

The Germ

*A mighty creature is the germ,
Though smaller than the pachyderm.
His customary dwelling place
Is deep within the human race.
His childish pride he often pleases
By giving people strange diseases.
Do you, my poppet, feel infirm?
You probably contain a germ.
-- Ogden Nash*

Freedom and Risk

Risk is a good thing. If you have a risk you can either win or lose. If you lose, your most serious loss is the ability to risk. The ultimate risk is of course, **life**. Losing is then called death. Then there is no more risk at all. We see then that risk is a good thing, like life.

We can also relate risk to freedom. Without risk there is no freedom. These three good things then belong together:

LIFE..... FREEDOM..... RISK

Each is of unlimited value when exploited according to law. For example, a commodity trader who knows well the rules of the market can use risk to multiply a small stake into a fortune. Knowledge and application of the laws of the marketplace ultimately reward the risk taker in spite of temporarily losses. The winner appreciates this principle and perseveres in learning the rules, taking risks and getting **SUCCESS**. Some don't see this. They make no effort to understand the underlying laws and since failure follows their misguided efforts at risk taking they assume that luck or some other superstitious property is at work. Their reaction is to avoid risk and possibly to even outlaw it. And every such "outlaw" and regulation is a deadly cancer that minimizes risk . . . and freedom . . . and life.

The Delaney Amendment

This amendment is an "outlaw" of the type mentioned above. It attempts to minimize the **risk** of cancer by eliminating from the diet anything known to have even a remote relation to cancer. This is comparable to outlawing the commodity market because some have suffered losses therein. But those bent on destroying risk **cannot** be challenged on the basis of faulty logic. Since no one knows perfectly the rules of life, elimination of risk is a logically consistent approach. In fact, risk is a very difficult

problem in logic. (See the article on PROBABILITY in the Encyclopedia Britannica.) Since those living life (risking) to the full have not been able to avoid death, scientific pessimism logically steps to the fore and offers to eliminate risk . . . and freedom . . . and life. The same careful scientific thinking that brought us the Delaney Amendment brought us **Beyond Freedom and Dignity** in which B. B. Skinner argued that freedom is a figment of the imagination; and **Beyond the Pleasure Principle** in which Sigmund Freud argued that the goal of life is death.

Against all this is practical optimism. It has its own peculiar logic – it works. It works in business and it works in life. Take the case of lettuce.

Lettuce

Some of us like a salad with tomato wedges, a few olive slices and a little of this and a little of that on a bed of nice, crisp lettuce – lightly topped with a tangy Italian dressing. Now there’s something you can really feel good about eating. But what about the pseudomonads?

Pseudomonads? What’s that? Well, they are a type of bacteria that is quite resistant to antibiotics. And they are frequently found on lettuce. In fact, one out of three samples checked recently, had as many as 2000 pseudomonads per gram of lettuce. This is the reason salads are not usually permitted for patients in burn treatment centers. The pseudomonads could enter the body through the damaged skin and become a fatal infection – uncontrollable by antibiotics. And although no salmonella or fecal bacteria were found on the lettuce, there were low levels of coliform bacteria and up to a **half million** bacteria of other types per gram of lettuce. Here then are the risks that you might not have considered.

BACTERIA ON FRESH PRODUCE				
		Bacteria	Coliforms	Pseudomonads
Lettuce	a	520,000	<3	2,000
	b	11,000	<3	1,000
	c	2,000	9.1	1,000
Potatoes	a	1,400,000	>2,400	130,000
	b	2,000,000	<3	140,000
	c	95,000	240	4,000

Potatoes, Too

The situation for fresh, whole potatoes is similar except that there are much higher levels of coliform bacteria and hundreds of thousands of pseudomonads. Of course, since potatoes are ordinarily well cooked before eating, the bacteria on them will be killed. But heating does not destroy solanin, a deadly toxin sometimes found in potatoes

So what can we say? Life itself is a risk that can be profitably taken. To focus on the multitude of possibilities for loss robs us of enjoying the magnificent benefits of gain. Our image of pleasure and strength associated with salad and French fries should not be sullied by concern for any possible loss. We will use the laws of psychology and nutrition to maximize our benefits and will be grateful for the opportunity to take the risk.