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How can an exchange benefit both parties? That is a clear question with an even clearer answer: both get what they need, and lose very little. A more complex question is, how can an exchange benefit both parties, other than the material items being shared? Does an exchange help make a society “nicer,” not just “richer,” as Pinker suggests? Does it encourage a friendlier society? In “Enlightenment Now,” Pinker argues that it does, and specifically points to “*doux commerce*” (translated as gentle commerce) as an example.

“Gentle commerce” is the idea that during an exchange, both parties will be civilized, courteous, and helpful, because they want something. Some cynics might see *doux commerce* as simply a useful tool, one used to get something from another individual. It can be seen as self-interest, and only self-interest; some may call it a selfish and manipulative act. However, Pinker argues the opposite: the very exchange promotes polite manners, cordiality, and cooperation. It promotes peace. When people trade, they don’t fight or steal, and vice versa: if they don’t trade, then they must fight for coveted resources, thus creating a harsher society. Though one may see harming another to gain something as advantageous in the long run, a decision to engage in an exchange leaves room for more stabilized generations to think of others and others’ desires. Peace may flourish.

Hypothetical examples can also serve to illustrate why Pinker thinks this is true. Picture a butcher living in the Middle Ages. He longs for peace in his life; thus, he decides not to steal from the nearby farmer, and live in fear of the farmer stealing from him. Instead, he exchanges resources with the farmer, and consequently, learns about the humanness of his neighbor. He starts living without self-preservation as the be-all and end-all. As the butcher interacts with the

farmer, his eyes open to see the similarities, not only the differences, between them; empathy emerges. Once people choose to make exchanges, society becomes “nicer,” in addition to “richer,” as a result. Peace begins to flourish, and both parties are alive and well enough to contribute to society while the bonds that spring from these exchanges strengthen it. As butchers trade with farmers, scientists collaborate with one another, and countries form alliances, the limits of society even expands and Earth becomes richer and nicer.