

Spring 2022

DIALOGOS

(Greek: To See Through to Meaning)

A Magazine of the Institute for the Study of Western Civilization

Nations on the Brink



MISSION: To improve our understanding of how we came to be who we are, why we think the way we do and what assumptions about the world and human nature trace back to earlier periods in the 5,000 years of Western civilization.

From the Editor

Why Russia? (Reprisal)



By Michele McCarthy

Who would have thought that since the last issue of *DIALOGOS*, devoted entirely to the subject of Russia and its place in Western civilization, all eyes of the world would be riveted to this very subject today? You may recall that last fall, for the first time ever, our founder and director Dr. William Fredlund offered a complete academic year's study on the history of Russia. Many of his students in that class are from Ukraine! As you can imagine, much time has been spent in class discussing and agonizing over the war in Ukraine.

So it is only fitting that Dr. Fredlund address the current geopolitical landscape in Europe from a historical perspective as he does in this issue. In addition, two other friends of the Institute offer their particular insights into two other hotspots around the globe —Taiwan and Afghanistan. Find

this feature article “Nations on the Brink” on page 8.

On a personal note, many of you probably know that I left California last September to move to Chattanooga, TN. When that opportunity did not work out for me, I decided to embark on a tour of the South, starting February 1, in search of quality of life and affordable housing. (So I can totally relate to this quote from *Why We Drive: Toward a Philosophy of the Open Road*: “It is therefore not surprising that some of our best stories retell episodes from the road and often convey contingency and adventure of exploration.” Book review on page 13.) I visited Pensacola, FL; Savannah, GA; Augusta, GA; Anderson, SC; Greenville, SC; Winston-Salem, NC; Asheville, NC; Knoxville, TN; and Cookeville, TN. My odyssey ended on March 26 at which point I decided to focus on Asheville where I’ve been since, looking at property, talking to lenders—and of course,



That's not snow. It's the white sands of Pensacola Beach on a chilly 48-degree day on February 5, 2022.

working remotely for the Institute! I'm hoping my gypsy life will be over soon. Stay tuned.



Got Opinions?

Have you read anything in *DIALOGOS* you'd like to comment on? Send your thoughts to Michele McCarthy:

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Submissions may be edited for length based on space available.

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Who's Who at the Institute Denise Baeriswyl

DENISE BAERISWYL

is an office associate at the Institute. As an upstate New York Adirondack native from the historic Revolutionary War areas of Lake Champlain and Fort Ticonderoga, Denise grew up in a small town on Lake George where she went on to raise her family, work in various part-

time positions including at the Silver Bay Association YMCA Conference Center, serve in her church, and volunteer as a New York state-certified EMT until moving to California in 1993. In California she spent her time primarily as a homemaker and caregiver for her late husband and serving her church in Sunnyvale. Eventually this led to making the acquaintance of her dear friend and neighbor Grace Fagalde, who introduced her to the Institute... and she was hooked! Beginning as a volunteer with Grace, Denise became part of the staff five years ago when a position opened up in the front office. She loves working at the Institute and coming to lectures with her new husband Stuart— with whom she went on their first date to an Institute lecture! She thoroughly enjoys working with the Institute staff. Her favorite part of the job is working with the attendees, both in person and on the phone. Denise and Stuart recently moved to a new home in Scotts Valley where they are enjoying being part of the Monteville community and living where they can hike and be closer to the ocean.



Odysseys

A Pilgrimage to Chartres

By Patricia Fredlund, Travel Guide Editor

Chartres Cathedral is considered by many art experts to be the most perfect Gothic cathedral in France. It uses all the structural elements of Gothic architecture—the pointed arch, the rib-and-panel vault, the flying buttress, and most significantly, the two differing spires that demonstrate the evolution of medieval design. The cathedral is also celebrated for its many stained glass windows and sculptures. Because most of its 12th-and 13th-century stained glass and sculpture survives, Chartres Cathedral is one of the best preserved medieval churches. The labyrinth inlaid into the floor is world famous and is the basis for labyrinth projects around the globe.

On August 16, 1944 during the intervention of the American troops in Chartres, the cathedral was saved from destruction thanks to the American colonel Welborn Barton Griffith, Jr. (1901-1944), who questioned the order he was given to destroy the cathedral. The Americans believed that Chartres Cathedral was being used by the enemy. The belief was that the steeples and towers were being used by snipers. Griffith, accompanied by a volunteer soldier, instead decided to go and verify whether or not the Germans were using the cathedral. Griffith climbed to the top of the tower and could see that the cathedral was empty, so he had the cathedral bells rung as a signal for the Americans not to shoot.

