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THE MARCH 2025 ISSUE IN BRIEF

JOURNALISTS AND BLOGGERS/INFLUENCERS seem to enjoy the freedom they have to pose as experts on just about anything, but transportation planning appears to be one of their favorite topics. They feed into the fury of deciding how to regulate and control vehicular transport, which has for some time been fair game for experimentation by politicians, just slightly behind coming up with new ways to run schools and educate children. Let's charge a tariff on every car coming into our city. Let's ban cars from city centers. Let's ban all cars except battery electric cars. Let's make parking prohibitively expensive. Let's hand out tickets to people who are legally parked. Let's let bikes and scooters ignore one-way signs. Let's turn all on-street parking spaces into outdoor cafes, bicycle racks, and scooter stands, except for the handicapped spaces, which need to be quadrupled. Let's put back all the parking meters we pulled out years ago but make them battery chargers. Then let's see what happens. These kinds of experiments actually do affect people's lives. Some might like the result, but an equal number might not. What happens, for example, if all cars are BEVs? What if nobody parks because the fees are too high? What if people start being run over by bikers and scooterers going the wrong way?

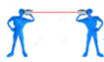
The 'progressives' who have come up with all of these ideas squeal bloody murder when a 'Make (add appropriate term here) Great Again-ite' talks about tariffs on stuff they want to buy and bans on what they want to try. Neither one of these groups is truly interested in finding ways to do things or get things done that take everyone's views and wishes into consideration. They are both bullies. Some people seem to thrive on harassing people, whether it's because of their religion or race or the language they speak, or because of their political beliefs, the clothes they wear, the fast-food chain they frequent. I will add car ownership to the list. An increasing number of people seem to positively delight in making life miserable for anyone and everyone who owns a car. In my opinion, the harassment has gotten far worse during the fifty-eight years since I bought my first car. We can speculate forever on why this has happened. Perhaps, in the next incarnation of *THE DISPATCHER* — if there is one — we can share our thoughts on this subject. Until then, keep your faith alive in sensible mobility.

Feature: People and Transport: Parking Policy

Feature Articles



The real case for driverless mobility



Vehicle-related telecommunications



Automotive artificial intelligence



The business of delivering transport systems



People and transport – the effects of how and where we live, work, and recreate on our requirements for transport



Standardization and regulation of transport systems

The politics of parking a car in a city

A PARKING METER was installed along a curb on a street in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on the 16th of July 1935. It was called a “Park-O-Meter” (See sidebar on next page). The claim has been made that this was the first parking meter installed anywhere. The inventors were Holger G. Theusen and Gerald A. Hale, but the patent for their device was awarded to a lawyer and newspaper publisher named Carl C. Magee who appears to have commissioned the two engineers to create the device. Did anyone complain (not about who was awarded the patent, but about paying for parking)? Did anyone raise his or her voice to ask: “By what right do you take my hard-earned money to park my “effect”¹ upon a public thoroughfare to which, through my taxes, I have contributed to its construction, and use a space that has by tradition been reserved for the purpose to which I put it to use without requiring me to pay a fee?”

If horse riders or teamsters paid for parking their mounts or wagons on the street, I have found no evidence of it. What I did find was that parking garages pre-dated on-street parking of cars because early cars were not designed and built to be left outside exposed to the weather. One type of paid parking for cars was the horse stable, where a car replaced the horse and paid a similar fee as the horse owner paid for stabling. Garages were built, and looked like any other building along a street, with parking levels above and below grade.

When Oklahoma City began to charge people – citizens and visitors alike – five cents per hour for the privilege of doing something which they had previously done for free (i.e., parking along a street curb), it opened a

¹ The word ‘effects’ is used in the U.S. Constitution to refer to portable personal property not used for business.

Pandora's Box that has continued to spew out "presents which seem valuable but which in reality are a curse".² Before the *Park-O-Meter*, cities passed ordinances limiting the time a motorized vehicle may be parked on certain streets, but it was difficult to administer these regulations without significantly increasing the number of police officers, and there were no fees associated with the restrictions. The *Park-O-Meter* provided the means to effectively oversee the amount of time vehicles were parked, and the fact that the meters were activated by inserting a coin meant that the cities now had an additional source of revenue. A win-win windfall, except for the vehicle owners.³ One city after the other installed these magical machines, and legal case after legal case was filed objecting to their installation.

