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Bicycling, Transportation and the Problem of Evil

1 Introduction

As some of you know, I have a reputation as an expert in bicycle transportation. In that respect, I was asked by Santa Barbara Safe Streets to speak at a meeting organized to oppose certain traffic-calming methods being proposed for that city. One argument presented by the proponents of these methods was that they protected cyclists against traffic dangers, and I was asked if I would present an opposing argument. I did so, arguing that cyclists are better off with good roads of standard design than the traffic-calming methods being proposed, which increase the danger for cyclists. The prime speaker, however, was Randal O'Toole of the Preserving the American Dream Coalition and the Cato Institute, who spoke on the private auto as the enabling force for American urban growth.

My own presentation, and its association with O'Toole's, aroused a storm of angry criticism on the internet among those who call themselves bicycle activists. My participation in that discussion has led me to see the connection between bicycle activism and what philosophers call the problem of evil.

2 Pre-Bikeway Cycling History

My expertise sprang from two childhood interests, one in transportation in general, the other in cycling, that I have continued until the present day. In the days of the National City Lines controversy, my best friend and I recognized that, though we loved the SF Bay Area streetcar and

interurban lines, and the ferry steamers, (we carried out our plan to ride every line that then existed), the switch to buses was being produced by economic factors. Shortly thereafter, we recognized that the switch to private motoring was being driven by the combination of wealth and urban growth. Our youthful interests bore fruit: my best friend came from an Espee family, spent much of his professional life as a civil engineer for them, then later as an international rail consultant.

I started cycling in 1936 in London, England, a member of the fourth cycling generation in my family, and was raised in the standard view that cyclists, as legitimate road users, had to obey the same rules of the road as all other drivers. My parents moved to Berkeley, California, in February, 1940, to a home near the top of the Berkeley Hills, and it wasn't long before I was cycling those hills, descending as fast as the cars did and obeying the same rules.

Over the decades since, I have largely continued cycling: riding to work, club cycling, touring, racing (most of that in my middle years when I had more time). We were a cycling family of Dorris, me, and her two daughters, of which I was the only one who did not win a place in the national championship races. In many of those years, particularly in the 1950s, as the effects of the Depression and World War 2 wore off, cycling was denigrated by society, as being an activity of those too poor to afford a car or otherwise unable to conform to society's norms.

We adult, active cyclists knew that we did not conform to society's norms in one respect. We considered ourselves legitimate road users who

obeyed the rules of the road, which is the standard legal requirement. That view had partly come from European cyclists, partly developed here through experience. We kept in touch with European cycling thought, largely through the British weekly, *Cycling*, and the publications of the Cyclists' Touring Club, but also through the French cycling press, by those with French connections. We recognized that Americans thought differently about cycling, considering it to be an activity of children that should be regulated as such, although the traffic laws had difficulty in safely accommodating such regulation. The resulting regulation of cyclists was confined to prohibiting cyclists from using the full width of the roadway, or the roadway at all wherever there was a usable path alongside, all excused as protecting child cyclists from the great danger of same-direction motor traffic. Child cyclists were not considered to be competent and legitimate roadway users, as were motorists, but as trespassers who would be greatly endangered if they left the side of the roadway. Motorists produced the "bike-safety" training that was given, concentrating on never leaving the edge of the roadway under pain of death. I described this training as: "Cyclists who ride in traffic will either delay the cars, which is Sin, or, if the cars don't choose to slow down, will be crushed, which is Death, and the Wages of Sin is Death."

However, we adult cyclists operated as full drivers of vehicles with only very rare interference from child-centered officials, and we accepted the difference as social policy that we could not affect, except when we taught proper cycling to the few new cyclists who joined us.

I later named the adult cyclist tradition as vehicular cycling, and the child cyclist tradition as cyclist-inferiority cycling.

3 Bikeway Origins

Then, in 1971, the California government started a program of designing and building bikeways, along with the appropriate changes to traffic law, that institutionalized in physical form the long-standing treatment of cyclists as incompetent children. At the same time, the Federal government was instituting a regulation that all bicycles sold in America be designed as if for use by children. The parallels demonstrate the thought of the time. I heard about both of these (though the Californians were secretive about their aims), and started the opposition to them, by participating in the commit-

tees and in the legal discussions, and organizing that opposition by publicizing the threat to adult cyclists.

I was accepted (actually by mistake) to the first California committee, as the only cyclist up against eight motorists. By the time of the second California committee, we cyclists had managed to get two representatives out of eight members. I won't discuss details here, but we cyclists managed to head off the most dangerous proposals made by the motorists who ran the committees. However, one aspect is fully relevant to this discussion. That is, those who ran the committees insisted that the only laws and designs acceptable to them were those that institutionalized the long-standing treatment of cyclists as children. That is, laws and designs that prohibited cyclists from using more than the right-hand margin of the roadway. They tried to prohibit cyclists from any roadway that had a path alongside, but we cyclists frightened the government personnel with the prospects of the lawsuits from dead and injured cyclists that would result from that law. The committee members also refused to consider any proposal that would actually ameliorate known causes of car-bike collisions.

