AUTOMOBILITY
AND
FREEDOM PROJECT

AUTONOMY AND AUTOMOBILITY

Loren E. Lomasky

June 1995

AUTONOMY AND AUTOMOBILITY

by Loren E. Lomasky
Professor of Philosophy, Bowling Green State University

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the automobile enters its second century, it is increasingly attacked as a public malefactor. The fact that automobiles cause deaths and pollution does not seem sufficient to explain the intensity of the opposition to them. These are only its costs; what we still must account for are its benefits.

The focus of this paper will not be on the many and varied instrumental uses to which the automobile is put, but on what is intrinsic to automobility — the capacity to move oneself from place to place. Automobility directly complements autonomy — the distinctively human capacity to be self-directing. Automobiles enable us to extend the scope and magnitude of our self-direction, and for that reason they are worthwhile.

- Automobiles allow us to choose where we will live, where we will work, and to separate these two choices from each other.

- Automobiles enhance knowledge. From watching geese fly to Canada, to visiting a battle-ground, to attending an opera, no form of transportation combines local maneuverability with extended range to the degree that the automobile does.

- Automobiles enhance privacy. While public transportation is not always bad, and sometimes is the only viable alternative, it necessarily encroaches on privacy. The automobile is for 20th century American society the quintessential bastion of privacy. The failure of diamond lanes and other car-pooling inducements may be viewed as a failure of policy, but it can also be seen as a result of the valid human desire for privacy.

- Automobiles allow control over one's immediate environment. Surely one reason for the fondness people hold for their cars is the scope of control over this environment, which is not possible with any alternate transportation mode.

In short, what is conspicuously left off the balance sheet of automobility is its intrinsic goodness of promoting autonomy.

When compared with alternate means of transportation, the automobile is the prime vehicle of self-directedness. Its most strident critics are well aware of its relationship to autonomy, and that is precisely why they are so wary of it. People who drive automobiles upset the patterns spun from the policy intellectual's brain. They wish to drive, and their exercises of choice also have the effect of rendering the planners' conceptions moot.

In the end, highways are so heavily used because millions of people judge that driving enhances their lives. The striking feature of the critique of highway building programs is that what should be taken as a sign of great success is instead presented as a mark of failure. But the only failure has been with the critics' attempts to talk people out of their cars and out of the neighborhoods and workplaces that their cars have rendered accessible. This failure is well-deserved. Automobile motoring is good because people wish to engage in it, and they wish to engage in it because it is inherently good.

AUTONOMY AND AUTOMOBILITY

by Loren E. Lomasky

I. THE DRIVING CONTROVERSY

Years before the automobile became a transportation necessity, before meandering mudded ruts were replaced by multi-laned asphalt, intrepidly pioneering motorists took to the roads for pleasure. Today tens of millions drive for pleasure, but increasingly it is a guilty pleasure. From a multitude of quarters motorists are indicted for the harms they leave in their wake. Drivers generate suburban sprawl, exacerbate the trade deficit while imperiling national security, foul lungs and warm the atmosphere with their noxious emissions, give up the ghosts of their vehicles to unsightly graveyards of rubber and steel, leave human roadkill in their wake, trap each other in ever vaster mazes of gridlock, and, adding insult to injury, commandeer a comfy subsidy from the general public. It is only the presence of unconverted cigarette smokers that deprive them of the Public Nuisance Number One title.

Today tens of millions drive for pleasure, but increasingly it is a guilty pleasure.

Barring a radical re-engineering of America, there is no prospect that we will any time soon toss away our car keys. The primary vehicles for commuting, hauling freight, and general touring will be automotive. Cars (and trucks) are here to stay. But as the automobile enters its second century of transporting Americans from here to there, it is increasingly dubbed a public malefactor, and momentum for curbing its depredations grows. Construction of significant additions to the interstate highway system has ground to a halt. Lanes on urban roads are declared off-limits to solo motorists. Federal CAFE standards require auto makers to eschew selling vehicles as capacious as motorists may wish to buy but instead to alter their mix of product to emphasize lighter, less gasoline-hungry cars. Taxes on fuel have been increased only modestly, but if critics of the hegemony of the automobile have their way, America will emulate European standards and the taxation level will go up by a dollar or more per gallon. Funds thereby generated will not be designated for motorist services — that is precisely what has exacerbated the current plague of over-automobilization — but will instead be directed toward more mass transit, pollution relief, and research on alternate modes of transportation. Some argue that employer-provided parking should be taxed as income to the employee or disallowed as a business expense to the provider. Others advocate following the model of Amsterdam by barring nearly all automobiles from entry into the center city. And supplementing policy proposals is moral suasion. In the name of social responsibility, individuals are urged to carpool

or avail themselves of public transportation, scrap their older, fuel-intensive vehicles, and to eschew unnecessary automobile trips.

Why this assault on the automobile? I have no wish to deny that it is at least in part because some of the charges advanced by critics are true. Automobile carnage is indeed dreadful. The number of people killed each year on our roadways far exceeds the total who succumb to AIDS. Automobiles do pollute, all to some extent, some much worse than others. The cost of petroleum imports into this country exceeds the amount of the entire national trade deficit. And anyone who has ever been trapped in rush hour gridlock, fuming inside at the delay while being engulfed by the fumes outside spewing from ten thousand tailpipes, knows that the simple job of getting from here to there in one's automobile can be the most stressful part of the day. Cars are not always "user-friendly."

But even accepting all the above, it does not seem sufficient to explain the intensity of opposition directed toward the automobile. There are costs associated with any large-scale enterprise, and so a critique that merely reminds us of the nature and extent of these costs is only half useful. What is also required is, of course, a statement of the benefits derived from the enterprise, and a plausible accounting of whether those benefits do or do not exceed the costs. How to identify and measure costs and benefits of automobile usage poses very difficult methodological problems which I shall not address here. I do note that the overwhelming popularity of the automobile is itself prima facie evidence that, from the perspective of ordinary American motorists, the liabilities of operating a motor vehicle are more than compensated by the concomitant benefits. Just as theorists speak of people "voting with their feet," we can count those who vote with their tires. And this vote is overwhelmingly pro-automobile.

We need also to think more intently about how to classify and understand as a distinctive human practice the action of driving a car.

Critics may contend, though, that the election has been rigged. They can maintain that it is the absence of public transportation and of compact neighborhoods in which commerce, industry and housing are integrated that force us so often into our cars. People might like to be able to purchase a loaf of bread without buckling their seat belts, but in many parts of the country they cannot. And even if it is the case that each of us values the options and mobility that automobile transport affords, we might disvalue yet more the stress, delay and pollution imposed on us by others. Private utilization of automobiles so understood would approximate game theory's Prisoner's Dilemma, an interaction in which each player acts in his own rational self-interest but the result is worse for all parties than if there had been some mechanism in place that would have forced them to choose otherwise. And some such mechanism, whether in the form of regulation or increased taxes or outright prohibitions, the critic contends, is what is needed to escape the tyranny of the automobile.

