of labor* if man's nature didn't compel him to try to satisfy his desires in the easiest possible way.

Because every normal human wants to get as much as he can in the easiest way he knows, every job *naturally* divides itself among many men, each a specialist doing the kind of work he does best. He isn't directed or commanded to do a particular kind of work at a certain speed, as the Marxists insist man must be, if he is to be efficient. He specializes voluntarily, because it means more wealth with less effort for him.

To get a really clear picture of how far man has carried the idea of *division of labor*, we might thumb through the pages of a big-city classified telephone directory. In one published most recently, we find that in New York City alone more than three thousand different kinds of businesses and services are operating, all combining their skills and knowledge to provide New Yorkers with food, clothing, shelter, or other satisfactions. Listed are many businesses most of us seldom, if ever, think of; and yet all serve us directly or indirectly. For example, there are firms that make or sell compressed air, ambulances, ballast blocks for stevedores, ballet slippers, columns to support or decorate

buildings, pennants for freshmen or for carnival crowds, glass eyes, cut-out alphabets, letter boxes, life rafts, scows, barges, pipes for smoking and pipes for carrying water or oil, zinc sheets, and zippers. Other firms rent out crutches, wheel chairs, male or female escorts, dancing partners, secretarial services. Other companies teach ice skating, translate advertising and radio programs into foreign languages, chase rats, roaches, and other vermin from buildings, remove albumen from eggs and dry it.

The people engaged in these different businesses had no idea, as children, that they would as adults make their livings as they do. The boy who hoped to become a tight-rope walker found he could satisfy more desires more easily by becoming a bubble-pipe manufacturer. The boy who wanted to be a great doctor became instead a doughnut maker, which enabled him to satisfy more of his desires with less effort. For the same reason, the son of a baker becomes a great doctor.

In spite of our boyhood plans, circumstances guide us into the particular type of work to which we are best suited—only because our nature urges us to do whatever offers us the greatest satisfactions in money or enjoyment in return for the least amount of labor. That same side of our nature explains why, when the demand for television mechanics suddenly arose, a sufficient number of television mechanics became available almost overnight. If tunnel diggers or sword swallows should be needed, seemingly from nowhere a sufficient number of tunnel diggers and sword swallows apply for the jobs. The only time things don't work out that smoothly is when governments or labor unions restrict the wages, hours, or employment of the worker, or compel him to do work he doesn't like. Humans of their own accord do their part of the job to be done efficiently, not because the law compels them to do so, not because they want to help their fellow man or society, but because they are human, and as humans can't help choosing the work that offers them the greatest reward in return for work that comes easiest to them. Adam Smith said the same thing this way:

The division of labor, from which so many advantages are derived, is not originally the effect of any human wisdom, which foresees and intends that general opulence to which it gives occasion. . . . It is common to all men, and to be found in no other race of animals. (*The Wealth of Nations*, Book I, Chap. 2.)

And now we've found another part of our jigsaw puzzle. Let's save it until we find some key pieces.



" . . . every man desires to obtain additional wealth with as little sacrifice as possible."

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MORE "KNOWLEDGE" WITH LESS EFFORT

Beware lest you lose the substance by grasping at the shadow.—Aesop

MAN'S SEEKING to satisfy desires as little effort as possible has its dangerous side, too. Since

cartoons are easier to understand, we are inclined to turn to them for our education rather than to books on philosophy. Also, we're more inclined to believe what we read or hear than we are to reason things out for ourselves, since it is easier. That's true of most humans, of adults as well as children.

Consequently, the cartoonist has proved to be a more effective instructor than Aristotle, Faraday, Dr. Eliot, or the multitude of less famous schoolteachers who earn their bread by stuffing knowledge into the unwilling schoolboy's head. For, the cartoonist, reaching millions of readers, teaches more people in a year than all the professors in the world can hope to teach during a reasonable lifetime. Even after the student completes his university training, seventy-seven out of every hundred, according to recent figures, turn to comic books, cartoon magazines, or comic strips for further and more lasting education.