The first study of car-bike collision statistics (Cross, Santa Barbara County) was written during this period. The statistics demonstrated that collisions between cyclists and same-direction motor traffic were very infrequent compared to those between turning and crossing movements, thus invalidating the safety excuse for limiting cyclists to the edge of the roadway. The committee members, who had paid for this study, believing that it would demonstrate the acute danger of same-direction motor traffic, refused to publish the study. Since I was present at the initial presentation, before the committee members realized its conclusions, I have one of the few copies.

Subsequent to the creation of the design standards for bikeways, Cross's second study of car-bike collisions, based on nationally representative data and providing more detail, was published. In the 1990s, a less detailed replication of Cross's national study was made, which showed that the general pattern had not changed. Thus, over the years, the car-bike collision statistics have consistently disproved the bikeway hypothesis.

3.1 Conclusions About Bikeways

These bikeway design standards, produced

in California against the opposition of cyclists, have been copied and adopted nationwide, with some improvements over time.

Seven conclusions are to be drawn from these events.

- 1: The actions of the committees were done by motorists and largely opposed by cyclists.
- 2: The motoring members ensured that all actions shoved cyclists to the side of the road, or off the road if possible.
- 3: All actions of the committees served to physically institutionalize the traditional treatment of cyclists as incompetent children, to be kept at the side of the roadway or off the roadway if possible.
- 4: These actions were justified by the excuse of the great danger of same-direction motor traffic.
- 5: The excuse of the great danger of same-direction motor traffic had no scientific support at the time, was said to be false by experienced cyclists, and was in fact conclusively disproved during the operation of the committees by the first good statistical study.
- 6: All the actions of the committees were actions that served the interest of motorists in shoving cyclists to the edge of the roadways, or off the roadways.
- 7: These discriminatory actions against cyclists were approved by the public because the public wholeheartedly believed the propaganda that the motorists had issued over the previous forty years.

Consideration of the first five of the above conclusions leads inexorably to the sixth, that the basic intent of these bikeway design standards was to make motoring more convenient by shoving cyclists aside or off the roadways. And, equally, to the seventh, that this was possible only because of the strong public belief in the cyclist-inferiority superstition.

4 The Injection of Anti-Motoring

If the bikeway controversy had been purely between the motoring establishment's proposals and the opposition by the cycling organizations, cyclists might have been able to successfully repel the motorists' desires. This is because cyclists could make the case that the bikeway designs were motorists' way of discriminating against cyclists, and, at that time, the public viewed motorists and motoring with skeptical eyes.

However, a new political power entered the controversy, that of anti-motorists. One would think that anti-motorists would oppose discrimination against cyclists by motorists, but they took the opposite course and supported it.

The anti-motorists sprang from the American cyclist-inferiority tradition of shoving cyclists to the side of the roadway under the excuse of the great danger of same-direction motor traffic. While vehicular cyclists saw bikeways as limiting cyclists' normal traffic rights in the interest of motorist convenience, the cyclist-inferiority American saw bike lanes as giving cyclists, for the first time, a safe and legitimate place on the roadway. Of course, both facets of this statement were false: staying at the margin of the roadway was no safer, indeed was more dangerous, than operating according to traffic law; cyclists were always legally considered to have the rights and duties of drivers of vehicles. However, the force of several decades of "bike-safety" propaganda by motorists produced a superstition that amounted, in many cases, to a phobia.

Anti-motorists need to have a substitute for private motoring. For various reasons, bicycling is a most attractive substitute. That means that many anti-motorists are strongly attracted to what they call bicycle advocacy, advocating bicycle transportation in place of motor transportation. The anti-motorists recognize that the cyclist-inferiority fear of same-direction motor traffic prevents many people from taking up cycling.

The anti-motoring view by itself tends to exaggerate the evil aspect of motoring, including its danger to other road users. In addition, the anti-motoring view tends to exaggerate the strength or dislike of motoring among the general public, and to greatly understate the utility of motoring to the public. What proportion of anti-motorists actually fear same-direction motor traffic, and what proportion simply use that fear to advance their anti-motoring agenda is unknown, probably unknowable.

Through these thoughts, the anti-motorists concluded that a national bikeway program would make cycling safe for even children, and would thereby persuade transportationally significant numbers of motorists to switch a transportationally significant number of trips to bicycle transportation. Therefore, the bikeway program, designed to limit cyclists' use of the roadways for the convenience of motorists, became the prime object of bicycle advocacy under the belief that it made cyclists safe and legal.

5 Changes Since 1978

In the thirty years since these events, the same arguments continue.

Vehicular cyclists argue that their style of cycling conforms to standard traffic-engineering principles and traffic law, and is confirmed by the collision statistics and by comparison of the particular traffic movements required of cyclists and of motorists during normal traffic operations against those required when bikeways are included. Furthermore, these same data not only confirm the vehicular style of cycling, but they demonstrate that there is no reason to believe that bikeways can significantly reduce collisions, and may well increase them. Vehicular cyclists argue that even child cyclists can learn to obey the rules of the road in 15 class hours of instruction, and that nobody has shown that cycling in a city with a bikeway system removes the need for any standard traffic-cycling skill. These arguments are all supported by scientific evidence.

