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The development of self-driving cars has brought about an ethical dilemma: who should be held responsible in the event of a self-driving car accident? As AI becomes more advanced and prevalent, it is important to consider the ethical implications of self-driving crashes.

The article mentions “Moreover, we should note that whereas a pragmatic argument like the one Hevelke and Nida-Rümelin present against holding car manufacturers responsible is certainly important to consider, it does not settle the question of whether it is just or fair to hold car manufacturers responsible for harms or deaths their cars might cause” (Nyholm II pg3). This snippet dives deeper into what would happen if all the responsibility fell onto the manufacturer of the car. It would discourage them from developing autonomous cars and it can be argued that the innovation in technology in this space would decline. The concept referred to here that I want to talk about is moral responsibility. Moral responsibility refers to the idea that individuals can be held accountable for their actions based on their intentions and the consequences of their actions. In the context of self-driving crashes, moral responsibility raises important questions about who should be held accountable for the accident. Should the car manufacturer be held responsible for faulty hardware or design? Should the software developer be held responsible for errors in the AI system? Should the owner of the car be held responsible for failing to properly maintain or monitor the AI system? Some may argue that assigning moral responsibility to the AI system itself is problematic too. AI systems, by their very nature, are programmed to follow a set of instructions and do not have the capacity for moral agency or intentionality. Think about how LLM’s such as ChatGPT merely generate text and ideas based on existing text and ideas in which case it does not believe or think what is generating. This means that holding an AI system morally responsible for an accident may be the same as holding a hammer responsible for a nail breaking. However, others argue that even if an AI system does not have moral agency in the traditional sense, it is still capable of causing harm and thus should be held accountable for its actions. In this view, the AI system is seen as a tool that is created and designed by human beings, and therefore the humans responsible for its creation and deployment should also be held accountable for any harm that the system causes.

One potential solution to this ethical dilemma that jumps out at me first is to assign shared responsibility for self-driving crashes. This would mean that multiple parties, including the car manufacturer, the software developer, and the owner of the car, would be held responsible for self-driving crashes. By assigning shared responsibility, each party would be incentivized to prioritize safety and ethical considerations when developing and deploying self-driving cars. Considering all of this, I also want to point out that self-driving cars, in my opinion, would only seamlessly work when all other cars on the road are also self-driving. The combination of human drivers and AI drivers is what truly causes these accidents in the first place. The idea here is that multiple self-driving cars may be able to communicate with one another to avoid accidents and overall decrease the risk. We are far from this reality but ultimately would minimize the ethical implications of moral responsibility altogether.