There is at least this much merit to the critic's case: a purely behavioristic appraisal of automobile usage is insufficient for evaluating its

normative status. We need also to think more intently about how to classify and understand as a distinctive human practice the action of driving a car. Opponents portray the automobile as a *public bad*. That is the appraisal I shall dispute in this essay. My focus will not be on the many and varied instrumental uses to which the automobile is put (driving to work, carpooling the kids, buying groceries), though in no way do I mean to disparage these. Rather, I shall concentrate on what is intrinsic to automobility as the capacity to move oneself from place to place. As such, automobility is, I argue, complementary with *autonomy*: the distinctively human capacity to be self-directing. As will be discussed in Section III, an autonomous being is not simply a locus at which forces collide and which then is moved by them. Rather, to be autonomous is, minimally, to be a valuer with ends taken to be good as such, and to have the capacity as an agent to direct oneself to the realization or furtherance of these ends through actions expressly chosen for that purpose. This is what motorists do. Therefore, insofar as we have reason to regard self-directedness as a valuable human trait, we have reason to think well of driving automobiles.

Automobility is, I argue, complementary with autonomy*: the distinctively human capacity to be self-directing.*

I am not maintaining, of course, that all and only motorists are autonomous, that one who is persuaded by the slogan, "Take the bus and leave the driving to us" is thereby displaying some human deficiency. A liberal society is one in which a vast diversity of goods are pursued in a myriad of different ways, and in no small measure its attractiveness is a function of this variety. So even if driving a car is an intrinsically worthwhile thing, it does not follow that declining to drive is suspect.

But neither am I saying that in a cornucopia of consumer goods, automobiles are simply one among thousands of other kinds of items that individuals might — and do — happen to find attractive. The claim is stronger. Automobility is not just something for which people in their ingenuity or idiosyncrasy might happen to develop a yen, as they have for Nehru jackets, disco music, hula hoops, crack cocaine, pet rocks, pink flamingo lawn ornaments, Madonna, and "How many ____ does it take to change a lightbulb?" jokes. Rather, automobile transport is a good for people in virtue of its intrinsic features. Because automobility is a mode of extending the scope and magnitude of self-direction, it is worthwhile.

Because automobility is a mode of extending the scope and magnitude of self-direction, it is worthwhile.

Moreover, I go on to argue, the value of automobility is strongly complementary to other core values of our culture, values such as the freedom of association, pursuit of knowledge, economic advancement, privacy, even the expression of religious values and affectional preference. If these contentions are even partially cogent, then opponents of the automobile must take on and surmount a stronger burden of proof than they have heretofore acknowledged. For it will not only be the case that they must show that instrumental costs of marginal automobile usage outweigh the benefits thereby accrued, but they must additionally establish that these costs outweigh the inherent good of the exercise of free mobility. That heightened burden will be difficult indeed to satisfy.

II. WHEELS OF FORTUNE: MOVEMENT, CHOICE AND HUMAN POTENTIAL

Concern about automobiles may be a modern phenomenon, but analysis of the distinctive nature of automobility is not. For Aristotle, being a self-mover is the crucial feature distinguishing animals from plants and, thus, higher forms of life from lower. That distinction is itself preceded by a yet more basic one that separates the organic realm from that which is lifeless. To be alive is to be possessed of an internal animating force, *psyche*. The customary translation is 'soul', but in the context of Greek biology that is misleading. For us 'soul' tends to carry a theological and thus elevated sense, but in classical Greek thought it marks the divide between inert things and those imbued with a vital principle. *Psyche* comes at three levels. The lowest, level-1, is vegetative soul. Plants are more than just things insofar as they are not merely acted on but also can be said to *do*. Specifically, they ingest food, metabolize, and reproduce. At the highest, level-3, is the rational soul, the intelligence exhibited among the animals only by man. In between, and crucial to this discussion, is animal or sensitive soul. Level-2 psyche has the capacities of level-1 psyche (and level-3 psyche those of level-2) but has superadded to them two further features. Animals, unlike plants, perceive. And they move themselves.

Animals, unlike plants, perceive. And they move themselves. To perceive is to assimilate in some measure the world to oneself. And to be a self-mover is to situate oneself in the world in accordance with one's own desires.

The qualities of perception and movement are enumerated as two but, according to Aristotle's discussion in his biological treatise *De Anima*, they are to be understood as strongly complementary. Because plants are stationary (or, if mobile as are the seed pods of some species, carried where they go by external forces), they have no need to perceive. If the wheat isn't going anywhere, then it would do it no good to see the swarm of locusts about to descend on it. Aristotle expressed this in the teleological language of *purpose* and *natural function* that pervades his metaphysical awareness, but essentially the same point could be made in contemporary terms of inclusive evolutionary fitness. Plants do not perceive because no purpose would be fulfilled via their perceiving; evolution does not select at that biological level for perception. The locusts, however, do perceive because their survival depends on becoming aware of and being able to direct themselves toward potential items of food. The connection can also be stated in reverse order: if a being does not perceive the difference between *here* and *there*, then there would be no point to its having the capacity to direct itself there rather than here.

Plants are alive but their "quality of life" is low. (Thus the comatose individual referred to as a "human vegetable" and the inert TV-watching "couch potato.") They function in the world but in complete obliviousness to it. Lacking consciousness, the cucumber has no perspective from which there is a "what it is like to be a cucumber." Plants *are*, and in a restricted sense *do*,

but in terms of nearly all that we take to be of value in life, they are nullities.

Animal life is different, and the difference lifts the organism beyond nullity status. To perceive is to assimilate in some measure the world to oneself. And to be a self-mover is to situate oneself in the world in accordance with one's own desires. Perception plus mobility are prerequisites of *agency*. Patients are beings to whom things happen but agents act. At some level of awareness agents distinguish between goods and bads and endeavor to direct themselves toward the former and away from the latter. With animals this involves instinctive or acquired responses to pleasure and pain. For human beings, action takes on additional complexity. We do not merely react to stimuli in our environment but instead deliberate among available alternatives which are conceived of not only as pleasing or displeasing but also in terms like "dishonorable," "what justice demands," "liable to make me famous," "chic," and so on. At this level it is proper to speak in a nonmetaphorical sense of *choice*. There is no genuine choosing, Aristotle maintains, performed by animals or young children. Choice is action in which we give expression to our settled conceptions of how we are to direct ourselves. Our choices flow from and have a feedback effect on our virtues and vices. We do not offer moral appraisals of beings that are not capable of choice; neither infants nor animals are literally brave or wicked or temperate but normal adult human beings can be such.