Some bicycle advocates argue against these claims, claiming that obeying the rules of the road is no safer than disobeying them, that bike-lane stripes reduce car-bike collisions by some unspecified means, that bikeways make cycling safe for beginners, again by some unspecified means, that bike lanes make cycling legitimate, again by some unspecified means. Other bicycle advocates have given up on the safety, engineering, and legitimacy arguments as being unwinnable. In fact, many of these openly admit that they choose to cycle in the vehicular manner because that works best. However, both kinds of bicycle advocate are adamant that bikeway systems cause many motorists to switch a transportationally significant number of motor trips to bicycling, and if a reason is given it is “comfort”, whatever that might mean.

Since 1978, government has funded many attempts to justify its bikeway program, largely in terms of safety or beneficial operating characteristics, as have some academic persons also. All of these attempts have failed, and many have been harshly criticized for poor scientific design. Bicycle advocates have attempted to show that bikeway systems significantly switch trips from motoring to bicycling. While these have shown correlation, there are too many confounding alternate explanations to attribute any change to bikeways.

The original engineering analyses of traffic movements that showed the superiority of vehicular movement over others have never been dis-

puted. Government funded a review study of car-bike collision statistics, and found that the modern pattern is the same as that of thirty years ago. Some European studies have shown that bikeways increase collisions in the ways predicted here at the start of the bikeway era.

In short, there has been no significant change in knowledge concerning bikeways over the past thirty years.

6 The Bike Forums Discussions

6.1 General Description

Bike Forums is an internet discussion group with many distinct simultaneous discussions. For some time they have had a division devoted to discussing Vehicular Cycling, within which new variations of the subject are continually being introduced. When the news arrived of my appearance at the Santa Barbara Safe Streets meeting, several new discussions appeared, specifically about me and what they thought to be my views. When a talk on bicycle transportation that I gave at Google was made available on video to the internet, that also added fuel to these discussions.

The active participants are people with agendas. Others surface occasionally by commenting that they had hoped to learn from these discussions. Participants in these discussions rarely use their actual names, and even hinting that one might recognize, by his writing or argument style, the person behind some alias brings down severe criticism. Some, like myself, have chosen to use our actual names. I think it reasonable to say that over half of the participants support the bicycle advocacy agenda, while less than one quarter support vehicular cycling.

The discussions within the Vehicular Cycling Forum have all been based on opposition to vehicular cycling. If there was an attempt to advocate vehicular cycling, the critics of vehicular cycling quickly took over and the discussion became largely criticism of vehicular cycling and defense against that criticism.

6.2 Outline of Argument

There is no need to discuss in detail the lines of argument supporting vehicular cycling. They are that vehicular cycling is in accordance with standard traffic-engineering principles and with standard traffic law, both of which are founded on the inherent characteristics of drivers and their vehicles. That obeying the rules of the road for

drivers of vehicles allows traffic to flow in a reasonable combination of safety and efficiency, and that disobeying those rules produces dangerous conflicts. That vehicular cyclists operate cooperatively with other drivers, and that this method of operation is sufficiently easy to learn that even young children can learn to do it in a reasonable instructional time. One might say that any child who is able to play a reasonable game of soccer has all the abilities that are required to learn to properly operate in traffic, and can learn the required skills in reasonable time.

The main subject herein discussed are the arguments produced in opposition to vehicular cycling and advocating bikeways and bikeway cycling.

6.3 Vehicular Cyclists' View

Vehicular cyclists place greatest concern on the problems of cycling under present conditions in the cities that we have. The modern decentralized city offers fewer opportunities for bicycle transportation than do earlier cities, in large part because the distances are greater, and also because of the increase in linked trips for several destinations and several purposes. Because of the greater distances, higher average speed is necessary to make many trips practical. This is attained, in many cases, by using direct arterial routes because they allow high cycling speed and have fewer delays. Indirect routes to use bikeways rarely provide shorter trip times. And, of course, cycling in the vehicular manner is necessary for both safety and efficiency, as well as to avoid upsetting the public.

With fewer opportunities for useful bicycle transportation, it is likely that no modern city will have a large proportion of bicycle transportation, and it is likely that much of that which is done is done by people who enjoy cycling.

Vehicular cyclists consider that American bicycle transportation has two major defects. The first is that too few cyclists obey the rules of the road for drivers of vehicles. This both endangers the cyclists and upsets the public. The second is that governmental bicycle policy and practice are based on motorist-designed bikeways and motorist-inspired cyclist-inferiority cycling instead of on cyclists as lawful, competent drivers of vehicles. This policy naturally inhibits the instruction of cyclists in proper traffic procedures.