Keep in mind when this was happening. In 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected President of the United States, and the first of his four terms began on the 4th of March 1933. He had beaten the incumbent, Herbert Hoover, by 472 Electoral Votes to 59, and won over 57% of the popular vote. He came in with a mandate to get the country out of recession, and he promised to do it with his big government New Deal reforms. Governments at all levels were in the drivers' seats, literally and figuratively. Cases were brought against cities for installing the meters and charging for parking. One after another they were all dismissed by state courts. Here is an example of the judgment of the Supreme Court of the State of Washington in *Kimmel v. Spokane*, February 3, 1941.

The plaintiff, Mr. Kimmel, claimed that the parking ordinance allowing parking meters was "a sham and that the ordinance is, in reality, a revenue measure." The plaintiff was the lessee of a storeroom fronting on the street where the city placed a parking meter. He claimed that the parking of cars in front of his premises, which the city allowed by the placement of a parking meter, is an unlawful interference with his right of ingress and egress. The plaintiff's lawyers argued the case on the basis that the parking meter ordinance was unconstitutional.




Park-O-Meter

In 1935 Oklahoma City installed the first meters. They have been hailed as the greatest traffic invention since the stop light. The parking meter is a mechanical device indicating when the allotted time for parking has elapsed. It consists of a metal stand four feet high on the top of which is a clock-like face with a large indicator. Parking places must be indicated by white lines, and a meter placed on the sidewalk alongside each space. When the driver wants to park, he must place a coin (usually a nickel) in the machine. The indicator then disappears until the allotted time has elapsed at which time it swings back up, again becoming visible. The patrolling traffic officer is authorized to cite the owner of any car parked beside a meter where the indicator is visible for violation of the parking ordinance.

Source: Municipal Corporations: Legality of Parking Meters. California Law Review, Vol. 29, No. 5 (July 1941), pp. 651-654.

² Definition of Pandora's Box in Brewer's Concise Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (1992).

³ *Municipal Corporations: Legality of Parking Meters. California Law Review, Vol. 29, No. 5 (July 1941), pp. 651-654.*



The defendant, the City of Spokane, Washington, claimed that the installation of parking meters “accords to municipal corporations plenary police power within their limits”. The defendant claimed further that the state and the municipalities “have power to regulate the parking of cars on the streets and highways, and the courts will not interfere with the exercise of that power so long as it is invoked with reasonable regard for the rights of both the traveling public and the occupants of abutting property,” and that the installation of parking meters “is a valid exercise of the city’s police power”. The defendant’s lawyers argued that the ordinance is a regulatory measure enacted under the police power, and not a revenue measure. The defendant claimed that the State of Washington allowed for both parking on public streets and restrictions on parking, and that restrictions could be modified by local jurisdictions. The plaintiff argued that streets are for travel, not for storage of cars, and that his rights as an occupant of abutting property are subservient only to the rights of the traveling public. The defendant allowed that the plaintiff’s argument was sound, but that in a modern society with water and “sewerage” systems, telephone and trolley cables, the rights of the occupant of abutting property are “not absolute even as against persons using the streets for purposes other than actual locomotion”.

“Under the exigencies and complexities of modern life, it is impossible to guarantee to respondent free and uninterrupted access to his premises at all times. The use of streets and highways for the parking of motor vehicles has been too long and too well established by custom to now be denied because of the theoretical right of the occupant of abutting property to free and uninterrupted access to his premises at all times. Indeed, the custom of parking cars along the streets and highways may well be regarded as an incident to public travel. The custom has so long prevailed that it has received legislative recognition as a right.”

The court ruled that ordinances prescribing time limitations on parking “have long been recognized as a proper exercise of the police power, both in the interest of the occupant of abutting property and the traveling public. Such limitations are designed to keep traffic moving, to minimize congestion, and, at the same time, to afford users of the highways an opportunity to transact business with the occupants of abutting property. Time limitations upon parking have been

necessitated by abuse of the privilege. It is obviously to the interest of the occupant of abutting property that such time limitations be strictly enforced, for the shorter the limitation and the more effectually it is enforced, the greater is his freedom of access to his premises. It strikes us that the parking meter is admirably designed to accomplish that result."

Here is how the court addresses the claim that the city is simply using parking restrictions as a means of filching money: "We fail to see what difference it can make to either the traveler on the street or to the occupant of abutting property whether the time limitations be enforced by a policeman marking cars with a piece of chalk or by a mechanical device that registers "Time's up" in a way that all may see. The object of both is to prevent overtime parking, and, of the two, it seems to us that the latter is more effective. With the latter, there are no minutes of grace as there are with the policeman while he is making his rounds "marking" and "checking up," for the time begins to run when the car is parked and ends when the meter registers "Time's up." That parking meters will diminish the vice of overtime parking and, consequently, speed up traffic, seems a certainty, for the car must be moved at the expiration of the time limited."