Upon hearing the bells, the American command rescinded the order for destruction. Notre-Dame de Chartres had been saved. Sadly, Colonel Griffith died in combat action that same day, in the town of Lèves near Chartres.

Sleep

The incredibly lovely town of Chartres can be visited on an overnight trip from Paris. William and I drove there in a rented car, but you could just as easily travel by train. Once you are in Chartres, you will not really need a car since everything you want to see is walkable. For lodging, I suggest the **Mercure Hotel**, a reasonably-priced hotel (less than \$200 a night for two) close to a fabulous underground car park and right in the center of town. It is a perfect location with or without a car. The rooms are comfortable with air conditioning individually controlled. It is also a great place to watch the evening light show that occurs all across the city in the summer months.

If traveling by car, head right to the Place des Epars. The best city parking





garage we have ever seen in Europe is located right under the Place des Epars. It is clean, well lit, easy in and out, and reasonably priced with attendants 24 hours a day. Upstairs and across the street is the Hotel Mercure.

Eat

The only thing missing at the hotel is a restaurant. It just has a snack bar downstairs. But a wonderful dinner awaits next door at **Le Geôrges** in the Best Western Grand Monarque Hotel. Now when an American hears “Best Western” they are not likely to think of a great restaurant, but in this case they would be wrong. It is an extremely attractive dining room, spacious and luxurious. We had a truly magnificent meal.

While you are outside the cathedral in the plaza, check out the small tours available. Especially fun is a night tour to see the light show on 24 historic buildings around town. Or, if you are a little tired from the day’s touring, you could do what we did: Watch the light show from your room window at the Mercure Hotel!

Notre-Dame de Chartres Cathedral

16 Notre-Dame Cloister, 28000 Chartres

Phone: +33 2 37 21 59 08

Website: cathedrale-chartres.org

Open: Monday—Saturday, 9:30 am—12 noon, 2-5 pm

Different evening hours Sunday, Tuesday, Friday

June—August

Labyrinth open: Lent through November 1, Friday
(Visit website for more info.)

Mercure Chartres Centre Cathédrale Hotel

3 rue du General Koenig, 28000 Chartres

Phone: +33 2 37 33 11 11

Email: H7386@ACCOR.COM

Website: all.accor.com/hotel/7386/index.en.shtml

Restaurant Le Geôrges

22 Place des Epars, 28000 Chartres

Phone: +33 2 37 18 15 15

Email: info@monarque.fr

Website: grand-monarque.com/fr/restaurant-bar/restaurant-le-georges

Open: Tuesday—Saturday, 12-1:30 pm, 7:30-9:30 pm

Notable Books from the Classroom

Traveling Without a Baedeker

By Joan Niemeier, Chief Financial Officer of the
Institute for the Study of Western Civilization

In the early pages of E. M. Forster's 1908 novel *A Room with a View*, the novelist Eleanor Lavish abandons her young companion, Lucy Honeychurch, on the square in front of Florence's Church of Santa Croce. Eleanor runs across the square to visit another friend, taking Lucy's copy of *Baedeker's Italy* with her. In very low spirits, Lucy enters Santa Croce on her own. She is miffed at being abandoned, feels slightly humiliated, and is very unsure of herself. In the 1985 Merchant and Ivory film version, it is Lucy's aunt Charlotte Bartlett (played by Maggie Smith) who is chastised by Eleanor Lavish (played by Judy Dench) for referring to the Baedeker travel guide instead of allowing herself to drift through the historic city and revel in its sights and smells. Either way, the scenes are humorous and work well. Lucy goes into the church as she must, for Forster's Lucy is to be transformed during her trip, not just educated about art.

The essential coming-of-age trip to the continent became popular for upper-class Englishmen in the 17th century as a way of marking the transition to

adulthood while providing cultural enrichment. Eventually this life-changing experience was extended to young women. Karl Baedeker (1801-1859) was a German publisher who improved upon the existing English travel guides of John Murray by adding more information about routes, modes of travel, and places to stay. In 1846 he introduced into his handbooks a star rating system for sights, attractions, and lodgings. Karl Baedeker's company continued to publish handbooks after his early death, and they became the indispensable travel guides for visitors on the Grand Tour of Europe in the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

Can a 21st century traveler plan a "Grand Tour" without the well-chosen equivalent of a Baedeker? Since few people have the time or the money to just drift, modern travel is frequently over-planned. An incredible number of available guides help in this planning—Frommer, Fodor, etc.—as well as online help regarding reservations, ticketing, and travel information published by the sites themselves and hotels seeking clientele.

