

## December 2021 Entry (on Proficiency & Farce in three acts)

### Definition of proficiency

1: advancement in knowledge or skill: PROGRESS

2: the quality or state of being proficient.

[Merriam Webster Online Dictionary @ proficiency.](#)

This is a real-world example for GGDM game play of how the incompetence or carelessness of individuals doing a job can turn an attempt at improved social proficiency into farce.

The [City of Pittsburgh collects household trash](#) every week from residential areas; every other week, they collect both regular trash and [recycling](#). This is accomplished by residents setting their refuse out on the curb at night and the garbage collection trucks come along around 6 a.m. and pick it up. The regular [trash trucks](#) are white, and the trucks that pick up recycling are blue; usually the blue truck comes first so that the following regular trash truck picks up whatever the recycling truck doesn't take. There is nothing startling about this, it is a very common refuse collection procedure in most urban settings.

On October 6, 2021, I set out my recycling and included with it a large plastic brown [trashcan](#) full of metal cans, the can had no lid or cover. As I got ready for work, I looked out and saw the blue recycling truck pick up the recycling and leave the brown trash can that was very obviously filled with recyclable metal cans. A short time later, the white regular truck followed, picked up the brown trash can full of metal cans and dumped it into their truck. So my metal cans recycling for October 6, 2021, ended up in a landfill instead of being recycled.

On October 20, 2021, I set out the same brown trash can filled to the top with metal cans, and I put a sign on it that said it was recycling. It was placed with the rest of my recycling. This time, as I got ready for work, I looked out to see that the white regular trash truck had come first, and they picked up the brown trash can full to the top with metal cans and with a recycling sign on top of it, and dumped it into the regular garbage truck. They did not pick up any of the rest of the recycling, leaving it properly for the blue recycling garbage truck to collect. So once again, my trashcan full of sorted metal cans ended up in the landfill instead of being properly recycled.

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(“Don't be a [litterbug!](#)”)

“...here is a rough (and only partial) inventory of the stuff mankind has left on the moon: more than 70 spacecraft, including rovers, modules, and crashed orbiters, 5 American flags, 2 golf balls, 12 pairs of boots, TV cameras, film magazines, 96 bags of urine, feces, and vomit, numerous Hasselbad cameras and accessories, several improvised javelins, various hammers, tongs, rakes, and shovels, backpacks, insulating blankets, utility towels, used wet wipes, personal hygiene kits, empty packages of space food, a photograph of Apollo 16 astronaut Charles Duke's family, a feather from Baggin, the Air Force Academy's mascot falcon, used to conduct Apollo 15's famous 'hammer-feather drop' experiment, a small aluminum sculpture, a tribute to the American and Soviet

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‘fallen astronauts’ who died in the space race – left by the crew of Apollo 15, a patch from the never-launched Apollo 1 mission, which ended prematurely when flames engulfed the command module during a 1967 training exercise, killing three U.S. astronauts, a small silicon disk bearing goodwill messages from 73 world leaders, and left on the moon by the crew of Apollo 11, a silver pin, left by Apollo 12 astronaut Alan Bean, a medal honoring Soviet cosmonauts Vladimir Komarov and Yuri Gagarin, a cast golden olive branch left by the crew of Apollo 11.... One other earthly object that resides on that landscape is an urn containing the ashes of Eugene Shoemaker, the famed planetary geologist who dreamed, during his life, of going to the moon.” – [Megan Garber, “The Trash We’ve Left on the Moon,” The Atlantic, December 19, 2012.](#)

One of the intense memories of my childhood was that in the vicinity of any [payphone](#) (remember those?) – and payphones were everywhere – [mom-and-pop corner grocery stores](#) (remember those?), laundromats, bars, subshops, and pizza shops the area would be littered with a carpet of cigarette butts and match packs, teardrop-shaped pop can tabs, soda and beer bottle crown lids, and of course, an ocean of used chew tobacco and spit. Some things change (e.g., about 25% of adults smoke now), but more often, they just morph into something else: I put out more recycling than my home would normally merit because I pick up recyclable [litter](#), and my neighborhood has a plentiful supply of it. So my total recycling is twice or three times what it would normally be for a household like mine because others don’t; they’d rather toss it out the car window or whatever.

There is an interesting dynamic there: People who pick up trash, don’t litter, because once you pick up other people’s trash, why would you be a litterbug? And people who litter, of course, would never be bothered to pick up trash. It’s like a toggle switch, a divide in humanity. When you ‘get it’ you don’t litter, when you don’t ‘get it’ apparently you feel free to litter – I cannot testify to the latter because I was raised to never litter, if we had a [soda can](#) or an empty container or [candy wrapper](#), we had a bag in the car, or you put it in your pocket and took care of it later.

Have you ever seen the people who go to Dollar General or Shop ‘n Save, buy one thing, the clerk bags it, they get outside, take it out of the bag, start consuming it, and toss the bag on the ground? If you know that is what you are going to do when you get outside, why not tell the clerk you don’t need a bag?

The same toggle switch seems to work for [smoking tobacco](#), [drinking and driving](#), [exaggeration](#) and [lying](#), and other human [bad habits](#) and fallacies – those who ‘get it’ would never even think of doing it – maybe that is what passes for Enlightenment – and those who don’t do it without care or thought.

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(on farcical results of social proficiency attempts)

Definition of farce (Entry 2 of 2)

2: a light dramatic composition marked by broadly satirical comedy and improbable plot

3: the broad humor characteristic of farce

4: an empty or patently ridiculous act, proceeding, or situation

[Merriam Webster Online Dictionary @ farce](#)

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It requires just two seconds of attention to look at a trashcan and determine that it is full of recyclable metal cans. I did not put out this trashcan full of metal cans on a non-recycling day. The people who collect the garbage in my neighborhood should not be driving a garbage truck, or driving anything that has wheels because the amount of intelligence and [comprehension](#) required to determine a trashcan if full of cans for recycling is the same amount of [cognition](#) required to understand what a [stop sign](#) means while driving. These people should not even be allowed to eat without [adult supervision](#), because they might mistake the food for trash and throw it away and mistake the wrapper for food and try to eat it!

Regardless of the social or political intent of the City of Pittsburgh's refuse recycling program, or the global [conservation objectives](#) of our civilization, the entire thing is reduced to farce if the person collecting the trash cannot take two seconds to distinguish a can full of sorted recyclable metal cans from a can of regular trash. That the City of Pittsburgh uses [taxpayer money](#) to pay these low-wattage [idiots](#) is sickening and infuriating, that such people are being employed to implement our larger conservation policies is disheartening. This is an example of how, within GGDM game terminology, Proficiency can clash with failure of Enlightenments (obviously, the City of Pittsburgh didn't choose the brightest lights in our local civilization to implement this important policy); there are no rerolls when the trashcan full of metal cans is dumped out into the wrong truck by someone who cannot give two seconds of [attention](#) to what they are [doing for a living](#).

By Charles W. Phillips