The spread of parking meters across the country in the 1930s (although not yet the world) was quick. One writer in 1941 declared that "in the six years since their introduction in Oklahoma, they have been hailed as the greatest traffic invention since the stoplight".

We know what you're selling; we're just haggling over price

Just because the courts allowed no-armed slot machines to police their parking places, these courts did not give cities carte blanche authority to charge whatever price they desired. The court rulings made it clear that payments were intended to activate the regulation method, NOT to serve as a source of extracting revenue. Cases were brought against cities based on a reading of the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which "protects against imposing excessive bail, excessive fines, or cruel and unusual punishments". This Amendment was adopted on the 15th of December 1791 along with the rest of the U.S. Bill of Rights. The Supreme Court has ruled under this Amendment that fines

are prohibited that are “so grossly excessive as to amount to a deprivation of property without due process of law”.

If only the Eighth Amendment applied in Stockholm. In early February, my wife and I drove into Stockholm where we have a small apartment to stay when we visit family, attend concerts and plays, and, as in this case, have appointments with medical specialists. We drove in on Thursday afternoon and planned to return to our main residence on Sunday. I drove around the neighborhood where our apartment is located, which is just outside the commercial and government center. I found a free spot after circling several times and went to a parking machine to pay. For the twelve years we have had our Stockholm apartment, the fees have gone from the equivalent of \$1/hour for parking between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., to \$2/hour for parking between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Parking was free from 3 p.m. on Saturday to 8 a.m. on Monday. When I went to pay for parking on this day in February, I found that I had to pay for parking for twenty-four hours, seven days per week, and that what had previously cost approximately \$35 for parking from Friday afternoon to early Monday morning, now cost \$150!

I found an article in a local newspaper that was in our apartment when we arrived. Carl Grefberg, an economist, had written to the City of Stockholm complaining about the “Shock Increase!” in parking fees. He claimed that the ‘greenies’ controlling the city government were simply acting out of spite because they were prohibited by the center/right national government from setting up an electric car-only zone in the middle of the city. The following week, I signed an agreement with a parking garage to store my car from Friday at 5 p.m. until Monday at 9 a.m. for less than the cost of one weekend of on-street parking. If we come in twice in a month, we can count the second weekend as parking fee free.

Carl and I both felt that the City of Stockholm had gone too far. I have no illusions that the parties now in power, or the ones that will replace them in the next election, will change their ways. There seems to be no restrictions on government bodies in Sweden at all levels from charging whatever prices for services that they consider reasonable. In this case, what is clear is that the Stockholm city officials want to remove all

cars from the city, and charging extortionary prices for parking is one way to do it. I have noticed that there are a lot more free parking spaces than there were before.

This is not the first time I have felt harassed by a city due to its approach to enforcing its parking restrictions.

IT'S NOT PERSONAL

That is what I had to remind myself of when I came home from work on a Friday evening in the late 1970s and found a parking ticket on my Jeep. I lived on Shepard Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a ten-minute walk north of Harvard Square, between 1974 and 1984. During the first two-and-a-half years I did not own a car. Eventually, renting a car became costly, I grew weary of bumming rides from friends (and so did they), and when I took up fly fishing, not having my own car was no longer an option. At about the same time as I bought my Jeep Cherokee, the city instituted resident parking. Commuters were driving into Cambridge from the suburbs, like Lexington, parking on local streets for free, and taking the T from Harvard Square into Boston. Those of us who were residents were issued resident parking cards that we left on our dashboards so that we would not be ticketed. Parking for residents was free, and parking by non-residents was not allowed. I never drove into Boston, where I worked. I walked to Harvard Square every day, took the Red Line to Park Street, and then walked to my office. I rarely used my car between Monday and Thursday. I found a parking spot and left it there until I escaped from Cambridge on the weekends for New Hampshire – although once every two weeks I had to move it for street cleaning.

Why was I and many of my neighbors issued parking tickets when we had our resident parking permits clearly in view on our dashboards? The first time it happened, I went with my ticket to the traffic court which was held one evening each week and presented my case. The judge dismissed my ticket. The second time it happened, I wrote a letter to the city's traffic department and asked them why it was happening. They did not answer my question but told me to send them a letter with a copy of my parking permit and a picture of where I placed it on my dashboard, and they would cancel the ticket. I had seen the meter man who patrolled our street and tried to ask him why he was ticketing residents, but he refused to talk. Did he have a quota for the number of tickets he wrote each week; did he receive a bonus based on the quantity of tickets he wrote; did he just have it in for us because we got to park for free? After the third time, I made a dozen copies of the letter, the permit and the photo, and sent them to the city when another parking ticket arrived. Each time the city wrote back confirming that the ticket was dismissed.