Rube Goldberg, Briggs, and Webster, through their cartoons, have taught psychology to far more people than have Freud or Adler. Hamlin, who draws the prehistoric comic character Alley Oop, has awakened an interest in anthropology in many more people than have all of our current university professors. That the cartoonist intends only to amuse his "students" and doesn't pretend to teach truth or accurate knowledge, is quite beside the point. The discouraging fact we must face is that the greater part of our total knowledge has been passed on to us in pictures by the cartoonist.

In fairness to the cartoonist, we must emphasize that he neither intends nor desires to mislead or confuse his "students." He tries his best to explain an idea with pictures, because pictures, like four-letter words, are easiest to understand. Unfortunately ideas *can't* be drawn. The most talented artist cannot draw a picture of the idea of fear, happiness, cruelty, war, or liberty. The best he can do to express the idea of fear is to draw a person with a frightened expression on his face. *Happiness* calls for a smiling face: *cruelty* an ape-like brute armed with a knotted club, a flaming torch, or perhaps a knife dripping with blood. To the cartoonist, *war* is the armored, toothy, bearded giant, Mars;

and *Liberty* is a statue of a lady holding her torch high in New York Harbor. In each instance, the cartoonist draws a person, a sort of symbol, to express an idea. But if we pause in our reading at this point and ask ourselves what these ideas really mean to us, we will find that the idea of freedom has nothing to do with a lady with a torch; that the idea of war has nothing to do with a man wearing an iron hat and vest; that the ideas of happiness, fear, and torture have nothing to do with the symbols the cartoonist draws to express them. And yet it is the lady in New York Harbor, the symbol, that we think of when we hear the word *liberty*, not what the idea of liberty really means.

Accordingly, if we are to approach our investigation intelligently, we will have to forget all we've learned from the cartoonist and behave like scientists. And the first scientific step we must take is to analyze the nature of each idea as we meet up with it, and then define each of our ideas according to its nature. Or, as Marcus Aurelius put it:

Make for thyself a definition or description of the thing which is presented to thee, so as to see distinctly what kind of a thing it is in its substance, in its nudity, in its complete entirety, and tell thyself its proper name, and the names of the things of which it has been compounded, and into which it will be resolved. For *nothing is so productive of elevation of mind as to be able to examine methodically and truly every object which is presented to thee in life*, and always to look at things so as to see at the same time *what kind of universe this is and "what kind of use everything performs in it, and what value everything has with reference to the whole, and what with reference to man.* (Italics ours.)

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WHY DEFINITIONS ARE IMPORTANT

If, however, it should be said that "man" means an indefinite number of things, obviously all discussion would be impossible. For, not to have one meaning is to have no meaning and if words have no meaning, all discussion with one another and even, strictly speaking, with ourselves, is over, since we cannot think at all if we do not think of one thing . . .

—Aristotle, *Metaphysics*

WHAT MAKES definitions so important is that they provide a tool with which we can bring arguments to an end, and with which we can measure and test the reasonableness of any answers we may find. To illustrate, imagine two little boys each arguing that his father is the stronger. One shouts that his father can lift a living-room table with his teeth. The other boy, not to be outdone, shouts even louder that his father can do the same thing and can lick two policemen at the same time. They go on that way for hours, one trying to top the other with not-too-truthful arguments, just as adults do, until finally one boy says, "My father's the strongest man in the whole world, and if you say he isn't I'll hit you over the head with this rock." The boys have settled this argument, bloodlessly let us hope, but we still don't know which father is stronger. If, however, instead of arguing, they had arranged to have their fathers meet in a brickyard, and then had seen which of the two could lift the greater number of bricks off the ground, they soon would have learned *beyond a doubt* which father was

indeed stronger. The bricks would have acted as a yardstick with which strength might have been measured.

