1. On March 23, 2018 a Tesla Model X driver had engaged the Tesla “AutoPilot” feature before dying in an accident on the freeway. The AutoPilot feature included all the hardware necessary to support a fully autonomous vehicle, however it lacked technical software and certification to be a street-legal fully autonomous vehicle at the time. Self-driving cars are proven to be safer than humans under certain conditions, but there are conditions where the human is the better driver. Is it ethical to let consumers experiment with limited self-driving capable cars when neither the consumer nor the vehicle know the limits? Why or why not?

For this particular situation, it is hard to say whether their choice is ethical or not. Tesla had implemented the autopilot feature with all of the hardware to be completely autonomous. Despite this, the software was not certified for street use. This brings up the dilemma as to whether or not they should make it available to the public even though the software wasn’t certified. Tesla had to consider the possibility of car accidents when this feature is used. As for the individual that chose to use the feature, they willingly used the software knowing that it was not certified. It would be assumed that the consumer accepts full responsibility for what could happen, much like how you would when you would normally drive a car. However, since Tesla implemented a feature that advertises autonomous driving, I as a consumer would expect the feature to work under normal driving circumstances. Consumers expect the car and its features to all work normally without having to worry about any technical specifications or considerations. Because of this, I think that it is not ethical to let consumers experiment with limited self-driving cars. Had the person stuck to driving their car normally, they would probably still be alive today. At the end of the day, it is Tesla’s product that caused the accident, not the driver. Even though the car had all the necessary hardware, I could imagine that not enough software testing was performed in different conditions. This would include conditions such as unsafe drivers or unmarked roads for example. Today, machines are not able to adapt on the road as efficiently as humans can because there are too many variables can cause an accident. Until Tesla performs more tests on their software and becomes certified, the decision is not ethical.

1. With the renaissance in artificial intelligence and machine learning that we see today, there is a great deal of excitement for the future since work done by humans today can be further automated. With automation we may see a significant loss of jobs with a sudden paradigm shift. If a task can be automated and obviates the job of a group of people, is it ethical to just release them and let them fend for themselves? Why or why not? Consider when answering if it make a difference for 100 people, 100 thousand people, or 100 million people.

The ultimate goal of a business is to make a profit. From a company’s perspective, automation may cost more than human labor in the beginning, but it is more cost efficient in the long run. This would result in the company making more profit as they no longer have to pay salaries to the hundreds or thousands of employees that worked for them. However, this creates the dilemma of the workers that currently work those jobs. These workers could have been doing their jobs for years before automation was implemented. In some cases, that job is all that they know and without it, it would be hard for them to find a similar job if more companies decide to move toward automating their processes. But at the same time, if companies were to choose not to automate, it can result in losing money. From this, the company would end up losing more money, thus being forced to lay off workers. Without work being completed by workers or automated machines, the company could end up going bankrupt. Regardless, releasing a group of people and leaving them to fend for themselves would be unethical. Most of these people would no longer be able to provide for their families and could even end up homeless due to a lack of income. While it may be good for the company to automate tasks, it certainly screws over the people that worked the job. It just does not seem fair for a company to be profiting millions while their past workers are left behind with no other line of work. For this to be ethical for both sides, I feel that the company should offer some sort of relocation the workers or stipend so that the workers are not completely left in the dark. From here, workers can use the money towards furthering their education so that they can qualify for new jobs.