As I was almost running out of copies, the tickets stopped. The meter man also disappeared. Then one of my neighbors told me that the meter man had been shot. He wasn't killed, just wounded. The shooter was not

identified. Six months later, the meter man was back, and he had added a few dozen pounds of muscle. The Friday evening tickets came in spurts. I gave up and decided to rent a garage space. The closest one was a several blocks away and cost more than I wanted to pay, but it was worth it to avoid the aggravation. Within a few years, most of the people I knew who lived in the neighborhood had done what I did: married and moved away, to somewhere where we had our own parking spaces.

Parking is personal; we have cars because we need them

Early on in the age of cars, on-street parking and designating lots for off-street parking were measures intended to satisfy residents living in cities who were purchasing cars and did not have parking spaces or garages on their own properties. Later, cities changed their building and zoning codes to incorporate off-street parking as a requirement for construction, with a fixed number of parking spaces for different types of building uses, including residential. It worked for a while, but then pressure on American cities became too great. By the middle of the 1960s, cities were being abandoned by residents and businesses alike in favor of the suburbs. Older couples moved to places where they could enjoy life without all of the problems that cities were experiencing (i.e., crime and grime and parking hassles); younger families wanted more space, better schools for their children, more freedom to enjoy their free time, and a secure place to park the vehicle that would take them to all those places where they would enjoy that free time; businesses wanted lower taxes, more space to grow and allow their employees to park their cars for free, and facilities that were purpose-built for computers and telecommunications technology.

City regulations that required new offices and residential construction to incorporate a minimum number of off-street parking spaces, either in garages or in lots on the buildings' property, were intended to entice people to live and work in cities. Apartments, like the one I lived in on Shepard Street, which was rent controlled when I moved in, were converted to condominiums so that those of us who purchased our apartments could take advantage of the tax deductions on interest payments. Free resident parking was a further incentive. New owner-occupied apartments and townhouses were built with off-street parking to make living in cities more desirable. These measures seemed to be working. Harvard professor, Edward Glaeser, wrote in 2011 in his book,

Triumph of the City,⁴ that the city was making a comeback as more people moved in than moved out. But there was another message in his book that was not given much airtime, and that was his caution to cities that they not make policies which drive residents to the suburbs. He was himself an example of that. In 2006, Glaeser and his family moved out of Cambridge “because of the home interest deduction, highway infrastructure, and local school system”.

If the pendulum on making cities a welcoming place for cars had actually swung back to a time before the 1930s when the first parking meters were installed, it has definitely moved back to where it was when car owners loaded up their U-Haul vans, hitched them to their cars, and got out of Dodge. In the name of making cities more affordable, minimum off-street parking regulations are being abandoned. Austin, San Jose, and San Francisco are just a few of the cities that have thrown out their minimum parking regulations in order to “build more affordable housing, make their cities more walkable, and encourage better transit”.⁵

THE ECONOMIST applauds the removal of minimum parking regulations but puts its Charge-for-Everything spin on city parking. “Cities should stop trying to increase the supply of parking and rigging the market in favour of homeowners. Instead, they should raise prices until the streets and the car parks are nearly, but not quite, full – and charge everybody. Residents will complain about the loss of their privileges. But if they live in an area of high demand, the revenues from the streets will be enormous. Local governments could spend the money on whatever they like, from beautiful gardens to security guards.”⁶ The UK does not have a written constitution with a bill of rights to prevent its government from gouging its citizens, so we can forgive the British journalist for taking liberties with other peoples’ money. This same journalist goes on to suggest that high prices for fewer parking spaces will hasten the arrival of self-driving (he means driverless) vehicles and these cars will “trundle around by themselves, picking up and dropping off person

⁴ Glaeser, Edward (2011). The Triumph of the City, Penguin Press.

⁵ National Public Radio, Laurel Wamsley on All Things Considered (January 2, 2024).

⁶ The perilous politics of parking. *THE ECONOMIST* APRIL 6TH 2017.

after person, (and) they might render many car parks unnecessary." I guess for *THE ECONOMIST*, fuel is free after the revolution.