6.4 Bicycle Advocates' Vision

Bicycle advocates envision a society in which little of the transportation is by private car. In this sense, it is an anti-motoring vision. Since modern suburbia depends on private motoring, their vision is one without suburbia. Since large retail establishments depend on customers who carry their purchases by car, their vision opposes large retail establishments. Bicycle advocates envision bicycle transportation being done by a large proportion of the population, of all ages, as a matter of daily routine: to school, to work, to shop, to play. Much of this bicycle transportation will be done on bike lanes or bike paths. Bicycle advocates so often admire Amsterdam that it is reasonable to conclude that Amsterdam is their ideal city.

6.5 Paradoxes in the Bicycling Vision

The bicycling vision requires a different city and a different way of life than have been developed over the past eighty years. The extent to which bicycle advocates recognize this is dubious. They praise Amsterdam because of its high cycling volume, but they insist that this is because of its bikeway system rather than its old urban design and history, which are far more likely causes. Bicycle advocates believe that bikeways greatly increase bicycle transportation, while refusing to believe that bikeways were designed, by motorists and to suit their own convenience, to limit the intrusion of bicycle traffic into motor traffic. Bicycle advocates believe that bikeway systems make cycling safe for beginners and children without training, although no evidence supports this claim. In this, they are accepting the motorists' propaganda that the essence of "bike safety" is to stay close to the edge of the roadway, out of the way of cars, otherwise called the cyclist-inferiority superstition, while denying that this commands inferiority. Instead of praising vehicular cycling as necessary for safety, bicycle advocates denigrate it as difficult, dangerous, and elitist.

In summary, the bicycle advocates' vision requires a completely different urban design than that developed in the past eighty years, with its transportation system operating on principles contrary to present knowledge. Attempts to change bicycling to conform to this vision produce paradoxes that defy rational thought.

6.6 Some Lines of Advocacy Argu-

ment

The following are very short summaries of some of the lines of advocacy argument that have appeared in the Vehicular Cycling section of Bike Forums.

6.6.1 Bikeway systems greatly increase bicycle transportation

The evidence for this is of two kinds. First, old European cities, such as Amsterdam, have bikeway systems and high proportions of bicycle transportation. These are cities whose designs make motoring inconvenient, with lifestyles developed in the pre-motoring era. Second, Portland, OR, has been installing bikeways and has shown an increase in bicycle transportation into downtown. However, Portland has been conducting a many-phased anti-motoring campaign for decades, and there is no way of knowing the extent to which bikeways have increased bicycle transportation.

Of course, bikeways appeal to people who have been raised with the cyclist-inferiority superstition without the subsequent cycling experience to demonstrate its falsity, as is true for most Americans.

6.6.2 Bikeway systems eliminate the need for traffic-cycling skills

This is never stated in this fashion, but always as bikeways make bicycle transportation suitable for beginners and children, although how this is accomplished is never mentioned. Nobody has ever shown which traffic-cycling skills are not needed in a city with bikeway systems.

6.6.3 Vehicular Cycling is dangerous, difficult, and elitist

This is commonly stated. However, there has been no description of a better way of cycling. Cycling in a city with a bikeway system still requires the standard vehicular-cycling skills.

6.6.4 People who live in suburbia have not freely chosen to do so

People do not really like to live in suburbia. Some have chosen to live in suburbia because they have been enticed by false promises produced by land developers, the motoring establishment, and financial bribes from government. The idea that people like the suburban environment is anathema.

6.6.5 Auto transportation is not very useful

Bicycle advocates deride the concept that many people choose motoring because they find it suits their transportation needs. These advocates believe that most people do not like motoring and will therefore be susceptible to switching from motoring to cycling once the fear of traffic has been removed by bikeways.

6.6.6 Vehicular cyclists advocate motoring

Because vehicular cyclists are reasonably happy with the current road designs and operating procedures (although several detail improvements are desirable), they are accused of advocating motoring and suburban living.

6.6.7 Vehicular cyclists wish to limit cycling

Bicycle advocates do not admit that vehicular-cycling skills are necessary for safe bicycle transportation, and they advocate bicycle transportation that is not based on vehicular-cycling skills. Therefore, they assert that those who advocate the use of vehicular-cycling skills, and, particularly, the principle that these skills are necessary, must be interested in maintaining vehicular cycling as an elitist activity from which they want the general public excluded.

6.6.8 The cyclist-inferiority superstition and phobia do not exist

Bicycle advocates' program is largely based on bikeways, and advocacy of bikeways is based wholly on the cyclist-inferiority superstition. When such a frightening superstition causes people to take actions contrary to their own safety, it matches the standard definition of a phobia.

Bicycle advocates are extremely upset at this argument that their program is based on a phobia. Therefore, they deny that such a phobia exists, but the only other motivation that they have supplied for their strategy is that of "comfort". However, the major comfort to be felt by a cyclist in a bike lane is the feeling of protection from the danger of same-direction motor traffic, and the minor comfort comes from the feeling that the bike lane has made him a legitimate roadway user, both of which errors are manifestations of the cyclist-inferiority phobia.