One of the more interesting examples of pre-Baedeker journeying and the spectacularly transforming results of travel comes from the Renaissance period.

One of the more interesting examples of pre-Baedeker journeying and the spectacularly transforming results of travel comes from the Renaissance period. **Albrecht Dürer** of Nuremburg (1471-1528), who worked first for his

father in the family's goldsmith workshop and then trained under the painter Michael Wolgemut, took several major journeys:

- In 1490-1494 to major cities west of Nuremberg, including Strasbourg, Colmar and Basel as part of his Wanderjahre, the “journey years” at the end of an apprenticeship
- In 1494-1495 and 1505-1507 to Venice and other northern Italian cities including Bologna, Padua, Verona, Pavia, and Mantua, meeting and working with major Italian artists and humanists
- In 1520-1521 (the only trip that included his wife Agnes) through the German cities of Wurzburg and Frankfurt to the Low Countries (Netherlands) including Aachen, Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp, and Cologne, where he was celebrated as a great and influential artist who had Emperor Charles V as his patron

Having seen prints of works by Andrea Mantegna and Antonio Pollaiuolo while training with Wolgemut, the young Dürer set out for Italy within months of his marriage to Agnes Frey in 1494. He was encouraged to do this by his wealthy friend, lawyer and humanist Willibard Pirckheimer, who had been educated in Padua and Pavia. Dürer started his trip alone to Venice on the same route used by German merchants who traded in Italy by going south to Mittenwald, Innsbruck, and the Alps. Then he entered the Brenner Pass and spent a month in the mountains, stopping along the way to make sketches. In Venice he stayed with merchants from Nuremberg who had their own warehouse, stores, and meeting house, the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, near the Rialto Bridge. He met the Bellini brothers, Giovanni and Gentile, and spent six months sketching and painting. His subjects included the



Albrecht Dürer, View of Trente, 1494

Venetians themselves, sea life, and animals. He learned the secrets of the “naked pictures of the Italians” and studied the engravings of Pollaiuolo and Mantegna (the brother-in-law of Giovanni Bellini). On his return trip over the Alps, Dürer made some of his early watercolor paintings.

On his second trip in 1505-1507 to Venice, Padua, and Bologna, Dürer wanted most particularly to meet the friar Luca Pacioli, a mathematical scholar in Bologna who is still celebrated as “the father of accounting.” His treatise on the importance of proportions, derived partly from demonstrations by the artist Piero della Francesca, was well known and taught in Italy. Pacioli knew Leonardo da Vinci, who had illustrated his treatise, and he may have shown Dürer some of Leonardo’s drawings. Dürer also hoped to meet the aging Andrea Mantegna before leaving Italy, but he discovered upon his arrival in Mantua that the great artist had died a few months before.

The documentary evidence of Dürer’s travels is small considering the amount of ground he covered and number of people he met. The travel diaries and letters from his trip to the Netherlands and second trip to Italy have been published as *Records of*

(continued on page 12)

Feature Article

Nations on the Brink

DENYING HISTORY IN UKRAINE

By William Fredlund, Founder and Director at the
Institute for the Study of Western Civilization

It is now almost two whole months since Russia invaded Ukraine. The event is something none of us expected to see in 2022—a real land invasion of one European country by another. Although we had many months of build-up with thousands of Russian troops gathering on the border, no one really believed that an invasion of the whole country was Russia's goal. Turned out it was. We failed to see the obvious signs leading to a real war. And now we have it. Putin announced that he is retaking historic territories of Russia.