The conception of motion has a wider scope than traveling from place to place. We retain residual traces of this broader meaning in expressions such as "a moving experience" and in the etymological history of "emotion," but in the philosophical language of the Greeks the more inclusive sense is primary. Any transformation of a subject from a state of potentiality with regard to some quality to the actual realization of that quality is deemed motion. So going from here to there is to move, but so also are an organism's growth, someone's coming to know something of which she had previously been ignorant, development of a faculty, and so on. In an Aristotelian universe, motion is ubiquitous because everything has a level of highest possible self-realization toward which it tends to progress. In the case of simple inorganic forms like a rock this potential is correspondingly simple, involving only the propensity to fall when dropped. In organisms the transition from potency to act is more complex. The complex chain of maturation that commences from the acorn stage is the oak's moving to its actuality. And, as noted previously, with animals such self-realization incorporates consciousness and self-propulsion, and human actualization adds deliberation and choice. Only for a being that is completely actualized would movement be otiose (or counterproductive). And indeed, Aristotle hypothesizes that at the pinnacle of the metaphysical hierarchy is a god dubbed the "Unmoved Mover" because in its enduring perfection it has transcended all reason to change, while anything else in the universe insofar as it realizes any of its potential is approaching to some greater or lesser degree, consciously or unconsciously, this state of full actualization.

For people, there is a chosen *better or worse toward which we deliberately direct ourselves. Crucial to the elevated status of human beings viz-a-viz other beings is intelligent automobility.*

When Christianity encounters Greek philosophical thought it applies this concept of an unchanging perfection to the book of Genesis's Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Movement, therefore, is not simply descriptive of getting from here to there. It is normatively rich. To move is to progress — though, of course, it can also be to backslide. Only stasis is morally neutral, and ours is a dynamic universe. The greater the variety of dimensions through which an individual transforms itself and those things with which it comes into contact, the greater the scope there is for evaluative concerns. And so grounds on which human beings appraise themselves and their fellows will be much richer than will be, say, the standards applied to horses or bottles of wine or the performance of machines. For people, there is not only a better and worse but a *chosen* better or worse toward which we deliberately direct ourselves. Crucial to the elevated status of human beings viz-à-viz other beings is intelligent automobility.

III. A PHILOSOPHICAL DETOUR

We value full authorship of our own actions and are threatened by conditions that impede such authorship.

If you bump into me and cause me to lurch from my path, clearly my behavior is not that of a self-mover. Less clear, though, is the case in which you glower menacingly at me as you approach down the sidewalk, "persuading" me to step aside. Or suppose that yesterday when you hypnotized me you implanted within me a suggestion that I always make way for you, and so today when I see you approaching I not only defer but am pleased to do so out of concern for your well-being. In the latter two instances I have, in a sense, moved myself. Not only are the muscle contractions that impel my legs the contractions of *my* muscles, but they are preceded by mental activities that can be characterized as *my decision* to move in that way. But that characterization demands qualification. The action is mine, but in its initiation it is also yours in virtue of the threat or hypnotic manipulation. That is, it is at least as much a *being done to* as it is a *doing*, and so it qualifies as agency only in a restricted sense.

There are many species of such qualified action — or "action" — and they raise notoriously vexing problems of moral responsibility. Aristotle considers them with regard to the dichotomy voluntary-nonvoluntary and concludes, not all that helpfully, that they are "mixed," though perhaps to be classified more closely with the voluntary than the nonvoluntary. The issue thereby raised is not only theoretical but also sharply practical: do we blame (or praise) the individual who acts under duress, extraordinary fear, rage, naive suggestibility, exhaustion, ignorance or similar other conditions that call into question his full authorship of the action in question? Lawyers and moralists wrestle with such issues. For purposes of this discussion it is not necessary to resolve these conundrums but only to note that the more qualified the action is with regard to the performer's agency, the less does it redound to the individual's moral account.

Accountability enters crucially into human dignity. An insane or incompetent individual is not accountable for his doings, and that is symptomatic of his misfortune. We value full authorship of our own actions (or, noncircularly, authorship of the behavior of one's body) and are threatened by conditions — manipulation, coercion, intimidation — that impede such authorship. One who exercises such control over his actions is said to be *autonomous*. Autonomy, literally "self-legislating," is in its origin a term applied to political units and distinguishes those that are independent from those that are governed by the laws of some other polity. It importantly enters moral philosophy as an attribute of individuals in the writings of the 18th century German philosopher, Immanuel Kant. Like Aristotle, Kant is concerned with the conditions required for the existence of moral responsibility, but now the universe in which human beings act has a significantly different look than the teleologically structured world of Aristotle that was thoroughly hospitable to normativity. Newton and the new physics have depicted a deterministic order in which each event is the inevitable consequence of the nexus between universal causal laws and the antecedent conditions to which they apply. Whatever happens does so of necessity rather than caprice or randomness. But if that holds for events in general, it will apply to human actions in particular. We are as subject to the physical laws governing the cosmos as galaxies and atoms. Therefore, our doings are in principle entirely explainable and predictable (depending on whether one is viewing them retrospectively or prospectively) in terms of these laws. But if conditions that obtained five minutes — or five hours, or five years, or five millennia — ago made it inevitable that at this precise moment I would perform Action A, it would seem that I am not free with respect to performing A. It *had to happen* and, thus, I *had to do it*. But this, finally, can be seen as a crushing blow to conceptions of human agency and moral responsibility. If the doing of A was sealed long ago, was fixed even before I was born in the history of the cosmos as an inevitable event, then my participation in its unfolding would seem to be purely passive. I can no more be genuinely responsible for its occurrence than I can be for my eye color or, for that matter, an eclipse of the sun. In none of these cases is it open to me to bring about something other than what in fact transpires.

Insofar as we enjoy autonomy, we are free beings who thereby possess a worth and dignity that sets us apart from the realm of necessity.

This problem of free will and determinism is one of the most vexing in philosophy. At the time at which Kant writes it has reached a pitch of special acuteness. If the whole universe is one giant machine obeying its own internal laws, how can we be other than machine cogs ourselves? Kant's way out is drastic. He salvages human freedom by imposing on persons a metaphysical schizophrenia. We are at one and the same time part and parcel of the phenomenal universe subject to cause and effect and also subjects of a purely intelligible realm, what he calls the *noumenal order*, governed not by mechanical laws of physics but by the normative laws of reason. In the former realm we are only in a relative and incomplete sense self-movers; for every action there is a cause that necessitated it, and a cause for that cause, and so on ad

infinitum. As phenomenal beings we are no more than protoplasmic machines in a thoroughly mechanistic universe. But as noumenal beings we can determine ourselves in accord with dictates of reason that we impose on ourselves. That is what it is for an individual to be autonomous. Insofar as we enjoy autonomy, we are free beings who thereby possess a worth and dignity that sets us apart from the realm of necessity.

"He who chooses his plan for himself, employs all his faculties."
—J. S. Mill

Ironically, almost no contemporary moral philosophers buy into Kant's complex "two worlds" metaphysics, but his guiding idea that autonomy is central to our special moral status as persons informs much modern moral thinking. Its effect can be seen in quarters as disparate as the Existentialist insistence that we are beings with no predetermined essence and thus privileged — or condemned — to define ourselves through our own free choices, John Rawls's influential theory of justice as those principles that would be autonomously chosen by free and equal rational beings deliberating behind a veil of ignorance, and the doctrine of informed consent that dominates contemporary medical ethics. I shall not attempt to sort out these and other variants on the theme of autonomy. It is worth noting, though, that much of the contemporary concern for autonomy is continuous with and indeed has tended to replace the earlier emphasis in moral philosophy on the centrality of liberty in human affairs. It is the writings of John Stuart Mill that provide the locus for much of this transformation.