6.6.9 Bike-path systems can carry a large proportion of bicycle traffic.

Bicycle advocates admire and advocate bike paths as the best of bikeways, seeing them as being completely separated from motor traffic.

However, they ignore the fact that in any typical urban area there are very few locations for bike paths that have very few connections with motor traffic, and these locations may not be located to suit bicycle transportation patterns. One discussant hoped for the day when all people could ride to work on a path as good as the one she used, which, for half its length, traversed a deliberately undeveloped marsh.

And for paths with frequent connections with motor traffic, see below under sidepaths.

6.6.10 Vehicular cyclists are out of touch with modern cycling thought

Bicycle advocates consider that vehicular cyclists rely on ancient data and ancient memories that are hopelessly out of touch with modern bicycling thought. In a sense, they are correct, for vehicular cyclists are focussed on the present according to lessons learned through decades over which not much has changed about the technical aspects of vehicular operation. However accurate this criticism might be, it is irrelevant because the bicyclist advocates' vision has not yet become real, and may never become so.

6.6.11 Bicycle Advocates' View of Side-Paths

Bicycle advocates are conflicted about paths alongside urban streets (think sidewalks). On one side, they praise these for allowing safe cycling for children and the aged. On the other, they use the argument that because sidewalk cycling incurs great danger of car-bike collisions at driveways and intersections, bike lanes should be built because they persuade some sidewalk cyclists to use the safer bike lane instead.

It is believed that cycling on a sidewalk at the speed and with the caution required of pedestrians is about as safe as walking. However, cyclists rarely choose to ride at pedestrian speeds, and it has been well established by analysis, accident statistics, and experiment that, for urban sidepaths that are crossed by many driveways and streets, cycling at normal cycling speeds incurs a very high rate of potential car-bike collisions. However, some bicycle advocates refuse to acknowledge this, writing that the report of my experimental ride on such a sidewalk at normal road speeds, describing the dangers of car-bike collision I encountered, as being "hilarious". Since I wasn't killed, it could not have been dangerous. But, of course, nobody has tried to repeat so dangerous an experiment.

6.6.12 Traffic conditions have changed to invalidate vehicular cycling

Bicycle advocates argue that traffic conditions have changed so much since the origin of vehicular cycling that it is no longer a good way of operating. The prime reason that they cite, today, is the increased speed of motor traffic. However, since they have never presented any way in which their bikeways reduce the skills required, they cannot rationally argue that their bikeways reduce the danger of making the required movements in fast traffic. Rather, since bikeways conflict with standard traffic movements, as the intensity of traffic increases, so do the difficulties of dealing with it while cycling in bikeways and in the cyclist-inferiority manner.

6.6.13 Vehicular Cyclists Can Use Bike Lanes

Some bicycle advocates say that vehicular cyclists have no right to criticize bike lanes, since vehicular cyclists can ride in bike lanes or on the normal roadway, whichever suits them best. The facts are correct (unless the area has a mandatory bikeway use law), but they are irrelevant. When operating properly on a street with bike lanes, a cyclist will sometimes be in the bike lane, sometimes not. The fact that he is sometimes in the bike lane cannot demonstrate the validity of bike lanes; indeed, the fact that sometimes proper cycling requires him to be outside the bike lane demonstrates that bike lanes and their theory cannot be valid traffic-engineering facilities.

Vehicular cyclists oppose the governments' program for bicycle transportation, implemented largely through bikeways, because those bikeways are the official statement of a policy that is contrary to operating according to the rules of the road. The rules of the road for drivers of vehicles have been worked out to provide for the reasonably safe and effective movement of vehicles, according to the normal characteristics of wheeled vehicles and their drivers. Contradicting those rules creates both dangerously conflicting traffic movements and confusion in the minds of roadway users.

The governments' bikeway program is based only on the two sides of the cyclist-inferiority superstition. On one side is the motorists' superiority assumption that they and their vehicles are better than cyclists and their vehicles, and thereby deserve to have bicycle traffic cleared aside. On the other side is the bicycle advocates' inferiority assumption that cyclists can neither protect themselves from motor vehicles nor have the ability, or

even the right, to operate in the standard manner.

6.7 The Problem of Evil

Bicycle advocates clearly believe that their vision represents a far better way of life than that chosen by most people. Bicycle advocates believe that people are basically good and rational, and will choose better life styles when offered. However, this far better way of life has not yet come about; in fact progress toward it is substantially nil. That is, some growth in bicycle transportation in a few places, countered by great increases in motoring almost everywhere else. This failure of the good and increase of the evil presents the bicycle advocates with the problem of evil; some evil power must be influencing people to make bad choices.

For the most part, this evil power is exercised by faceless organizations: auto manufacturers, land developers, oil companies, road builders, government tax policy, home builders, the free market, motorists, and the like. However, bicycle advocates have one person to identify as their personal Satan; that's me, John Forester, the leader of the vehicular cyclists and the developer of the intellectual opposition to bikeways.

