Blog: Self Driving Cars

The issues that arise due to the use of self driving cars are mostly caused by the situation when both a human and an autonomous vehicle are sharing the same road. The rest are generally about the safety of pedestrians and the people surrounding a self driving car. Very few if not none of the issues are related to how safe having only self driving cars would be.

I will briefly address the last claim, as it may be questionable to some people. Driving in and of itself is not a complicated task. There are many variables that exist in driving that can easily be evaluated and handled by a computer. Driving is a very physical, kinetic task that can be broken down and comprehensively addressed. With only self driving cars on the road, the possibility of fast communication between the vehicles, and computers with far greater reaction times that humans, it is easy to see that having only self driving cars would make roads functions like well-oiled gears.

When it comes to the safety of pedestrians, a self driving car is theoretically much safer than the average human. Fast reaction times allow self driving cars to maneuver with greater precision and speed, allowing them handle hazardous situations optimally. This can be achieved by programming a self driving car to deal with situations that are highly risky by reducing the damage that can be caused as much as possible. Imagine the situation where a pedestrian is in the middle of a crossing during a green light. A self driving car can be programmed to handle that situation in many ways. One of those ways is try and cause the least amount of damage to everyone in event. This can manifest itself in many ways; the car could swerve, or even stop. A human, on the other hand, might have other interests. A human could have a bias that causes them to execute a sub optimal solution. It’s very easy to imagine someone in a panic, where their sensory is unreliable, or someone who just wants to damage themselves the least, so they might run over a human to save being rear-ended. A self driving car is constantly aware of what is happening, so a split-second reaction is only natural; it’s doing that all the time. Self driving cars would likely reduce the amount of accidents to non-drivers.

The last and most hotly discussed topic is self diving cars and humans driving along side each other. Many people believe that unmanned cars will make the roads more dangerous. I want to make the assumption that a self driving car will not make a mistake on the road. In this case, it is how humans interact with self driving cars. Collisions occur between humans because one or both of the people drive in an unexpected way. This happens everyday, even without self driving cars. With self driving cars, it would only make the roads more dangerous only if the unmanned cars would be more dangerous than humans. Realistically, as proven, self driving cars are much safer than humans. That means that even if the above assumption does not hold, it would still be better to use self driving cars on the road.

If people still deem it too dangerous, then maybe a different mode of transportation should be considered. It’s the best we’re going to get.