In his classic *On Liberty,* Mill is keen to provide a principled basis for opposition to the imposition of conformity via law and social custom. A whole array of arguments are trotted out to demonstrate that restrictions on liberty are inimical to scientific advance, accumulation of wealth, and other requisites of human happiness. Most of these appeals invoke instrumental considerations of the sort familiar from standard economic analysis. But in what may be the most important section of that work, the chapter entitled "Of Individuality, as One of the Elements of Well-being," he ventures a different sort of argument that is predicated on the intrinsic worth of what I have called full authorship of one's actions, Kant calls autonomy, and Mill refers to as individuality:

To live well is to live in a manner that one has made distinctively one's own.

> He who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the apelike one of imitation. He who chooses his plan for himself, employs all his faculties. He must use observation to see, reasoning and judgment to foresee, activity to gather materials for decision, discrimination to decide, and when he has decided, firmness and self-control to hold to his deliberate decision. And these qualities he requires and exercises exactly in proportion as the part of his conduct which he determines according to his own judgment and feelings is a large one. It is possible that he might be guided in some good path, and kept out of harm's way, without any of these things. But what will

> be his comparative worth as a human being? It really is of importance not only what men do, but also what manner of men they are that do it.

"What manner of men they are that do it" is not reducible to statistics of net wealth per household or GDP progress from one year to the next, but it expresses the conviction that none of our products is as important a measure of our success as is the character one creates in and for oneself. Retaining captaincy of one's soul (if not always mastery of one's fate) is essential to authenticity and a self genuinely deserving of esteem. Conversely, to be prodded by others along paths they have cleared toward goals that they have set is servile. It demeans the dignity of the individual. To live well is to live in a manner that one has made distinctively one's own.

To be autonomous is to "Just Say No" to the yoke.

Autonomy so understood incorporates Aristotelian self-moving but goes beyond it. A self-mover can be one participant among thousands in a lengthy parade, each following in lock-step the one who goes before, not knowing or caring where he is headed just so long as he ends up in the same place as all the others. But an autonomous individual is not content to leave the course of the march to the determinations of others (or to chance). She has a conception of a good for her that she may not have created ex nihilo but which she actively endorses. And in its service she prioritizes, deliberates, and selects means judged appropriate to ends. She acknowledges personal responsibility to both those ends and means. If she succeeds, it is in a full sense her success rather than the vagaries of fate playing kindly with her, and if she fails, that failure is also lodged at her doorstep rather than that of the parents who toilet-trained her, the teachers who instructed her, the community that socialized her, the politicians who competed for her allegiance, or the preachers who offered her slide shows of heaven. Any or all of these may have provided elements of value that she has incorporated into her projects, but the compound she concocts from them is hers.

The automobile is, arguably, rivaled only by the printing press (and perhaps within a few more years by the microchip) as an autonomy-enhancing contrivance of technology.

It would be overly contentious to maintain, as some exponents do, that one fails to lead a fully human life unless one is autonomous. There are countervailing virtues that grace traditional modes of life. These are not so much crafted by individuals for themselves as they are received and donned as hand-me-downs from others. The monk's life of humility and abasement and traditionally female roles of nurturance and support within the family display their own quiet dignity. Still, no mode of non-autonomous living is fully expressive of individuated human agency, and none so firmly opposes servile conformism. To cite Mill again:

> In our times, from the highest class of society down to the lowest, every one lives as under the eye of a hostile and dreaded censorship. Not only in what concerns others, but in what concerns only themselves, the individual or the family do not ask themselves — what do I prefer? or, what would suit my

> character and disposition? or, what would allow the best and highest in me to have fair play, and enable it to grow and thrive? They ask themselves, what is suitable to my position? what is usually done by persons of my station and pecuniary circumstances? or (worse still) what is usually done by persons of a station and circumstances superior to mine? ... It does not occur to them to have any inclination, except for what is customary. Thus the mind itself is bowed to the yoke.

To be autonomous is to "Just Say No" to the yoke.

IV. COMMUTING AND COMMUNITY

Automobility is, definitionally, promoted by the automobile. And the complementarity of autonomy and the automobile is only slightly less evident. Being a self-mover in the latter part of the 20th century is, to a significant extent, to be a motorist. Because we have cars to drive we can, more than any other people in history, choose where we will live, where we will work, and separate these two choices from each other. We are more able to avail ourselves of near and distant pleasures and to do so at a schedule tailored to individual preference. We are less constrained in our choice of friends and associates by accidents of geographical proximity. In our comings and goings we are less dependent on the concurrence of others. Our ability to gain observational experience of an extended immediate environment is notably enhanced. And for all of the preceding options, access is far more open and democratic than was the case in pre-automobile eras. The automobile is, arguably, rivaled only by the printing press (and perhaps within a few more years by the microchip) as an autonomy-enhancing contrivance of technology.

For just as worthy of notice as the unpleasantness of stop-and-go commuting is the fact of how many people voluntarily subject themselves to it.

No one who has ever been caught up in rush hour gridlock will maintain that commuting to and from work is an unalloyed joy. Competing with tens of thousands of other motorists for scarce expanses of asphalt can be reminiscent of the Hobbesian war of all against all. For critics of the automobile, this is not a negligible point. But neither are its implications entirely clear-cut. For just as worthy of notice as the unpleasantness of stop-and-go commuting is the fact of how many people voluntarily subject themselves to it. Have they not realized how much time they are wasting in overly close proximity to their steering wheels? Such inadvertence isn't plausible. Rather, it is evident that people who, individually and collectively, could have devised for themselves residential and occupational patterns not incorporating lengthy commutes chose to do otherwise. In their judgment, the costs of commuting are amply compensated by the benefits thereby derived. The more the critics emphasize the magnitude of the costs, the more these critics underscore, knowingly or otherwise, the extent of the benefits.

Commentators from the Greek philosophers to Adam Smith and Karl

Marx have noted that the nature of the work one does largely shapes the quality of life one leads. To do work suited to oneself in a satisfactory environment is for nearly all of us a great good, while to perform alienating labor under unfriendly and unhealthy conditions is a correspondingly great evil. Similarly, to reside in a comfortable and functional dwelling situated in a neighborhood one finds pleasing is also a considerable good. For most people throughout human history, neither occupation nor place of residence has afforded more than a negligible range of choice. One did the work one's father or mother did, or to which one had been apprenticed, or which was the kind of work available in that place. And one lived where one must or where one could.