6.7.1 The Problem of Suburbia

One part of this evil power is that which has produced suburbia against the desires of good people. Good people would not buy a house in suburbia. Therefore, the fact that many do requires that they have been misled by false promises and misguided tax policy, all driven by the profit motive. The land developer sees a way to make a profit by selling houses that people don't really want, but that requires road construction, and the proposed inhabitants require automobiles, and later gasoline, oil, and tires. Therefore, all these supplying organizations conspire together to produce an overwhelming force for the construction of undesirable houses on land that should have been left alone.

The argument that if people really didn't want to buy these houses, the whole project would fail, thus preventing later wasteful projects, falls on deaf ears. Bicycle advocates do not believe in the free market. They believe that people buy the houses that they do only because they are coerced by evil forces.

6.7.2 The Problem of Transportation Choice

Another part of the evil power is that people

insist on using auto transportation when it doesn't benefit them and when they would prefer another mode. Motoring both allowed the development of the decentralized city and is its lifeblood, but this connection does not come within the bicycle advocates' vision. Bicycle advocates deride the statement that our employment, commercial, and social patterns have developed to suit the availability of auto transportation, with many trips linked to several purposes, and of sufficient length and diversity that they are practical only by private automobile. In the view of bicycle advocates, much auto transportation is an expensive waste of time, rather than the method of choice when living in a decentralized city.

Since the connection between automobile transportation, suburbia, and the decentralized city does not fit some bicycle advocates' vision, they like to pretend that these developments have not occurred. Other bicycle advocates complain about the actual development that is occurring, particularly about arterial streets with high motor speeds (as if such had never existed before).

6.7.3 The Problem of Bikeways

When it comes to considering bikeways, bicycle advocates have the luxury of a personal embodiment of evil: John Forester leading the vehicular cycling advocates, whom the bicycle advocates call "Foresterites". That's me, of course, and I will use "I" and "my". There are four major aspects to my work:

- 1: Justification for cycling according to the rules of the road for drivers of vehicles, the vehicular-cycling principle
- 2: Acceptance of most aspects of road design and traffic operation, plus wide outside lanes to allow motorists to overtake cyclists without delay
- 3: Opposition to bike lanes as contradicting the rules of the road, and to many bike paths as doing so where they connect to motoring facilities
- 4: Advocacy of the vehicular-cycling principle and criticism of the cyclist-inferiority superstition as being its opposite

Every one of these is a slap in the face of the bicycle advocates' vision of bicycle heaven.

Their vision of bicycle heaven requires that bicycle transportation be so easy that anyone can do it with no significant training. This echoes the motorists' propaganda that any cyclist can be safe if he stays at the edge of the roadway, or, prefera-

bly, off it; no real skills to learn. Therefore, bicycle advocates believe that vehicular cycling, obeying the rules of the road, is an unattainable standard. They refuse to believe the studies that have demonstrated attainment in reasonable time, for several ages. Of course, the bicycle advocates never have been able to provide an alternate way of cycling in traffic that is as good as obeying the rules of the road, but they ignore this difficulty by providing their own answer to this problem of evil. They claim that vehicular cycling advocacy is an elitist plot to restrict cycling to some elite few, the lawful and competent, and to keep real cyclists, those who do not obey the rules of the road, off the streets by describing them as incompetent.

The bicycle advocates' vision of bicycle heaven requires that streets be made suitable for cycling in the unskilled, incompetent, and even frightened manner that they admire. The acceptance of most current design principles by vehicular cyclists is another slap in the face of that vision. Even the advocacy of wide outside lanes is suspect. However bicycle advocates have never developed roadway designs that are suited to the unskilled, incompetent, and even frightened cycling that they desire. Bicycle advocates explain this conflict with their vision by saying that vehicular cyclists, particularly John Forester, have sold out to the automobile interests.

The bikelane issue is the one of these that upsets bicycle advocates most, probably because it most directly confronts their program to implement their vision. In this matter, bicycle advocates don't need the excuse of an evil power because bike lanes are nearly everywhere; bicycle advocates like to think that they won that battle long ago. Their problem is that winning that battle has not produced their vision. They believe that it will, though the evidence is slender and even contrary. The evil power in this case is John Forester, who both points out the failure and explains why it should have been expected.

The failure is that only a small proportion of the motoring public has switched to bicycle transportation. The primary reason is the low utility of bicycle transportation in the modern decentralized city. But there are other failures: no reduction in car-bike collisions, no reduction in the level of required skill, in fact an increase because of the contradiction with traffic operating procedures, no increase in legitimacy. Forester is evil because he keeps reminding bicycle advocates that these failures were all predicted decades ago. And bicycle activists are particularly confused when Forester

informs them that their ideal, bike lanes, were designed by motorists to shove bicycle traffic aside for the convenience of motorists, which is what bike lanes do to this day. Bicycle advocates refuse to believe Forester's criticism of the motorists in those events, because that would negate their vision, and their refusal allows them the additional advantage of being able to claim that much of their ill fortune is because Forester has sold out to the motorists.