But those of us at the Institute who have been studying Russian history this past year know that Ukraine is not a historic part of Russia. If anything, it's the opposite—Russia is a historic part of Ukraine. From our study of early Russian history, we know that the nation of Russia started in Ukraine in the 1000-year-old city of Kyiv. Russian history begins in the 800's with the community that scholars have now come to call Kyiv Rus—the ancestor of modern Russia. Kyiv Rus (Rus from the red hair of the Scandinavian arrivals) was the name that the inhabitants gave to themselves in their land and Kyiv was the capital. In modern terms, it embraced all of Belarus, northern Ukraine, and much of European



Russia. The peoples of these three modern states—Eastern Slavs—all spoke closely related languages derived from the early Slavic language. Its neighbors were roughly the same as the neighbors today—Hungary, Poland, the Baltic peoples, and Finland. In the north, Kyiv Rus stretched to the Arctic Ocean. This early origin of Russia in the south is ascribed to the slow melting of the medieval Little Ice Age. Most of present-day northern Russia was still under an ice cap. Thus the early origins of Russia are in the south, in Ukraine. So today's war, and Putin's justification for it, turns history upside down.

The behavior of the Ukrainians in this war seems to astound everybody. But no one should be surprised about their dedication to their nation. When Ukraine freed itself from the collapsing Soviet Union in 1991, no other former Soviet satellite country was more proud of its history and proud of its future than was Ukraine. To understand this, one only need to watch the spectacular Netflix documentary called *Winter on Fire*. (Last month, Netflix put the film on YouTube for all to watch for free.) In the film, you see the extraordinary commitment of the Ukrainians to free their nation. The people of Ukraine went into the streets in 2014 and with their bodies devoted themselves to maintain their freedom. With their physical presence, they registered their commitment to a free Ukraine. They drove the pro-Russian, crooked president Yanukovich out of office.

It is the single most dramatic peaceful success of any population in any country since World War II to oppose a dictator.

They succeeded but at great cost. Hundreds were mowed down and killed by Yanukovich's thugs. But it did not save him. And like all fortunate corrupt dictators, he found refuge with his benefactors. Our last view of Yanukovich in Ukraine on video recordings shows him climbing hastily into a helicopter inside palace grounds and flying off to his Russian retreat.

If Putin had watched this film, he never would have invaded Ukraine. It would have been clear to him that he did not have enough troops in all of Russia to kill the spirit of the Ukrainians.

Why would China use violent force to invade Taiwan and likely risk destroying much of the Taiwan infrastructure and value it depends on?

WILL TAIWAN SUFFER THE SAME FATE?

By Eno Schmidt, a Silicon Valley retired executive and entrepreneur, community volunteer, and student at the Institute

(First, a bit on my personal history with Taiwan. I have much appreciation and respect for the long and remarkable history of China. Marriage to a woman born and raised in Taiwan inevitably has motivated me to be even more aware and supportive of the Taiwanese condition. I first traveled to Taiwan in 1980 and within China in 1983. I saw the transformation of Taiwan from martial law to a democratic government in the 1980's and the economic transformations of both Taiwan and China. I particularly remember watching in 1989 from the safety of my hotel room in Taipei a live TV feed of the tanks rumbling in Tiananmen Square in Beijing and losing hope that the student-led demonstrations for democracy and freedom could result in peaceful change in China.)

H

ow does the situation in Ukraine relate to Taiwan? Will the status quo of the last 5–10 years continue

(scenario A) or will a full-scale fighting war commence similar to what Russia is doing in Ukraine (scenario B)? Before exploring more closely, consider some comparative data:

Taiwan has an economy that is about four times



advanced ones found in today's iPhones, fighter jets, and supercomputers!

Typically, if the question is posed as scenario A or B, my experience is that most Chinese people from Taiwan might hedge their answers and likely start with a pithy quote

larger than Ukraine's while having only about half the population and only six percent of the land mass. Another important difference is that Taiwan is an island and more than two-thirds are mountainous terrain, whereas Ukraine consists almost entirely of level plains that are easily enough accessible by land from many directions.

In terms of global economic impact, Taiwan is much more significant than Ukraine by measures besides gross domestic product (GDP). For example, in 2021 headlines highlighted that various US industries faced supply chain problems when they could not acquire a sufficient number of semiconductor chips. Taiwan dominates the foundry market, or the outsourcing of semiconductor chip manufacturing, and accounts for more than 60 percent of total global foundry revenue. Much of Taiwan's dominance in this area can be attributed to Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSM), the world's largest foundry that counts major technology firms such as Apple, Qualcomm, and Nvidia as its clients. To gauge the impact on the global economy of this one Taiwanese company, it is estimated that TSM makes 24 percent of all the world's chips and over 90 percent of the most

or two from a Chinese philosopher. Sun Tzu, for example, famously wrote, **"The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting."** This statement resembles the popular Asian game of GO, in which each player attempts to surround the opponent's pieces and through strategic placement ultimately force surrender. Under this scenario, the rhetoric of China's political and military leaders is all part of the broader strategy of China's attempts to isolate and intimidate the people in Taiwan. China in the past decades has implemented various moves to isolate Taiwan both diplomatically and commercially.