The increased affluence and openness of liberal capitalist society vastly expanded the range of choice. But not until the coming of the automobile were they essentially disaggregated. Previously one either lived in direct proximity to one's work or else on a commuter rail line. But motorists were not bound by the geography of the New York, Hew Haven, & Hartford tracks. Depending on how much time they were willing to invest in transit, they could live at considerable distance from where they worked while also being emancipated from mass transit rigidities. Cultured despisers of the idiocy of suburban existence can and do find this a circumstance to decry, but millions of Americans (and, increasingly, the rest of the world) disagree. Yet even if one believes for aesthetic or other reasons that row upon row of bungalows or ersatz Tudor houses miles distant from the city or industrial area to which they are connected by roadways represent a less attractive form of neighborhood than others that human beings have devised, it can hardly be denied that these are genuinely an object of choice by those who live there. Even banality, we might say, has its rights. To respect the autonomy of persons is to acknowledge that expanding the options people have with regard to combining work and place of residence is, as such, a plus.

The more the critics emphasize the magnitude of the costs, the more these critics underscore, knowingly or otherwise, the extent of the benefits.

19th century socialist reformers decried the enhanced ability of industrial capitalism's factory system to exploit workers. Human labor, they charged, was depreciated to the status of an appendage of mill or machine. Although it could reasonably be contended in response (as Hayek famously did in *Capitalism and the Historians*) that those workers who voluntarily abandoned their rural domiciles for the factory town did so only because they themselves regarded the latter as affording a net improvement, it must nonetheless be conceded that their situation was not enviable. They may have enjoyed a standard of living higher than that available to them on the farm, but work was grueling and opportunities for self-directed choice were minimal. Against the oppression of industrial society these reformers contrived various nostrums, one family of which, now mercifully defunct, oppressed millions of unfortunate souls throughout most of this century.

No syndicalist scheme or string of workers' cooperatives remotely approaches the automobile as an emancipatory instrument. Insofar as it

extended the feasible range of commuting between residence and labor, the coming of the motor car augmented the bargaining power enjoyed by workers. A company town does not offer much scope for alternate employment opportunities. To change jobs will very likely require changing place of residence, and exit costs of both pecuniary and nonpecuniary sorts may render that prohibitive. However, widespread automobile ownership meant that the geographical radius of possible employment venues was dramatically extended. This in turn meant that the market for labor came more closely to approximate the economists' model of many sellers and many buyers. In theory, under a legal regime of free contract workers always enjoyed the right to terminate their employment when they wished to do so, but in practice this liberty often proved too costly for exercise except in the most extreme cases. Automobility lowered those costs significantly. It is at a time when car ownership had become almost universal that the country music song "Take This Job and Shove It" became something of an anthem for the disaffected. Judgments of musical aesthetics aside, this must be accounted desirable by those who value choice not only formalistically, but as the existence of genuine live options. So understood, Detroit has done more for the liberation and dignity of labor than all the Socialist Internationals combined.

Choice of residence is a major avenue through which Americans exercise their right to free association. To choose a neighborhood is the macro-level correlate to choosing one's friends.

Liberation can also be observed when viewing the employment-residence nexus from the other direction. The ability to choose where one will live makes a considerable difference to the exercise of self-determination. Life in the suburbs is not inherently better than life in the central city, but it is different. To the extent that one possesses a real opportunity to choose between them, one is thereby able to give effect to significant values that shape the contours of a life. The city may offer ready access to arts and education, a succession of ethnic neighborhoods, a feel of drive and vitality, an ambience that "swings." But it can also be dirty, expensive and dangerous. Exurban life may provide peaceful neighborliness, gardens and green spots, family-oriented activities that take place in the home or the mall. But it can also be antiseptic, provincial, stultifying. To choose the one is to relinquish (some of) what the other affords. So which is the better alternative? Each person must answer for herself based on her own conceptions of what matters most. To the extent that she is geographically mobile, the question is answered by an act of positive choice rather than through inertia or extraneous constraints such as the location of one's place of employment.

Choice of residence is a major avenue through which Americans exercise their right to free association. To choose a neighborhood is the macro-level correlate to choosing one's friends. One thereby decides with whom one will live. And perhaps even more importantly, one decides with whom one won't live. "Leaving home" is how in contemporary society one signifies a full coming of age and the concomitant entitlement to direct one's own projects as an adult. But then comes the necessity of finding and making a home in a neighborhood to which one has a tie at least in part because one has freely chosen to live there rather than somewhere else. And this too

signifies and gives effect to one's values. Some people prize a high degree of homogeneity with regard to race or religion or age or economic class among those with whom they will most frequently associate. Others prefer a heterogeneous diversity of different ages, skin tones, and backgrounds from which casual acquaintances and intimate friendships will emerge. It would be to wander away from the theme of this essay to consider whether one of these preferences deserves more admiration than the other, but even if one believes it an unfortunate matter when people choose to segregate themselves from those who are different along the relevant dimension — or conversely, unfortunate when they defect from tightly-knit ethnic communities — an ethic that endorses autonomy must acknowledge that, the content of individual choices aside, it is a good thing that people are able to make up their own minds and then act on that decision concerning where they will live.

Detroit has done more for the liberation and dignity of labor than all the Socialist Internationals combined.

Cars more flexibly and more frequently than anything else are what get us from one place to another. If we can, consistently with work and other commitments, conveniently drive to a place, then it passes the first test of eligibility as a possible place of domicile. (This may, due to that other great choice-enhancing device, the microchip, change as more and more individuals are able to telecommute.) Despite the fact that critics of the automobile are also frequently critics of what they take to be a dreary suburban sameness, within reasonable commuting distance of virtually every urban center in this country are dozens of towns and neighborhoods that differ significantly one from another — perhaps not with regard to factors these critics take to be momentous but certainly along dimensions that the men and women behind the steering wheels of those cars consider important. And from the perspective of autonomy, it is their criteria that matter.

V. MOBILITY AND KNOWLEDGE

For much the same reasons that automobility and autonomy are good things, so too is knowledge. Like self-moving, knowing affords us a firmer grip on our world. Indeed, the goods of choice and knowledge are complementary. A simple example will help illustrate that relationship.

Automobiles enhance mobility, and mobility enhances knowledge.

Consider a shopper in a supermarket deciding whether to buy the can on the left or the can on the right. The labels on both cans have been removed, so it is anyone's guess whether one of the cans holds tuna fish or shoe polish or bamboo shoots. How much value is there to the shopper's freedom to choose between them? The obvious answer is "Not much." The minimal ability to distinguish between them as "left can" and "right can" does not afford enough information for the individual to make any judgment concerning which of the cans is more likely to serve her ends. The "choice" is only vestigial.

Now suppose that the label is restored to one of the cans. The shopper now knows it to contain mushrooms. The value of choosing has gone up. The

magnitude of the increase depends on how this added bit of knowledge fits in with the shopper's various attitudes. If she either strongly likes or dislikes mushrooms, then she has been given some solid basis for picking between the cans. But not as good a reason as she would have if the other can were labeled too. And further knowledge concerning particulars of taste, nutrition, quantity and so on further render the choice one in which the shopper is able to give effect to the values that are distinctively her own. We might say, paraphrasing Kant, that choice without knowledge is blind, knowledge without choice is impotent.