The difference between the vehicular-cycling principle and the cyclist-inferiority superstition is the foundation of the bikeway controversy, but bicycle advocates find it difficult to understand. They easily see themselves arrayed against monstrous conspiracies of motorists, motor manufacturers, highway builders, land developers, oil companies, and the like, whose forces have prevented the realization of the bicycle advocates' vision. They see themselves as weak persons being endangered by the motor vehicles that are the weapons of those conspiracies. One would think that they would eagerly accept the fact that bikeways were designed by motorists as part of the oppression of cyclists. But bicycle activists refuse to believe this, because their vision requires that cyclists be exactly the unskilled and incompetent persons described by motorists when justifying their bikeway program.

Bicycle advocates find it more difficult to understand the vehicular-cycling vision founded on cyclists' status equal to that of motorists. Bicycle advocates certainly feel that cyclists are morally superior to motorists, but that feeling reverses when they consider actual cycling conditions. Therefore, their view of vehicular cycling is contaminated by their feelings of inferiority to motor traffic. They fail to understand that vehicular cycling is simply riding along the road according to the rules of the road in cooperation with all the other drivers. Instead, they infuse their view of vehicular cycling with their own view of a fight against motor traffic, thus presenting, in words only, the parody of a person feeling inferior and vulnerable trying to do what he thinks vehicular cycling instructs.

However, bicycle advocates realize that the vehicular cycling movement presents the only intellectual case against their vision, and that Forester is its leader. (None of the powerful conspirators with whom the bicycle advocates think themselves in conflict ever bothers to say anything against the bicycle advocates' vision. They either agree with it, or consider it irrelevant. So much for

that “conflict”.) Bicycle advocates have no substantive arguments against this contradiction of their vision; therefore, they invent evil qualities to apply to vehicular cycling and particularly to Forester. For example: Forester cannot know much about cycling, because he admits that he cycles because he enjoys it instead of being a dedicated transportation cyclist, as they consider themselves to be. Think what their argument shows about themselves: bicycle transportation is not enjoyable, and one learns only by doing what one hates. Another: Forester has sold out to the motorists because he thinks that motoring is quite useful, that most road design is good, that obeying the rules of the road is good, and the like. Bicycle advocates invent lies about Forester, such as writing that he drives an SUV and is on the motorists’ payroll. Their argument ignores entirely Forester’s decades-long criticism of the motoring establishment for discriminating against cyclists, and his efforts to have that repealed, and to obtain wide outside lanes, bicycle-responsive traffic-signal detectors, bike-safe drain grates, and the like.

The fact that there is opposition to the bicycle advocates’ worthy vision of a bicycling society, is proof that there is evil afoot.

7 Tactical Considerations When Opposing Bicycle Advocates

Practically all designated “bicycle advocates” are anti-motorists who are using bicycle transportation as a tool to reduce motoring. Their goal is to entice motorists away from motoring by whatever means they think to be effective. Those who style themselves bicycle advocates advocate bikeways and traffic calming, and maybe such non-controversial side issues as secure bicycle parking. They make big talk about safety to get what they want, but such talk is mendacious, ranging from simple superstition to outright falsehoods when stated by the better informed. Their arguments are rarely challenged because their listeners believe that same-direction motor traffic is the great danger to cyclists and that bikeways make cycling safe, particularly for beginning cyclists, both of which claims are false.

Bicycle advocates make difficult opponents for two reasons. Their thought, being based on strange beliefs, such as that people do not like living in suburbia, leads them into arguments whose accuracy and relevance are difficult to ascertain. They see their motivation, opposition to motoring, as so important as to justify any level of mendac-

ity. These characteristics mean that bicycle advocates silently evaluate bikeways and traffic calming by their supposed anti-motoring effects rather than by the welfare of cyclists, about which they have little concern.

Bicycle advocates consider bike lanes and bike paths to have a direct effect and an indirect effect. The direct effect, when present, is reduction of width available for motor traffic. The indirect effect, much more important, is persuasion of motorists, persons without traffic-cycling skills, to switch trips from motor to bicycle transportation in the belief that bikeways make cycling safe. Bicycle advocates consider traffic calming purely for its effect in dissuading motorists, thinking that this effect overwhelms any possible danger to cyclists.

In contrast to bicycle advocates, the person who argues for the welfare of cyclists presents a very different picture. He is concerned about getting more cyclists to obey the rules of the road, as being good both for them and for motorists. He desires road designs that properly accommodate lawful cyclists, as do today’s good designs without bikeways. He deplores road designs that contradict the rules of the road, as do all bikeway systems at critical points. These contradictions make obeying the rules of the road more difficult for both cyclists and motorists. He deplores many traffic-calming items because they make driving of vehicles more difficult and dangerous, whether those vehicles are motor vehicles or bicycles. In short, he is concerned about the welfare of the individuals who are operating the traffic system, instead of being against the traffic system.