A definition is exactly like those bricks. It is a yardstick that measures ideas behind a word. It measures things like honesty, beauty, democracy, God, wisdom, and the many other things that can't be measured with tape measures, scales, or even with the most delicate meters. An argument as to whether one woman is more beautiful than another might go on for eternity without bringing the arguers any nearer to an answer. But if, in the beginning, the disputants had made themselves a definition, as Marcus Aurelius advised, by agreeing upon what they meant by beauty—for example, *whichever woman's body measurements were most like those of the Venus of Milo statue shall be considered the more beautiful*—all they'd have had to do to settle their argument would have been to get hold of a tape measure, take the measurements of the girls, and then compare them with those of the Venus of Milo.

To be useful, definitions must be precise. Loose definitions are as useless as elastic tape measures. Words, if they are to be used with scientific accuracy, must have one meaning, and only one. For, as soon as we allow one word to represent more than one idea, we're sure to run into trouble. The story of the carpenter who gave his two new helpers their instructions might serve to make this point clearer.

"Each of you get two horses," he commanded, "and then nail an end of one of these boards to the top of each horse. Understand? Okay! Get going!"

Tom, one of the helpers, had had some experience in carpenter work. And before very long he had his board nailed securely to the tops of two of those four-legged wooden frames that builders call horses and use as supports for their work. Before he could report back to his boss for a "well done, m'lad," and for another job to do, an unexpected commotion broke out in the nearby barn. Such a pounding, banging, yelling, and screeching—Then, suddenly, the barn door flew from its hinges, and jerry—the second helper—came sailing gracefully through the

doorway. It seems that Jerry, having been brought up on ranch, knew of only one kind of horse: the kind that eats hay and doesn't like to have boards nailed to its back. Jerry, as result of his hoof-propelled flight, learned an important truth: a word having more than one meaning can get a man into lot of trouble. Almost all of the words we use in our everyday speech have more than one meaning. That is why scientists do not use words used in everyday speech. They make up their own words. And if they do use old ones, they give them special, always-mean-the-same-thing meanings. It would never do for a doctor to use such words as "sick"; or when filling out a prescription to write the word "medicine" on it. If he did, a patient wouldn't know **if** he was suffering from canal congestion, costiveness, or constipation. But, what is more important, the druggist wouldn't know whether the medicine he is to prepare should be a liquid, paste, a powder, or a pill; blue, white, pink, or brown. And, course, the druggist wouldn't know which of the hundreds drugs on his shelves to mix. To avoid as much of such confusion as possible, medical science had to give a special name every single part of the human body, to every sickness, to every symptom, and to every known drug. Whenever physicians and chemists came across two things that differed in the slightest degree, they gave each a name all for itself. As a result, radio operators far out at sea can wireless the symptoms of a sick man on board their ship to a doctor thousands of miles away and the doctor receiving the message can guess pretty accurately the exact name and nature of the sickness. Moreover, he can tell the radioman exactly what to do to make the sick man comfortable, or how to keep him alive, until a doctor can reach him. A prescription written by a Mexican doctor can be understood, thanks to the use of scientific terms, by a druggist in China, Russia, or Bridgeport. Such things would be impossible unless words having exact meanings—and each word only one meaning—were used.

Chemists, physicists, engineers, architects, mathematicians

and all other scientists exercise extreme care in their speech and thinking. And all of the members of each scientific group must agree among themselves upon the exact definitions of the names they give things before they can discuss or practice their science intelligently. In his *Fundamentals of Physics* Bowen C. Dees wrote:

For convenience, the two kinds of electrical charge have been called positive and negative. . . . There is no particular reason for the choice of these names for the two kinds of electrical charge. *But once the choice has been made, -we must abide by the decision.* (Italics ours.)

Obviously, if Poleco is to be studied intelligently, each of the terms used in discussing it must likewise have an exact meaning; and once we fix the meaning, we, like the physicist, "must abide by the decision." If, for example, the word *wealth* is used, it must mean the identical thing whenever it is used. To a great extent, modern economics is in its confused and inefficient state because not all economists are agreed as to the meanings of the terms they use.

There are only nine important terms used in Poleco: *land, labor, capital, rent, -wealth, interest, wages, production, and distribution.* Let's be sure we understand exactly what the Polecoist means when he uses any of these terms. Unless we do, we're sure to have trouble keeping up with him as he tracks down the cause of poverty.