Automobiles enhance mobility, and mobility enhances knowledge. Recall the Section II discussion of the relationship between self-moving and perception in Aristotle's biological theory. Insofar as the area within which one is able to direct one's self-aware movements is increased, so too is the range of one's knowledge-gathering capacities. The knowledge in question is, in the first instance, local knowledge. By traveling through, around, and within a place, one comes to know it in its particularity. And for this kind of knowledge there is no very close substitute. I may have read a score of books about Paris, but if I have never visited the City of Lights, if I have never traversed its streets and bridges and market places, then it would be false for me to claim, "I know Paris." For knowledge of a place is not reducible to possessing many facts about that place any more than one knowing another person is equivalent to having read a very detailed resume about her. Philosophers often distinguish between *knowledge by description* and *knowledge by acquaintance*, and for the latter mobility is often essential.

For genuine exploration at long or intermediate range, the car dominates all else.

Of course, automobiles are not the only form of transportation that serves to increase local knowledge, and for some versions of local knowledge they may serve poorly. One such case may well be that described in the preceding paragraph; for up-close knowledge of a city like Paris the vehicle of choice may still be shoes. All forms of transportation from walking to bicycling to trains, buses, ships and airplanes are knowledge-enhancing. But, with the possible exception of the motorcycle — another means of transportation assailed by no shortage of critics — no other form of transportation combines local maneuverability with extended range to the degree that the automobile does. The train can move me from one city to another at intermediate distance from it and afford me the opportunity of viewing the terrain in between. But it allows only a limited number of stopping places along the way, the speed may be slower or faster than one would wish for optimal information-gathering, and the route will be exactly the same on the thousandth trip as it was on the first. Airplanes excel for speed, but everything between point of departure and destination is a blank. Walking is a wonderful way to observe a neighborhood, but even to take in the opposite end of a village, let alone state or country, it is inadequate. For genuine exploration at long or intermediate range, the car dominates all else.

But should this sort of knowledge be accounted for much? The question deserves to be addressed. Few of the automobile's critics have a word to say about the knowledge-enhancing aspects of automobility, either because they have never considered the automobile from the perspective of information gathering, or because they implicitly suppose that what one learns while behind a steering wheel is trivial. But these critics are not representative of the population at large. They are intellectuals and information processors of one stripe or another, and so they are most at home with information that can be synthesized in books or graphs or computerized data bases. That which can't be measured, quantified, and represented symbolically is not the substance of their trade and therefore tends to be depreciated. But the information to be gained from reading a history book or running a regression is not the only sort that can importantly enter into individuals' pursuits. Knowledge need not be grand or profound to be valuable in itself and as a complement to choice. If I drive north along the lake to see how the autumn leaves up there have turned and whether the Canadian geese are still milling or have flown, then I may have gained an item of experience that I take to be inherently valuable. Driving through the various neighborhoods of a city reveals where the bakeries and hair dressers and Thai restaurants are located, who is having a garage sale this week and which parts of town are becoming distinctly seedier. Teen-agers cruising the "main drag" are on an epistemological mission in which they are motivated by the hope of sniffing out the whereabouts of others of a suitable age and gender. And even the stereotypically boorish bermuda-shorts-clad tourists with their vans and videocams and surly children in tow may actually be uplifted by the sights of the civil war battlefield or seaside to which they have driven.

When the range within which one moves about becomes extended, so too does the range of one's potential base of knowledge.

When the range within which one moves about becomes extended, so too does the range of one's potential base of knowledge. And the automobile is the quintessential range extender, not only by lengthening the trips one can take but also by multiplying the number of available routes. The sort of knowledge that has been emphasized in the preceding discussion is knowledge by acquaintance, but automobility also extends one's ability to acquire other kinds of knowledge. Cars do not only go to malls and theme parks but also to libraries, universities, and museums. Urban centers of learning are rendered accessible on a regular basis to those who live many miles distant. The traditional derogatory image of the unlettered "country bumpkin" has been rendered increasingly obsolete by a number of technologies — telephone, television, now computer — but not least among them is the prevalence of the automobile.

VI. THE WHEELS OF PRIVACY

Another complement to autonomy is *privacy*. Someone who is

private has a life of his own. That is, he is someone who is not entirely defined and constrained by a public persona. Some quantum of privacy, therefore, is requisite for the capacity to be self-determining in the way that an adjunct to a greater whole or an organic part of an organism is not. An individual is private only to the extent that some part of his persona belongs primarily to him and not to the world in general. That is why one of the most basic encroachments on privacy is being inappropriately viewed during a moment of intimacy or vulnerability. In an extended sense, privacy incorporates not only perceptual access but also knowledge or control others may have over oneself.

What constitutes an invasion of privacy is not fixed by our nature as human beings, but is relative both to more or less arbitrary convention and to the arbitrary conditions that govern the possibility of forging an identity that is distinctively one's own. "A man's home is his castle" represents one early manifestation of this impulse. The king is powerful and the king reigns, but to the commoner is vouchsafed one little corner of the realm in which it is he and not the king who enjoys (quasi) regal prerogatives. Rights not to be subject to search and seizure without due process of law and a right not to be obliged to incriminate oneself are further manifestations. They are expressive of the conviction that personal dignity imposes limits on mandatory liability to the scrutiny of others.

In an extended sense, privacy incorporates not only perceptual access but also knowledge or control others may have over oneself.

Some ancient conceptions of privacy endorsed a radical withdrawal from one's fellows. The hermit or anchorite should not be seen essentially as a misanthrope but rather as someone who by separating himself from other human beings thereby draws closer to his God. (Jesus in the wilderness is for Christian civilization the paradigmatic instance; there are many others.) A slightly less radical version is voluntary sequestration with a few like-minded others away from the main crossroads of urban life: this is the monastic impulse. From Qumran by the Dead Sea to Koresh at Waco, sectarians have acted on the belief that they could achieve a greater inner and external freedom by isolating themselves from the majority culture. And when that majority culture nonetheless forcibly impinges on them, results typically are tragic.

Previously, the discussion of mobility has focused on the value to individuals of being able to approach and enjoy particular goods. But the concern for privacy underscores the concomitant importance of being able to distance oneself from that which is threatening. If too many eyes are on me where I am, then I shall enhance my privacy by moving myself out from under the spotlight of public scrutiny. For most of us the relevant degree of privacy rarely involves isolation from all others but usually does require the capacity to exercise a significant degree of discretionary control over who will have access to one's body and mind. The adolescent who goes out to "do nothing" is thereby claiming a measure of privacy vis-à-vis his parents; a fishing trip may have less to do with what is caught than it does with taking oneself off of invasive social hooks.

The automobile is for 20th century American society the quintessential bastion of privacy. For many of us, it's the Honda, rather than the home, that is the castle. Ironically or not, those minutes between home and office on a freeway clogged past capacity with tens of thousands of other cars may be one's most private time of the day. (By saying this I do not mean to slight the credentials of the other great solitude-enhancing device of our culture, the bathroom.) One who loves his wife and children, delights in the company of friends, and works compatibly alongside colleagues may nonetheless relish the possession of a short time each day to be alone with himself. There is not necessarily anything antisocial about this. Intermediate periods of solitude can fuel bouts of gregariousness and sociality just as an astringent serves to clean the palate between sumptuous courses.