Keeping these distinctions in mind will aid the advocate of private vehicles (motorized or non-motorized) when dealing with anti-motoring bicycle advocates.

8 Recommended Basic Strategy Against Bicycle Advocates and Their Anti-Motoring Strategy

The American Dream Coalition demonstrates that there exist persons and organizations who desire to protect themselves from the anti-motoring strategy that is promulgated as bicycle advocacy. One can call them advocates of private vehicles, whatever may be the source of energy for those vehicles. A strategy that is based on facts has much greater probability of success. Opponents of anti-motoring bicycle advocacy must start by recognizing that they probably need to correct their own misconceptions, misconcep-

tions that are used against them by the bicycle advocates. Sometimes the hardest part of accepting the facts is accepting responsibility for them.

The misconception that has caused all this trouble is that cyclists, being children, are unable to exercise judgement. Therefore, they should not be granted the rights of drivers of vehicles, but be restricted to the side of the road. The highway safety experts, being motorists and not cyclists, created instructions for operating in this cyclist-inferiority manner. These instructions were taught to generations of American children, motivated by fear of death from same-direction motor traffic for disobeying them. These instructions comforted American motorists with the thought that bicycle traffic was prevented from interfering with motor traffic, and the bike-safety excuse enabled them to disregard the fact that they were discriminating against cyclists for their own convenience.

These instructions were dangerous. Probably the most dangerous was for making left turns from next the curb without yielding to overtaking traffic. If one is assumed to have no judgement, then one cannot be held accountable for not exercising it. So motorists became worried whenever overtaking a cyclist, lest he swerve in front of them. But those same motorists never recognized that this swerving cyclist was operating as he was taught, taught by the motorists who were in charge of "bike-safety". An equally pernicious result was the view that traffic laws were for motorists alone, not for cyclists.

This system never worked as imagined. It is impossible to operate on the roadway without using judgement; those who used judgement disobeyed the system, while those who obeyed the bike-safety system had high collision rates. Thirty percent of car-bike collisions occurred because the cyclist was operating as he had been taught.

Then, when a later generation of motorists became concerned that bicycle traffic would plug up their roadways, they designed the bikeway system to physically enforce this childish cycling system that served their convenience. So certain were that they were right, they were utterly astonished when people who rode bicycles opposed them.

Motorists, you created both the false cyclist-inferiority ideology and the bikeway system to enforce it, and now these have come back to bite you in the form of anti-motoring bicycle advocacy. Only by admitting these faults can you weaken the system on which much anti-motoring bicycle advocacy is based.

Anti-motoring bicycle advocates plan to flood the roads with multitudes of bicycle riders who fit the pattern of childish incompetence that you motorists had devised and made so popular. Bicycle advocates recognize that only by appealing to this pattern of childish incompetence will they be able to generate the multitude of bicycle riders that they desire. Bicycle advocates also recognize that insistence on cyclist competence, though it may be good for cyclists, is so hated that it will dissuade those multitudes.

Bike lanes cannot keep incompetent cyclists safe. Safe and lawful cycling sometimes requires that the cyclist be where the bike lane is placed, sometimes it requires that the cyclist be outside the bike lane. Only a competent cyclist can distinguish when to be in the lane and when to be out of it, and only a competent cyclist can operate properly either way and in the cooperative manner of the driver of a vehicle.

If motorists manage to insist that cyclists obey the rules of the road for drivers of vehicles, they will find that those who choose to cycle are easier to have as fellow road users and many fewer than the number of incompetent bicycle riders that the bicycle activists plan to produce. Furthermore, discontinuing the bikeways program would remove the major attraction both for this multitude of incompetent cyclists and for disobeying the traffic laws. Cyclists need to be considered to be drivers of vehicles, as well as to act as such.

Of course, the bicycle advocates will argue that abandoning the bikeway program in favor of one of cyclist competence will destroy the hope of reducing motoring. This argument assumes that motoring is not very useful, that many people dislike motoring, that the major deterrent to bicycling is the danger of same-direction motor traffic, that bikeways remove that danger, and that these assumptions prove that many people would switch many trips from motoring to bicycling if a bikeway system were provided.

This argument is an empty threat. Despite thirty years of trying, no such reduction has been reported. For most people who live in modern decentralized urban areas, private motor transportation works so much better than any of the alternatives that it is predominantly chosen for most trips.

Some bicycling trips are made by those without access to a car; there's no need to encourage these because they are made anyway. Some people choose motoring for trips that would, if done by bicycle, serve the traveller's needs and desires

better. Both of these types of traveller would be much better served by a program that encouraged each traveller to cycle lawfully, competently, and enjoyably, without the cyclist-inferiority feelings that inhibit so many and on which bikeways are based.

In short, a program that is based on the principle that bicycle traffic should be operated in accordance with the rules of the road for drivers of vehicles has the following advantages:

- 1: For cyclists, it is best for those who choose to cycle
- 2: For motorists, it provides the most cooperative and safest bicycling road users
- 3: It short-circuits much of the anti-motoring bicycle advocacy.

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