I believe that most people working in city governments or serving on the city councils of cities like San Jose and Austin honestly and truly want to do what is best for all the people who live in their communities. I believe they think that eliminating parking requirements solves more problems that it causes; that if they eliminate compulsory parking provision for residences and businesses, more people will want to live and work in their cities; that people will stop believing that they both want and need cars to make their lives easier and more enjoyable; that people who move into new housing developments that do not have associated parking spaces will not own cars, and will not find it necessary to purchase a car after they have moved in; and that those people who do end up having to purchase a car to help solve their life's puzzle (sigh), will be able to find a place to park it among those who are already spending a considerable amount of time hunting for a parking spot within a reasonable proximity of their apartment or home, and that those people will be only too happy to share the available parking with the residents in a newly-built apartment house built in their neighborhood doing the same thing. Yes, I believe there are people who believe these things, but I do not happen to believe what I believe they believe.

In any case, it looks like we are now in the testing phase of this new reality – actually, old reality, because it is how it was from the time cars first appeared until about fifty years ago – and we shall see what happens in a dozen years or so.

p.s. My wife and I have just spent the first long weekend in Stockholm with our car, named Red Horse, in its new indoor parking space. I have not contributed a single Krone to the city's coffers for the privilege and pain of parking, and I have not wasted a single minute making sure that I pay to extend my parking payment before my time runs out and receive a parking violation that could pay for a week at one of the city's expensive hotels.



Dispatch Central

The topics I have covered in Dispatch Central were newsworthy, but I left it to others to deliver them "as they broke". I gave them a little time to settle in, and tried to provide an analysis of their impact. Hopefully, that's what you will do when you hear that the sky has fallen. Wait until the star dust has settled, and then try to understand whether it was your sky that fell, or whether, in fact, any sky actually did fall, and, if so, why.

There is a season and a reason for everything

HAS THE DISPATCHER made a difference during the twelve years since it has been appearing in mailboxes? I know it has for some of you because you have told me so. I would like to believe that it has for others who have not shared their thoughts with me. Writing it has certainly made a major difference to me, giving me the opportunity to explore and learn, to test and discuss ideas, and to distill simple truths from complex constructs.

Those of you who have followed along with me on my journeys, my explorations into the technology jungles, know that I have never been satisfied with finding a particular needle in a haystack; I want to understand how the needle got there, who or what put it there, and why it ended up in that haystack and not in another. Road transport has been the sole theme of my writing, but what influences road transport, and what it influences in return, has taken us into realms we might never have imagined that cars, trucks, buses, and traffic signals would take us.

On the 5th of November 2024, a majority of the people who could vote in the land of the automobile, where road transport got farthest first, selected a new government. On the 20th of January 2025, that government began to do what it had promised to do. First on its agenda was to pardon and release from prison everyone convicted of insurrection, for attacking the nation's Capitol and threatening all elected officials, attempting to prevent them from confirming Joe Biden as the legally elected President. They failed and were punished. They have now been exonerated by the person who incited them to riot. He has called them the true patriots. Both he and they know they are not.

What is happening now is the unravelling of everything the previous administration did to unravel everything the administration which has just taken over did during the four years it ran the country between 2017 and 2021. When it finishes the unravelling of the unraveled, it will

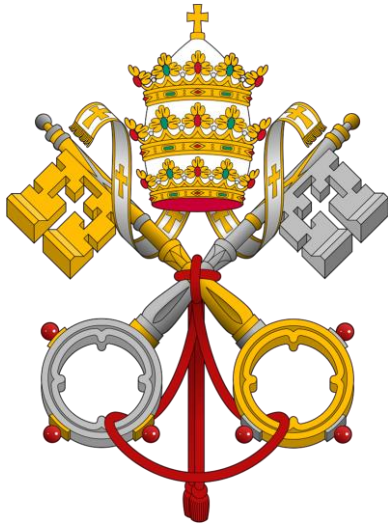
begin to tear down everything it did not manage to tear down during its first four years. All stories in all media will begin with the name of the president, praising or damning him and his courtiers, which one will depend on whether the judgments are coming from those who are feeding at the president's trough, or are in the dishwater being flushed down the drain. Congress will be irrelevant, as witnessed by its willing participation in the unquestioning approval of the president's unqualified nominees for positions in his cabinet.

There will be a lot of shouting in the coming years, and those who will be heard will be those who shout the loudest. Shouting is not my forte. Those of you who know me well know that I speak softly and carry a big pen. If you don't read what I write, you never hear a word from me. Reading does not take pride of place among all the president's men and women, especially if there is even a slight trace that what is placed before their eyes will question their strongly held beliefs. *THE DISPATCHER* would never pass muster and make it past the White House censors. I feel that the measure of relevance for anything written in the coming few years will be how closely it aligns with the party line, or how much vituperativeness it expresses against that party line for the forty-nine-or-so percent of the people who did not vote for the current administration or for most of the people in the rest of the world who simply wonder what the hell the American people are doing. Neither is of interest to me. By now, you know my views. You do not need monthly reminders of those beliefs. If you are in doubt, you can always send me a mail and I will be happy to jog your memory.