Social planners are wont to gnash their teeth at the number of motorists who could arrange to carpool to work but instead "inefficiently" take up roadway space with a solitary occupant car that could carry several times as many people. Diamond lanes and other inducements have only a limited effect on average occupancy statistics. This may be viewed as a failure of policy, but it can also be seen as a reasonable and in some ways estimable response to the valid human desire for privacy. "It is not good for the man to be alone," says Scripture, but for those whose lives are lived among a surfeit of others, sometimes it is very good indeed to be alone. The closing of the car door can provide a welcome shutting out of the rest of the world so as to allow a recapturing of the self by the self — as opposed to its usual embeddedness in an array of intersecting public spaces. That is not to say that carpools are a bad thing, or that there are not demonstrable respects in which we would be better off if more people doubled and tripled up before taking to the roads. Privacy in virtually all its forms, including that afforded by the automobile, is a good to which significant costs come attached. (Think of the private room vs. the hospital ward.) I shall not dispute here whether the costs incidental to automotive privacy exceed the benefits; my point is rather that there are genuine benefits going beyond the merely instrumental facility in getting from here to there that attach to driving solo. Any cost-benefit analysis that aims to be unbiased must acknowledge that privacy is a positively-valued good and then proceed from there.

The automobile is for 20th century American society the quintessential bastion of privacy. For many of us, it's the Honda, rather than the home, that is the castle.

Being alone is one aspect of privacy but it is not, I believe, the most central. What is more salient to privacy even than the distancing of oneself from others is a (re)gaining of control over one's immediate environment. I may be surrounded by other people, but if I am able to determine to a significant degree what they shall be allowed to perceive of me and know about me and impose on me, then to that extent I have retained a private self. Surely one reason for the fondness people often hold for their cars and for automobility in general is the scope of control over one's immediate environment. It is not only that by turning the wheel clockwise and counterclockwise the driver makes choices concerning the external environment thtough which she will move herself; by other manipulations she arranges the internal environment to

her liking. Pushing one button turns on the radio. Pushing another changes the station, the volume, turns off the radio and switches to the tape player. It is one's own choice whether to listen to news reports, Beethoven, Beatles or nothing at all. Next to the switches for the stereo are those for climate control, washing the windows, blinking one's lights, perhaps even a cellular phone. (Because the access this item of technology supplies is incoming as well as outgoing, an assessment of whether it extends or diminishes privacy is double-edged.) More permanent features are the vehicle's make, model, style, color, and options, all of these objects of one-time choice. "Responsiveness" is one of the features written up in automobile reviews. This has a limited meaning in the context of evaluating how a vehicle performs, but there is also a larger responsiveness that is unique to automobiles among all forms of personal transportation. An individual exercises control over the internal environment of her car in a manner that is not possible with any alternate mode of getting around.

An individual exercises control over the internal environment of her car in a manner that is not possible with any alternate mode of getting around.

Contrast the privacy-enhancing features of the automobile with a typical (typical, that is, based on the author's recent experience) commute by public transportation. As one walks down the stairs to the subway, one's nostrils are greeted by a subtle aroma of urine and garbage. If it is rush hour the platform is clogged with many milling people, and so one tries to be careful neither to knock nor be knocked into. When traveling will actually commence is not in one's own hands but rather depends on whether the train will be on time or delayed. Being able to sit is a matter of luck. So too is the company one will keep. A man of indeterminate years holding a hat in his hand is trekking through the train car by car. He begs the attention of the passengers, tells them that he has no job, no place to sleep, no money. Dope, he announces, has scrambled his brain. That probably is true; he twitches, smells bad, looks unhealthy. Some people drop a quarter into the hat, most don't. A few minutes later three kids come through, break into song for a mercifully brief period, smile, wait to get paid. The singing displayed few aesthetic gifts, but the boys' smiles are rather shark-like. Maybe another quarter is dropped in another hat, maybe not. Between bumpings of the car and the performances of these itinerants one may manage to read a few New York Times column inches. Eventually one arrives at one's destination.

Again, I am not arguing against mass transportation. In some urban settings it is the only realistic way in which large quantities of people can be moved through small spaces in a reasonable amount of time. The point, rather, is that public transportation necessarily encroaches on privacy. On a New York subway the encroachment tends to be great, with other modalities it may be considerably smaller. Whatever the extent of the encroachment, it must be accounted on the debit side if privacy itself is a credit. How to work out the magnitudes is the tricky part, and that is an exercise that will vary in proportion to differences in individual temperament and preference structures. But once we focus attentively on the good that is privacy, it will no longer appear obvious to us that rush hour gridlock on highways is an unacceptably high price to pay

for the opportunity to be one's own man or woman behind the wheel of one's own car. Appealing to popular practice is not decisive in these matters, if only because there may be some extraneous force that perversely shapes such practice, but it does count as evidence. The fact that millions of people who bear no obvious marks of incompetence elect to drive when they might otherwise at equal or lower financial cost to themselves employ some means of public transportation indicates that for them automobility is a positive good rather than a necessary evil.

VII. THE ROAD FROM SERFDOM

The preceding sections of this essay have argued that the automobile does not merit the opprobrium its critics have showered on it. These reflections took up some very general features of automobile usage, features that obtain across nearly the whole range of interactions between motorists and their machine. I could have but did not discuss more specialized enjoyments of automobiles: for example, exhilarating in the speed of a high-powered sports vehicle taken flat out, the enthusiast's loving application of wax to a cherished collector car, the teen-age boy half buried under the hood of the beat-up Ford whose engine he is tweaking for one last little bit of extra performance. These too are automobile dividends, but because they appeal to special tastes it was judged that their inclusion might distract from the main normative significance of automobility. But even with regard only to what is most general, there is ample reason to maintain that the ethical status of automobility is quite high.

But once we focus attentively on the good that is privacy, it will no longer appear obvious that rush hour gridlock on highways is an unacceptably high price to pay.

Why, then, has motoring fallen under such a cloud? Why does ostensibly enlightened opinion find it a bane and a nuisance? Three possible reasons suggest themselves. First, although the critics acknowledge the range of goods afforded by automobility, they have identified accompanying evils that drastically outweigh the goods. Second, the critics may have been oblivious to the various autonomy-enhancing features of automobility. Third, they may have recognized these features but regard them as goods of a much lesser status than I have claimed for them or, indeed, even as negatively valued.

It certainly true that the case against the automobile has been driven home with lengthy recitations of the social ills it fosters. I listed several of these in the opening section of this essay: polluting the air and littering the landscape with rusting steel cadavers, dependence on foreign oil suppliers, gridlock, the multitude of bodies that are mangled each year in road accidents, and so on. Let us grant that each of these is an evil. Still, as I noted in that section, these are not intrinsic to the practice of automobility as such but rather are undesirable side effects of its pursuit. In a proper accounting they will be balanced against the various goods toward the securing of which the automobile is instrumental. The overwhelming popularity of automobility among ordinary shoppers, commuters, suburbanites schlepping around the kids, and

The fact that millions of people elect to drive when they might otherwise employ some means of public transportation indicates that for them automobility is a positive good rather than a necessary evil.