Of course, both sides are playing this game. China expects that its strategy ultimately would result in the Taiwanese people, tired of isolation, generally agreeing to various economic enticements and thereby eventually and voluntarily joining the Chinese enterprise. At the same time, Taiwan sees its skilled managers and economic strengths being integrated into China and through this means, Taiwan gains influence within China. For example, Hon Hai Precision (headquartered in Taiwan and commonly known as Foxconn in the West) is a major contract manufacturer and has many of its largest plants in China using the cheaper available labor.

Millions of employees and managers in China interact with the Taiwanese company on a daily basis as it produces cellphones and all sorts of other manufactured goods in China (often on behalf of US companies). Many people supporting this scenario ask the further question, why would China use violent force to invade Taiwan and likely risk destroying much of the Taiwan infrastructure and value when it can obtain those through nonviolent means?

On the other hand, there are voices within Taiwan claiming that what is happening in Ukraine is a precursor to a similar military move from China into Taiwan. Those who take this position contrary to Sun Tzu are more likely thinking along the lines of one of the West's famous military philosophers, Carl von Clausewitz, who wrote, **“War is an extension of policy by another means.”** Using this idea, we can look at a series of recent aggressive military moves by Putin's Russia and China in which smaller, weaker states or regions were taken by force. In each case, the US has appeared passive and unwilling to prevent such changes in leadership and control structures through military intervention. This line of thinking asks, Why should Taiwan expect to rely on the US to defend them if China launches a full-scale invasion into Taiwan?

I would not want to bet on whether the world will see scenario A or B, but my expectation (and hope) is that a combination of strategies and tactics by Taiwan and the US will cause China to make a cost-benefit analysis and conclude that

military force against Taiwan would be too costly. Furthermore, various democratic countries including the US, after seeing some of the horrific scenes in Ukraine, may now be motivated to arm Taiwan. In turn, the Taiwanese people might be encouraged by the Ukrainian resistance and thereby make an invasion too costly for China.

UPDATE ON AFGHANISTAN

By Naeem Zafar, a Dean's Teaching Fellow at the University of California Berkeley and Professor of the Practice at Brown University, and the founding CEO of TeleSense, an IoT (Internet of Things) company in Silicon Valley

T

he situation in Afghanistan is dire. The economy is struggling, the supply chain is in peril, and food and shelter are scarce. For the fourth time in almost half a century, the people of Afghanistan are experiencing acute poverty. Among the causes are the sudden loss of livelihoods and income as a result of crippling international sanctions, frozen financial assets, and a manmade recession imposed on the country's aid-

dependent economy after the fall of Kabul last August.

It has to do with international law and the rules on who is a “terrorist” and who is a freedom fighter. The Taliban have fought for decades to gain back

The West's sanctions
have a long and adverse
impact on the innocent
population who are just
trying to survive.

control of their land, and although we do not agree with their beliefs or practices and want to “educate” them, our methods are to put on sanctions and hold back humanitarian relief until they cooperate. These methods have a long and adverse impact on the innocent population who are just trying to survive.

Looking at how sanctions are implemented would partly alleviate the severe external financial and banking restrictions brought upon the fragile Afghan system since the abrupt palace-triggered coup that led to the fall of the “republic” last year. It may also change the dynamics that have dictated relations between the world’s major donors and Kabul’s Taliban rulers—some of whom are still on UN and US terrorism blacklists.

Foreign aid comprised over 40 percent of Afghanistan’s GDP in 2020, with budgetary aid specifically representing more than 70 percent of the government’s budget prior to the fall of Kabul. Today Afghanistan receives no bilateral or multilateral foreign aid.

The banking system is not operational due to the restrictions and sanctions on certain people in the government (who are on the terrorist list of Western countries), so NGOs cannot get funds transferred to them any longer. Restriction on money transfer also limits trade and resulting prosperity.

Domestic revenue has risen due to tax collection and duties since the corruption is under scrutiny and reduced. But this Taliban government is in its infancy and lacks the education and methods to create a well-running society. This results in daily chaos and severe shortage of essential goods.