So, my faithful readers, I will concentrate my energies on activities that bring to me, my family, and a small circle of friends enjoyment, peace, tranquility, and feelings of optimism. I will dedicate my writing time to the follow-up book to [The Real Case for Driverless Mobility](#). That book was published in January of 2024. The follow-up book, like the first, is being co-authored with Princeton professor and friend, Alain L. Kornhauser. It will describe a test of how driverless cars can deliver affordable rides to those who really need them. It is scheduled for publishing in 2026. You can be sure I will send you a press announcement about it.



Musings of a Dispatcher: AI and the Pope



Emblem of the Holy See. The crossed keys symbolize the Keys of Peter. The keys are gold and silver to represent the power of loosing (to set free) and binding. The triple crown (the tiara) symbolizes the triple power of the Pope as "father of kings", "governor of the world" and "Vicar of Christ". The gold cross on a monde (globe) surmounting the tiara symbolizes the sovereignty of Jesus.

THE POPE AND I do not see eye to eye on several topics. One of them is the Roman Catholic Church's prohibition on the marrying of priests. Another is its refusal to allow the ordination of women. A third is the Pope's determination to assign blame to Ukraine for Russia's unprovoked aggression toward and invasion of its neighbor. There is one topic, however, on which we are in agreement. It is the Church's cautionary guidance on artificial intelligence.

On the 28th of January 2025, the Vatican issued a document titled "*Antiqua et Nova: Note on the Relationship Between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence*". *Antiqua et Nova* (Ancient and New) is a doctrinal note which was co-issued and written by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Dicastery for Culture and Education.⁷ A 'dicastery' is a department of the ROMAN CURIA, which is an administrative institution of the HOLY SEE, the central governing body of the Roman Catholic Church. Briefly, the *Note* addresses "the anthropological and ethical challenges raised by artificial intelligence" addressing AI's potential implications and risks.

Why should we care what the Vatican thinks about AI?

Whether the Vatican has, or should have, a say about such a topic as artificial intelligence is a legitimate question, and whether policy and decision makers should take what it says with more than a grain of salt is not just a matter of conscience. After all, the Church has a spotted history when it has been called upon to decide between dogma and data. Its persecution during the Middle Ages and Early Modern Era of proponents of heliocentrism comes to mind."⁸ Nevertheless, there are 1.4 billion baptized Catholics in the world, 17.5% of

⁷ https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddd_doc_20250128_antiqua-et-nova_en.html

⁸ Copernicus's *De Revolutionibus*, published in 1543 and describing a solar system in which the planets revolved around the sun, was initially tolerated by the Catholic Church, but was banned after Protestant leaders, including Calvin and Luther, ridiculed it. Galileo's *Dialogues on the Two World Systems* was officially removed from the Church's Index of Forbidden books in 1835. It was not until 1992 that Pope John Paul II acknowledged that the Church had persecuted Galileo unfairly.

global population, who look to the Vatican for guidance on how to practice their faith. Others who identify themselves as Christians, who represent another 17% of the world's people, at least lend an ear to what the Pope says about the responsible and ethical use of reason. So, I would suggest that it is worth our time and effort to add the Vatican's voice to a debate on any issue of ethics.

Antiqua et Nova begins with the following statement explaining why it has taken it upon itself to address the relationship between artificial intelligence and human intelligence. "With wisdom both ancient and new, we are called to reflect on the current challenges and opportunities posed by scientific and technological advancements, particularly by the recent development in Artificial Intelligence (AI). The Christian tradition regards the gift of intelligence as an essential aspect of how humans are created 'in the image of God'. Starting from an integral vision of the human person and the biblical calling to 'till' and 'keep' the earth, the Church emphasizes that this gift of intelligence should be expressed through the responsible use of reason and technical abilities in the stewardship of the created world."

Here is the key justification in *Antiqua et Nova* for the Church insinuating itself in the discussion on AI: "The Church encourages the advancement of science, technology, the arts, and other forms of human endeavor, viewing them as part of the 'collaboration of man and woman with God in perfecting the visible creation'. God gave skill to human beings that he might be glorified in his marvelous works. Human abilities and creativity come from God and, when used rightly, glorify God by reflecting his wisdom and goodness. In light of this, when we ask ourselves what it means to 'be human', we cannot exclude a consideration of our scientific and technological abilities."