Sunday drivers just out for a spin offers presumptive evidence that the magnitude of these goods is quite high. Precise measures can be left to the econometricians and their professional kin, but since I am not of that family, I shall offer no estimate concerning magnitudes but instead suggest two different points.

First, the cited ills do not support a general indictment of the automobile and the attempts to roll back its use. Rather, the indicated remedy is to adopt policies that more exactly make those who generate costs also bear them. Taxes and regulatory controls should be aimed at those vehicles that excessively pollute or present more than normal dangers to others; differential pricing for peak and off-peak access to highways is well within the capabilities of currently available technology; and so on. Well-aimed attentiveness to particular avoidable costs is commendable; wholesale denunciations of automobility are not.

Second, what is conspicuously left off the balance sheet of instrumental values and disvalues is the intrinsic goodness of automobility as promoting autonomy and autonomy-complements like free association and privacy. Even if purely instrumental calculations did not unambiguously display a positive balance in favor of automobility, the autonomy-enhancing aspects of this practice are so pronounced both qualitatively and quantitatively that any plausibly adequate normative evaluation of the status of automobile usage must give them primary attention.

Could the automobile's critics have failed to observe that cars support autonomy? If these effects were slight and subtle that might be a reasonable supposition. But we have seen that they are not, that when compared with alternate means of transportation, the automobile stands out as the vehicle of self-directedness par excellence. Not to observe this would be like visiting the mammal area at the zoo and failing to notice that the elephants are rather larger than the zebras, camels, and wart hogs.

People who drive automobiles upset the patterns spun from the policy intellectual's brain.

Rather, I am convinced that the automobile's most strident critics are well aware of the fact that automobility promotes autonomy — and that is precisely why they are so wary of it. To be in the business of formulating policy is to be professionally predisposed to consider people as so many knights, rooks, and pawns to be moved around on the social chessboard in the service of one's grand strategy. Not all analysts succumb to this temptation, but many do. Their patron saint is the philosopher Plato, the utopian architect of the ideal Republic who embraces propaganda campaigns ("Noble Lie"), eugenic breeding, radical property redistribution schemes and — most tellingly — rule exercised by people just like himself, the Philosopher-Kings. If one sincerely believes that one knows what is best, and if one benevolently desires to gift one's fellows with this treasure, their obdurate insistence on continuing to do things in their own preferred way can be maddening. "I'll give you what's good for you" is the policy specialist's vow, first delivered in the soft tones of a

promise and then, after experiencing rejection, in the clipped cadences of a threat.

People who drive automobiles upset the patterns spun from the policy intellectual's brain. The precise urban design that he has concocted loses out to suburban sprawl; neat integration of work, residence and shopping within compact, multi-purpose developments gives way to bedroom communities here, industrial parks there, and malls everywhere in between. If people rode buses and trains whenever they could, less oil would be burned and fewer acres of countryside would be paved over. Perhaps there would be more mixing between races and classes. Perhaps communities of an old-fashioned sort where everyone knew her neighbor would be restored. Perhaps the central city would come alive again other than between the hours of 9 and 5. Perhaps . . .; but why go on? These lovely visions are blocked by the free choices of men and women who resist all blandishments to leave their cars in the garage. They wish to drive, and by doing so they powerfully express their autonomy, but their exercises of choice also have the effect of rendering the planners' conceptions moot. So the intellectuals sulk in their tents and grumpily call to mind utopias that might have been.

Many of the missiles launched at the automobile are motivated by a disinclination to tolerate individual autonomy.

Although this essay was stimulated in the first instance by a conviction that the critics of the automobile had, at best, offered distinctly one-sided appraisals, my aim here has been to develop the positive case for the value of automobility, not to respond point by point to the items in the brief against the automobile. (And, of course, with some of these points I am staunchly in agreement.) I do wish to suggest, however, that many of the argumentative missiles launched at the automobile are more fully intelligible if one understands them as motivated at least as much by a disinclination to tolerate individual autonomy as they are by any particular facet of automobile technology. Let me offer one example.

If there is anything less loved by the critics than cars it is the roads that they are driven on. If existing highways are too congested to support the quantity of traffic that squeezes along them, would it not be desirable to build more roads to relieve that gridlock? No! respond the critics. They oppose the construction of more highways on the grounds that no sooner is a spanking new road opened to divert some of the flow from overused arteries than it too becomes engorged with traffic. The ultimate consequence is yet another venue for tedious stop-and-go automotive crawling. Better, then, not to waste any more dollars on futile freeway building. And this usually is when the subject turns to mass transportation subsidies and new imposts on automobiles.

I am convinced that the automobile's most strident critics are well aware of the fact that automobility promotes autonomy — and that is precisely why they are so wary of it.

This argument is, I am sure, familiar to most readers. But consider how odd it would sound if the context were changed. I am in the business of teaching philosophy classes. Suppose that my class in the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant were very popular such that every seat is filled and there is a waiting list for entry into it. (Alas, the supposition is counterfactual.) And

suppose further that when the philosophy department opens a new section of the class it too becomes quickly oversubscribed. And the same for a third and then a fourth section. Should we conclude that it is futile to keep pumping resources into Kant pedagogy, that instead we ought to use that money for a Nautilus machine in the football training room? That would be preposterous. Instead my colleagues and I would rejoice in what gave every appearance of being a renaissance of philosophy in northwestern Ohio.

There is no such renaissance for Kant instruction, at least not yet. But for other items such overflowing demand is observable. McDonald's is very successful at selling hamburgers. They have thousands of establishments in which they do so, and many of these establishments are, at rush hour, filled with lines of people in pursuit of Big Macs and Chicken McNuggets. When McDonald's opens a new franchise, it also soon becomes congested with consumers who have to wait in lines to place their orders. Should we therefore conclude that it is futile to invest resources in more Golden Arches?

The planner's lovely visions are blocked by the free choices of men and women who resist all blandishments to leave their cars in the garage.

No matter how many millions of instructions per second microprocessors perform, people keep demanding more and faster CPU's. Intel gives them the new generation top of the line chip, and almost immediately people start impatiently clamoring for its successor. Should we conclude from this observed insatiability that resources invested in computing power have been wasted?

As with Big Macs and Pentium processors, highways receive heavy utilization because millions of people judge that driving enhances their lives. The striking feature of the critique of highway building programs is that what should be taken as a sign of great, indeed overwhelming success is instead presented as a mark of failure. But the only failure has been with the critics' attempts to talk people out of their cars and out of the neighborhoods and workplaces that their cars have rendered accessible. If the argument of this paper is sound, it shows that the failure of these critics' persuasive appeals is well-deserved. Automobile motoring is good because people wish to engage in it, and they wish to engage in it because it is inherently good.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Loren E. Lomasky is Professor of Philosophy at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. He is the author of *Persons, Rights, and the Moral Community* (Oxford University Press, 1987) and *Democracy and Decision* (Cambridge University Press, 1993). He received his Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut.