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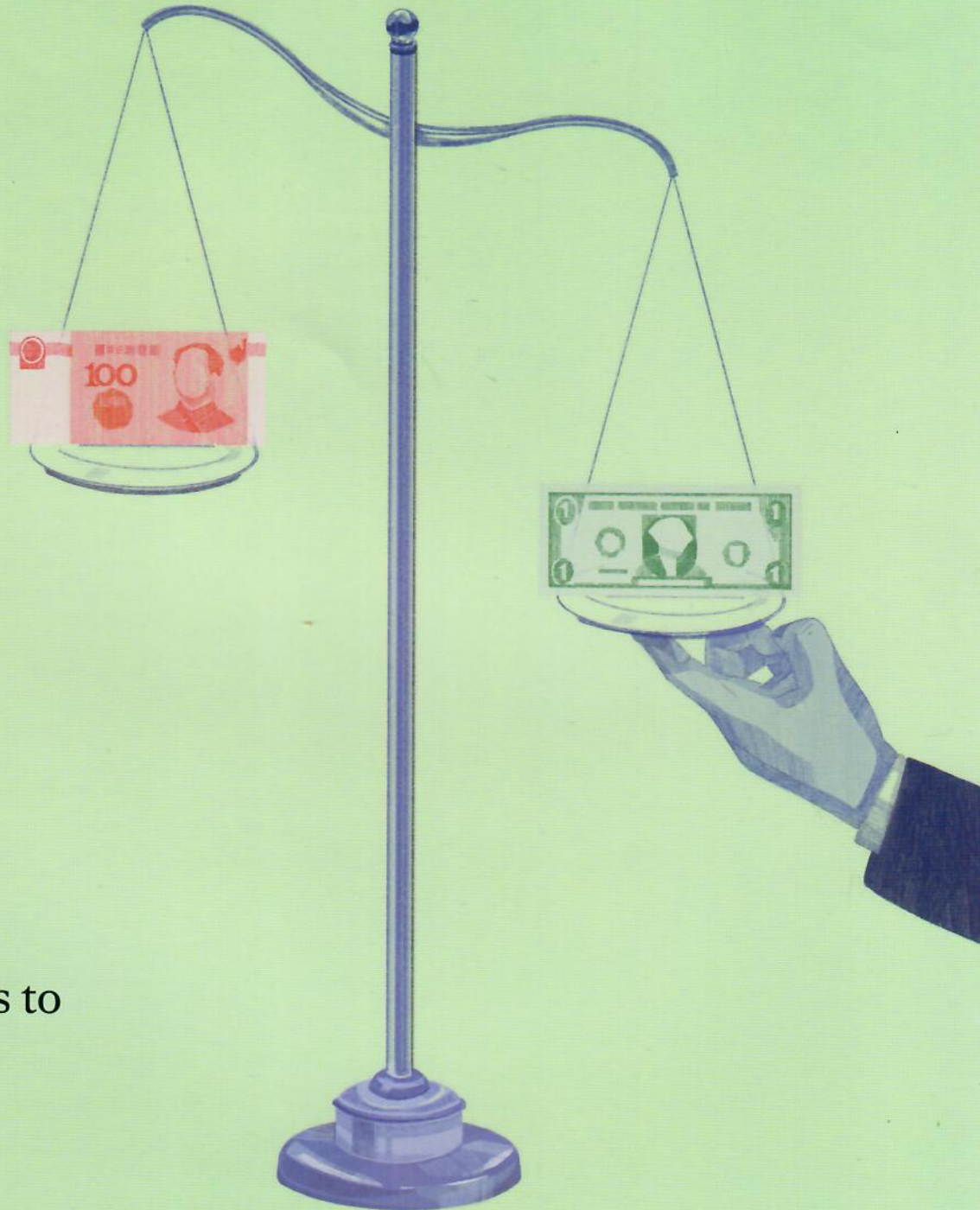
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AI: The Future of Cars?

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Often in science fiction movies, we are fascinated by the autonomous cars and the benefits it can bring to us, and we hope they can exist in the future. In recent years, autonomous cars have become a reality since they are now researched and developed by large technology companies. Tesla, Apple, Ford, Honda, and other large technology companies are testing their driverless cars on the roads with the approval of the California Department of Motor Vehicles. Within a couple of years, AI cars will be able to transport people from one place to another on a larger scale.

Indeed, the emergence of AI cars can bring numerous benefits and solve multiple problems caused by human drivers. According to the Tri-Level Study of the Causes of Traffic Accidents, more than 90% of car accidents in the US are caused by human errors. If AI cars are used instead as the main transportation system, the rate of car accidents can be minimized. For example, the AI will make sure that the speed of the car is in adherence to the road speed limit, thus decreasing the chance of causing car crashes. Moreover, people who used to have driving difficulties such as the disabled or even children can now figuratively "drive" the car. Furthermore, the experience of riding in an AI car will be smoother and safer compared to that of riding with human drivers who might not be paying attention to the traffic at all times. However, does society really benefit from the advantages that driverless cars can bring forth?

What does the future really look like?

If AI cars replace buses and taxis as the main transportation systems around the world, professional drivers will lose their jobs directly because the demand for human drivers is no longer existent. With an estimate of over 3.5 million professional truck drivers in the US, these drivers are going to lose their jobs, leading to a sharp rise of unemployment rate in the US.

In terms of safety, the lives of the passengers will now solely rely on the AI that controls the car. If the AI gets hacked by a hacker or if the AI suddenly malfunctions, the result could definitely be fatal car crashes. On top of that, since AI cars do not require a driver, they will become an ideal weapon for terrorists to launch attacks. As stated in the concrete evidence from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, ISIS is making AI cars into self-guided car bombs. Mikko Hypponen, the chief of the investigation, claimed that "[ISIS is] building mannequins to put behind the driver's seat, and have built a system to clone the heat system of a human being so it looks like a human's driving." Without the need of sending suicide bombers, the prevalence of AI cars will definitely give incentive to terrorists to launch attacks.

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Whose Fault?

If a driverless car collides with another vehicle, who is going to be responsible for the accident? The car owner? The car company? The software and AI designer? The responsibility will never be clear until laws are enacted. Also, by giving up the control of driving to AI, the AI may need to tackle with ethical issues. For instance, if a kid who accidentally runs on the street, should the AI car avoid hitting him yet in favor of hitting other people and cars on the side? The moral dilemma can be really difficult for AI to solve. Before the protocol of regulating AI cars is fully enacted, its potential problematic side should forbid AI cars from transporting passengers on the road.