You could not expect a religious group to leave out references to God when explaining its reasons for doing what it does. Monotheistic and polytheistic religions are based on some form of supreme or ultimate reality, and if you add up all those who are in some way religiously affiliated, it totals 84% of the global population. For those of you who are in the remaining 16% and are troubled by talk of God or gods in general, and in deliberations on matters of science in particular, consider temporarily suspending your animosity and allow that the Church is reflecting and commenting on what it means to be human and the role of humanity in the world.

It is not only speaking to Catholics or even to “believers”; it is speaking to everyone. It is an explicit acknowledgment by the Church that at critical times in the past (e.g., during World War II and the Holocaust) it failed to do so.

In 1965, as part of the Second Vatican Council that was held between 1963 and 1965, the Church issued a document titled *Gaudium et Spes (Joys and Hopes): Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, promulgated by Pope Paul VI. This constitution clarified and reoriented the role of the Church’s mission from one that was concerned with only people inside the Catholic faith to people both inside and outside the Catholic faith. This is said to be the first time the Church accepted and took responsibility for its wider role in the world at large. *Gaudium et Spes* is both an inward-looking examination of the workings of the Church and a response to the problems of the modern world outside the walls of its churches, convents, and seminaries. *Gaudium et Spes* is what has guided the Popes and representatives of the Vatican in their engagement with politicians, business leaders, leaders of other religious groups, and the news media during the past six decades, and it is in this context that *Antiqua et Nova* was written.

What are the Pope’s short and long views on AI

In short, *Antiqua et Nova* says that scientific and technological advances should be directed toward servicing the human person and the common good; that guidelines are needed to ensure that the development and use of AI uphold human dignity and promote the integral development of the human person and society; and that AI should serve as a tool to complement human intelligence rather than replace it, thereby underscoring the unique qualities inherent to humans.

After the Introduction, the *Note* defines artificial intelligence as “that of making a machine behave in ways that would be called intelligent if a human were so behaving”. It mentions John McCarthy and the DARMOUTH UNIVERSITY workshop when the term ‘artificial intelligence’ was first used publicly. It discusses the difference between narrow AI, that is, those applications that rely on statistical inference rather than logical deduction and which perform specific tasks, and Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), which are single

systems capable of operating across all cognitive domains and performing any task within the scope of human intelligence (AGI does not yet exist.)

This is where the authors of the *Note* make their first of many major points to distinguish between humans and machines. They say that those who believe a superintelligence (AGI) could surpasses human intellectual capacities and eclipse the human person base this belief on an assumption that the term 'intelligence' can be used in the same way to refer to both human intelligence and AI. *"Yet, this does not capture the full scope of the concept,"* they write. *"In the case of humans, intelligence is a faculty that pertains to the person in his or her entirety, whereas in the context of AI, 'intelligence' is understood functionally, often with the presumption that the activities characteristic of the human mind can be broken down into digitized steps that machines can replicate."*

The authors offer the "Turing Test" as an example of anthropomorphizing machines. The Turing Test supposedly shows that a machine is "intelligent" if a person (human) cannot distinguish its (the machine's) behavior from that of a human. However, in this context, *"the term 'behavior' refers only to the performance of specific intellectual tasks; it does not account for the full breadth of human experience, which includes abstraction, emotions, creativity, and the aesthetic, moral, and religious sensibilities. Nor does it encompass the full range of expressions characteristic of the human mind. Instead, in the case of AI, the "intelligence" of a system is evaluated methodologically, but also reductively, based on its ability to produce appropriate responses – in this case, those associated with the human intellect – regardless of how those responses are generated."*

In sum, AI can perform tasks, but it cannot think and it cannot feel. AI is given credit by the authors of *Antiqua et Nova* for being an "extraordinary technological achievement capable of imitating certain outputs associated with human intelligence", but *"it operates by performing tasks, achieving goals, or making decisions based on quantitative data and computational logic"*. If AI technology is overly relied upon or is used as the primary means of interpreting the world, they argue, it can lead to a loss of appreciation for the whole, for the relationships between things, and for the broader horizon. *"Human intelligence is situated within a personally lived history of intellectual and moral formation that*

fundamentally shapes the individual's perspective...Since AI cannot offer this fullness of understanding, approaches that rely solely on this technology or treat it as the primary means of interpreting the world can lead to a loss of appreciation for the whole, for the relationships between things, and for the broader horizon."

The role of ethics

As I read *Antiqua et Nova*, I underlined what I felt were the important words and phrases, noting what I believed were the key points in the discourse. When I reviewed the marked-up document, I saw that the same words were repeated throughout: the importance of moral responsibility; respect for human dignity; and promotion of the common good. One statement stood out because it made the Church's view on technology and scientific activities perfectly clear. In response to the rhetorical question, How can AI be understood within God's plan?, it states: *"To answer this, it is important to recall that techno-scientific activity is not neutral in character but is a human endeavor that engages the humanistic and cultural dimensions of human creativity."* In other words, God has no plan for AI. Pope Francis has said that *"the very use of the word 'intelligence' in connection with AI can prove misleading, and risks overlooking what is most precious in the human person. In light of this, AI should not be seen as an artificial form of human intelligence but as a product of it."*

Machines cannot accept responsibility for their actions. Machines cannot believe in anything, least of all the concept of 'God'. Machines do not have a place in a church pew or at an altar receiving Holy Communion or in a confessional admitting their sins because they cannot sin; they are a channel for the sins of humans; they cannot repent because humans made them do it.

Pope Francis has made AI a central theme of his talks

There were probably priests and scribes rattling around the Vatican when the *Antiqua et Nova* Note was being written who wished that the two important examples of human hubris were incorporated in the story of the relationship between artificial intelligence and human intelligence: the original sin of eating the forbidden fruit; and the attempt to build a tower to heaven. The first parable warns us that there is no quick way to attain knowledge, like eating an apple. The second tells us that there can be unwanted

consequences for trying to take shortcuts to achieve happiness, like everyone suddenly speaking a language that no one else can understand. You can take performance-enhancing drugs to win a gold medal or connect your brain to a computer to win on Jeopardy, but you are cheating yourself if you believe you deserve a prize. You can sell drugs or steal from others to buy an expensive car or watch, but it will be difficult to drive the car if you are in a prison cell where your time belongs to the prison guards.

The Pope, in his talks on the subject of AI, including his participation in the G7 meeting in Puglia in June 2024 to address a special session on artificial intelligence, has moved away from speaking in parables to referring to a “shadow of evil” directly. His message is clear: *“Where human freedom allows for the possibility of choosing what is wrong, the moral evaluation of this technology will need to take into account how it is directed and used. This means speaking about ethics.”*⁹

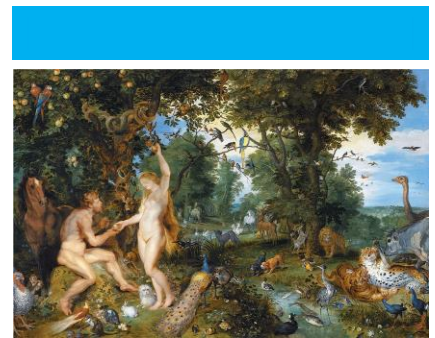
Pope Francis asserts that AI, created through human creativity (which, he says, is “God-given”, but however humans got it, they have it), should serve humanity and remain under human control. He says that delegating decision-making to machines or AI is not only unethical but also prone to inaccuracy. The quote below sums up the position of the Roman Catholic Church:

“We would condemn humanity to a future without hope if we took away people’s ability to make decisions about themselves and their lives, by dooming them to depend on the choices of machines. We need to ensure and safeguard a space for proper human control over the choices made by artificial intelligence programs: human dignity itself depends on it.”

Since we all have free will, we can all decide for ourselves on which side of this argument our views align, or whether we will take a neutral view and let the decision about the future place of humans be taken by others. I know where I stand. I am not neutral. I will win or lose with my own brain.



⁹ <https://www.vatican.va/content/Franco/2024/june/documents/20240614-g7-intelligenza-artificiale.html>



*Depiction of Original Sin
Peter Paul Rubens*



*Tower of Babel
Pieter Brueghel the Elder*

About Michael L. Sena

Through my writing, speaking and client work, I have attempted to bring clarity to an often-opaque world of highly automated and connected vehicles. I have not just studied the technologies and analyzed the services. I have developed and implemented them and have worked to shape visions and followed through to delivering them. What drives me – why do what I do – is my desire to move the industry forward: to see accident statistics fall because of safety improvements related to advanced driver assistance systems; to see congestion on all roads reduced because of better traffic information and improved route selection; to see global emissions from transport eliminated because of designing the most fuel-efficient vehicles; and to see everyone who needs a ride get one.

This newsletter has, during the twelve years since I began writing it, touched on the principal themes of the industry, highlighting what, how, and why developments are occurring so that you could develop your own strategies for the future. Most importantly, I put vehicles into their context. It is not just roads; it's communities, large and small. Vehicles are tools, and people use these tools to make their lives and the lives of their family members easier, more enjoyable, and safer. Businesses and services use these tools to deliver what people need. Transport is intertwined with the environment in which it operates, and the two must be developed in concert.



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