The long-term prospects are better due to the rich natural resources and its strategic location. There are encouraging signs, but this will be a long road ahead

for this society to have new enlightened leaders who can unite warring factions, create economic stability, and convince the West to allow them to transact commerce. Doing it otherwise is what creates war lords and oppression.

(Baedeker, continued from page 7)

Journeys to Venice and the Low Countries and are available at the Project Gutenberg website. The letters are written to his lifelong friend Pirckheimer and are full of jokes, innuendo, requests for loans, lists of items Pirckheimer had asked Dürer pick up for him, and some interesting comments about the Italians.

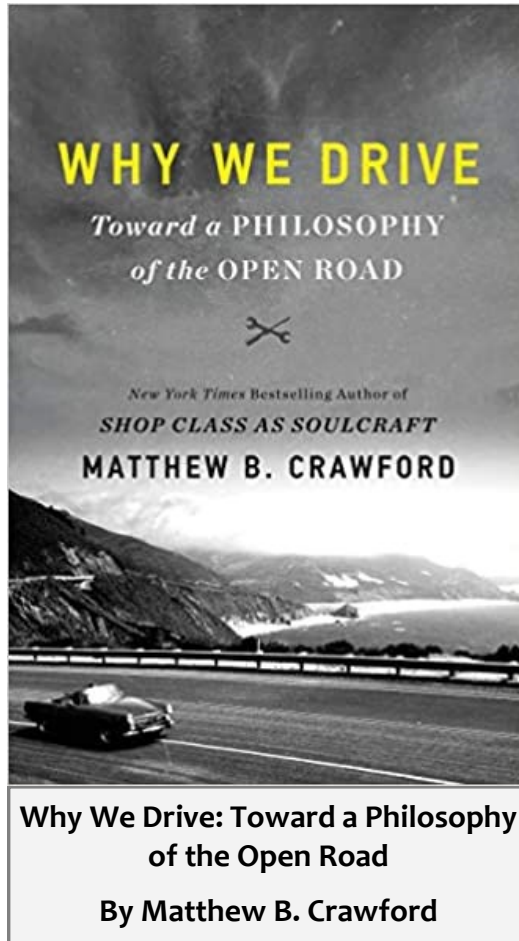
Albrecht Dürer brought the innovations of Italian artists and scholars to the artists of the north. His accomplishments include *Apocalypse* (1498), the first book entirely by an artist. He created the art, did the printing, and acted as his own publisher. His technical skill, expressive imagery, and deep iconography in woodcuts, engravings, and paintings continue to be studied and reinterpreted by art scholars. His works, including many self-portraits, are found in major museums and collections including the Louvre, Prado, Alta Pinakothek in Munich, and both the Kunsthistorisches Museum and Albertina Museum in Vienna. The Albertina specializes in works on paper, and its collection includes Dürer’s *Young Hare*, *Great Piece of Turf*, and *Praying Hands*. In Great Britain, the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle includes woodcuts, engravings, and etchings from Dürer’s book *Apocalypse*, his St. Jerome series, *St. Eustace and the Stag*, and more. Prints and watercolors are not permanently on view in any of these locations due to their fragility but are displayed in special exhibits. Be sure to check museum websites before your trip for information about current exhibitions.

Book Review

The Abolition of Sovereignty

Review by Eno Schmidt

Most of us living in Silicon Valley have encountered various enthusiastic descriptions of a future involving driverless cars. Maybe some are not so enthusiastic as we recall the sensational TV news on the latest “early adopter” sending the world his live social media feed while sitting in the back seat of his self-driving car careening down the local freeway at 60+ mph (with the news ticker crawling the warning: “Don’t try this, not authorized by the car manufacturer or anyone else.”) Rarely however, if ever, do we encounter a defense of humans driving and why we should continue to do it. This book brings a welcome and intriguing argument on many levels exploring the reasons why we should be paying more attention to what is happening with driverless technology and maybe put the brakes on its wholesale adoption. As a society, have we fully evaluated the merits and understood the likely long-term implications?



Matthew Crawford first covers a wide range of philosophical and scientific perspectives on mobility. As he explains, Aristotle defines the difference between animals and the rest of nature as “self-moving,” and modern science has made many discoveries involving movement and cognition, including that human babies need movement to develop episodic memories. Crawford writes “the subjective coherence of a life—our persistent identity through time—seems to be built up from some basic motor capacities. It is therefore not surprising that some of our best stories retell episodes from the road and often convey contingency and adventure of exploration.” We at the Institute can nod our heads in agreement

recalling that *The Odyssey* and *The Aeneid* and *The Divine Comedy* are indeed great epics involving mobility and adventure. Who has not conjured up images of wheels spinning as those mobile Bronze Age charioteers conquered the world? Crawford describes a number of experiments and discoveries by scientists exploring mobility and learning.

Safety and Sovereignty

By no means a Luddite, Matthew Crawford describes himself as a gear head or folk engineer happily rebuilding a VW bug with “state-of-the-art digital engine management, using the do-it-yourself platform MegaSquirt.” In providing readers with a review of the history of the internal combustion engine, Crawford observes that “today’s state of the art is the result of more than a century of back-and-forth between trained engineers and shade tree mechanics, illicit street racers and environmental regulators, high-dollar motor sports and cost-oriented automakers.” Through such descriptions of what at times may seem to some of us non-engineers like technical digressions, Crawford develops his larger argument about society and sovereignty. His larger point is that the competence (still necessary) to humans driving their cars is a fundamental example of the social trust necessary in a self-ruling society.

“Moving around freely is one of the most basic liberties we have as embodied creatures. That liberty is enhanced by machines that amplify our mobility, from skateboards and bicycles to motorcycles and automobiles—but only because they are not subject to remote control.”

“That democracy remains viable only if we are willing to extend to one another a presumption of individual competence. This is what social trust is built on. Together, they are the minimal endowments for a free, responsible, fully awake people.”

“Perhaps a more regularized, remotely administered regime of mobility is a bargain worth striking in exchange for the promise of enhanced safety and efficiency; people can reasonably come to different conclusions about that. The question is: who gets to decide? It comes down to the question of sovereignty.”

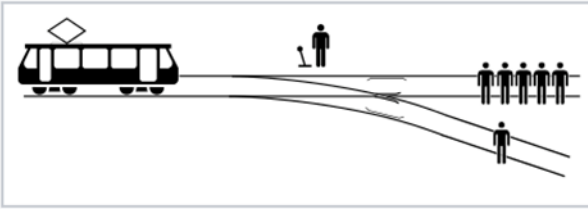
What does Crawford mean by “who gets to decide” and what is safety in this context?

“Safety is obviously very important. But it is also a principle that, absent countervailing considerations, admits no limit to its expanding dominion. It tends to swallow everything before it.... Those who invoke safety enjoy a nearly nonrebuttable presumption of public-spiritedness, so a stated concern for safety becomes a curtain behind which various entities can collect rents from perfectly reasonable behavior.”

At this point, let me direct this review on a slight diversion down a personal memory lane and observe that in Crawford’s narrative on safety, he rightly highlights the Peltzman Effect named after Sam Peltzman, UCLA professor and this reviewer’s mentor. Sam Peltzman encouraged me to venture from the familiar environs of California to the graduate school rigors at the University of Chicago. Peltzman published in 1975 his revolutionary *Regulation of Automobile Safety* which considered the fuller effects of the then newly required safety belts in automobiles. The Peltzman Effect refers to people reacting to particular safety regulations by increasing other risky behaviors and thus partially offsetting the safe behaviors originally intended by the regulations. For example, it was found that people in practice often drove faster (and less safely) than they otherwise might have had their cars not been newly equipped with seat belts that supposedly reduced their likelihood of serious injury in car crashes. The Peltzman Effect is now recognized as a foundational principle in the wider discipline of risk compensation. It is part of the Chicago school of economic thinking that explores the wider and consolidated behavioral and ancillary follow-effects in total rather than simply focusing on specific governmental regulations looked at in isolation. In the case of driverless cars, we can wonder what other effects might result from this technology.

The Trolley Problem

Another part of Crawford's review of the current approach to driverless car technology involves how we look at the problem. Problem definition as usual is critical. If the problem is described as how to efficiently get us from point A to point B with the fewest fatalities, then already a certain kind of decision-making comes into play. Crawford explains the philosophical thought experiment of "the trolley problem" to illustrate:



One of the dilemmas included in the trolley problem: should you pull the lever to divert the runaway trolley onto the side track?

Graphic courtesy of Wikipedia

Once a problem is defined as in the trolley problem, one common solution is to adopt the utilitarian greater good for the greater number which has the added benefit that it can be programmed into machine intelligence. Apparently Mercedes-Benz already has arrived at a "death algorithm" that would save the occupants of its vehicles!

"According to this mindset, the world presents as a series of problems to be solved. This basic stance toward the world has accomplished much good. It has in fact solved problems... in medicine, for example, and bridge-building and water treatment.... It also brings with it a train of entailments, and if we trace these... [we can] arrive at a better understanding of the central issue of politics—sovereignty. That is because the spirit of problem-solving claims every domain as its own.

There is nothing that exists that cannot be viewed as a problem that needs fixing. And so, sovereignty gets transferred to a cadre of problem solvers. Who are these people?"

Crawford argues that the automation of driving leads naturally to a Universal Utility Calculation which of course will have been developed by the planners (read engineers and business leaders of Big Tech) of the driverless cars. (Who else could make the cars run safely?) In theory, such an automated system would work to avoid some number of fatalities. At the same time, that may not be the only result of driverless technology. Since we humans no longer would have sovereignty in individual decisions involving this kind of mobility, are we restricting ourselves by defining the problem too narrowly?

Surveillance Capitalism

Crawford makes a persuasive case for another element involved in the movement toward autonomous driving. "Surveillance capitalism" combines the resources of Big Tech and the value of Big Data as analyzed and used by Artificial Intelligence. (Are we eavesdropping on a Silicon Valley VC conversation on how Big Tech uses AI on Big Data or what?)

"But what they [Google in developing the autonomous car] have in mind is something altogether different from a market exchange.... To understand the forces behind the promised driverless revolution, we have to come to grips with something genuinely new in the world, and that is the rise of surveillance capitalism.... The short version is this: When automakers started turning their cars into data vacuums, sucking up gobs of data about your movements through the world and your behavior as you go about your day, the car became a rival to the mobile phone as a supply of raw material that Google claims as its own. The auto industry needed to be taken over—to protect the supply route.

“But more than that, the competition among players in the behavioral futures market leads them to seek something even better than predictions: The real advantage comes if one can intervene to coax and herd people, shaping our behavior at scale.... ‘It is no longer enough to automate information flows about us; the goal now is to automate us.’... The rise of Big Data has altered the landscape such that marketers are no longer content with a scattershot approach to potential customers; it is grossly inefficient compared to a micro-targeted approach. The value of targeting can be construed as a quest for certainty, because ultimately what a marketer is weighing is the ‘expected value’ of making a pitch, and this is a function of probabilities.”

One expressed purpose of Crawford in writing this book is to heighten our awareness of the ways in which social control over our individual freedoms are possible (and even likely) without our conscious awareness of these freedoms disappearing. I would hope that if we as a society arrived at an informed awareness of the pros and cons, we would find a way to select the more free and more human direction. But the choice is not black and white for Crawford or for society. Throughout his book, Crawford points out different ways that problems can be solved without removing human freedom. For example, if we want efficient traffic flow at an intersection, we might consider implementing the traffic circles of Rome (or Taipei or Paris) rather than adopting more traffic regulations or lights or autonomous driving. (As an aside, Stanford University a few years ago implemented traffic circles rather than stop signs throughout Campus Drive. The technique seems to be working fine.)

The Abolition of Sovereignty Can Lead to the Abolition of Man

Crawford’s analysis of “safetyism” and surveillance capitalism brings to mind a parallel set of arguments made by C.S. Lewis in his 1943 book *The Abolition of Man*. For Crawford, the loss of mankind’s driving skills would lead to a loss of freedom and the atrophying of human decision skills, leading to more and more losses of sovereignty. “Market forces” and technology combine to change the fates involving a huge swath of human life *without any democratic voting* or any practical way to change direction once implemented. As people continue to lose more and more sovereignty like this over both themselves and their surroundings, we ultimately face losing what it means to be free. Lewis in his time foresaw in “Men Without Chests” the possibility of a similar loss through a lack of courage. He cautioned that humanity needed to be brave to recognize objective truths and that words have meaning. As Lewis observed, “Man’s power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument.” Abandoning The Way, by which values are associated with objective reality and words have meaning, leads the “Conditioners” to destroy humankind as previously known. The Conditioners as described by Lewis are no longer “men at all: they are artefacts. Man’s final conquest has proved to be the abolition of Man.... In reality of course, if any one age really attains by eugenics and scientific education the power to make its descendants what it pleases, all men who live after it are the patients of that power. They are weaker, not stronger: for though we may have put wonderful machines in their hands, we have pre-ordained how they are to use them.”

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